

Primary educator lesson plan

English: Debate a road safety issue

Lesson overview

The class will learn, discuss, evaluate and decide on various issues and viewpoints surrounding road safety and how to convey their ideas and their own decisions and beliefs through a classroom debate and beyond. Students will explore the concept of fairness and how people decide what is fair and unfair, and explore the process of debate and compromise in group decision-making.

Aim

To teach children about their own and others' opinions, and to help them learn debating skills, through a democratic debate.

To teach children some key facts about road safety.

Preparation

Print out the statements and labels on pages 3 and 4, with enough copies for each group. Each group discusses the same set of statements.

Lesson outline

1. Introduce the lesson. Explain to the class that they are going to be working in small groups to discuss a set of statements. For each one they will have to decide, as a group, whether they think the statement is fair, unfair or if they are unable to decide. Ask the groups to look at each slip of paper in turn and place it in a 'fair', 'unfair' or 'don't know' pile. Approximately 10 minutes.
2. Ask the students to present their answers as a group to the rest of the class, giving their reasons. Ask the groups how they made their decisions. Approximately 10 minutes.
3. Come together for a class discussion. Establish on which points everyone agrees and on which there are a range of opinions. Point out that people do not always agree on what is fair and not fair. Introduce the concept of compromise and point out that many people need to find ways to work together when they have different viewpoints. Approximately 10-15 minutes.
4. Discuss each statement (or a selection of them) and the difference in opinions. Call for a show of hands for Fair, Unfair or Undecided – so voting is based on an understanding of all the issues – and record the outcomes on the board. Approximately 10-15 minutes.
5. Point out that we live in a democratic society where everyone can try to change things and get their message across but in a large group there is often a difference of opinion as to what is fair and unfair. Point out that voting, after a discussion, is a good way of making a decision as a group. Ask the class if they know of any other methods of voting, such as: show of hands, division (moving to one side of the room), secret ballot, placing marbles in a jar, etc.
6. Ask the class what their understanding is of the words 'majority' and 'minority'. Stress the importance of discussion and listening to others so that voting is based on understanding of all the issues.

Statements

- Children should not cross the road by themselves
- Children should only cross a road where there is a pedestrian crossing
- Children should not have a mobile phone in their hands when walking to school
- All school buses should have seatbelts
- Cars should drive at 30km/h or slower around schools
- Drivers should not use a hands-free phone when driving
- Drivers should drive at 20km/h or slower around stopped school buses
- Walking and cycling should be made easier and safer in communities
- If more people walked and cycled instead of driving, it would reduce road deaths and injuries, and pollution

Follow-on lesson – Debate a road safety issue

The class will create a road safety council, debate road safety and elect a chairperson to oversee the discussions and ensure everyone gets a chance to speak. The teacher could be secretary and take notes.

The class could sit around a 'board table'. Explain that the chairperson can have a 'casting vote' if the council votes with equal numbers for and against any proposed motion. Depending on how far along the groups are and how much time you have, you could include the following:

- The proposal can be formally written down before voting
- The voting method can be discussed – show of hands or secret ballot
- Bring the class back together and explain that they have just been involved in a 'democratic process' – making a joint decision in a fair and thoughtful way.

Ask the class:

How did they reach their decision?

Did they have disagreements and how were these settled?

How did they get their views across?

How did they feel if the decision went against them?

Could the process be improved – how?

Expected Outcome

Students are able to identify what the safest behaviours are but can also identify what is practical and fair for their own and others' situations. For example, it might be safer, healthier and more environmentally-friendly for parents not to drive their children to school, but if there aren't any safe routes for walking and cycling, or other transport options available (such as a school bus), the only option may be for parents to drive. This can lead to a discussion about what could/should be changed on local roads to help improve safety.

SUPPORT MATERIALS

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Statements



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Fair

Unfair

I don't know