

2. Understanding the constitution: Using key competencies

Overview

This resource provides support for teachers to incorporate learning related to understanding our constitution, across the curriculum.

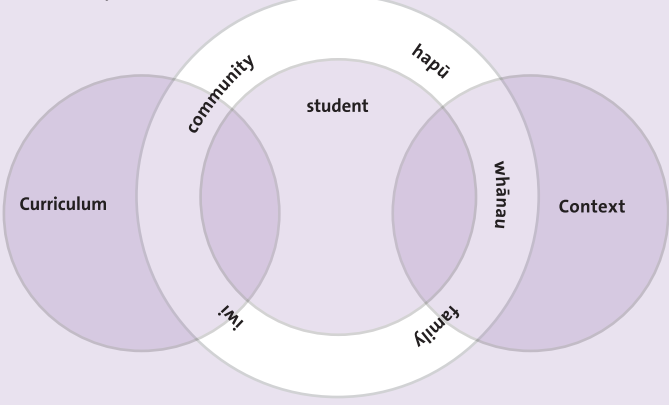
The materials use fact sheets and conversation cards produced for the 'Constitution Conversation'. It is envisaged that the teaching and learning can be integrated into current classroom programmes.

Aspects of planning

When planning consider:

- the big ideas that underpin *The New Zealand Curriculum*, as well as the social sciences learning area
- the relevance of the topic and contexts for your students
- the learning strengths and needs of your students and what they bring with them to the learning.

These aspects of planning are integral and reciprocal. They naturally overlap, so learning tasks and activities incorporate all three aspects.



Students' strengths and needs

What skills and knowledge do the students (and their whānau/ family, hapū, and iwi) bring to the learning?

What support will the students need to fully express their social sciences understandings?

Context

To enable students to participate in a changing society as informed and responsible citizens through:

- whole school experiences
- curriculum-based learning, within learning areas such as the social sciences.

Curriculum: The Key Competencies

- *Thinking* – by promoting students' critical and independent thinking.
- *Participating and contributing* – by considering students' participation in school life and the community.
- *Relating to others* – by listening actively, considering other people's points of view, and sharing ideas.

Resources that support the understanding of our constitution

- Our Constitution website
- Our Constitution external links
- Civics Education
- What is a Constitution?
- New Zealand Constitution booklet
- Constitution Conversation cards
- Constitution Conversation resources

Learning areas

- Social Studies – Level 4
- Social Studies – Level 5
- English – Level 5

Monitoring the progression of key competencies

Support students to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and to consider ways in which they can progress and monitor their progression.

New Zealand's Constitution:

"A constitution is the set of rules that determines how a country is governed and how its people live together."

"New Zealand has a constitution – it's just not all written down in a single document."

New Zealand's Constitution Conversation card – possible views:

"Retain the status quo." New Zealand's constitution is already in laws or in well-documented rules and conventions.

"Adopt a written constitution." Having a written constitution will strengthen New Zealand's sense of national unity, ownership of the constitution, and willingness to participate in government.

New Zealand's Constitution Conversation card:

"What other issues are important to you about New Zealand's unwritten constitution?"

To support critical thinking about the constitution, students could use one of De Bono's six hats and share their thinking.

White hat (Fact finding) – What is the constitution? What does it involve?

Yellow hat (Benefits) – What are the positives for having the constitution in the current format?

Black hat (Cautions) – What are the potential difficulties with the current approach to our constitution?

Green hat (Creativity) – What could be some alternatives?

Red hat (Feelings) – How does it feel to be part of this constitution debate?

Blue hat (Process) – What will be our approach to the learning? How will we draw it together?

To enable students to think critically about how the constitution is documented, have them draw two consequence wheels. Label the wheels 'written constitution in one document' and 'status quo'. The students then consider the possible consequences of these and record their ideas in an outer section of the wheel. Continue this process as students think of related consequences, and use this information to make an informed opinion on how the constitution should be documented.

To introduce thinking about citizenship, students could develop a concept wall showing what citizenship is, what it isn't, and any practices associated with citizenship. The **UNICEF** resource may assist with this activity. Students could then identify who they think is a responsible citizen and why, and what activities people do that are participatory.

Drawing on their knowledge of the constitution and citizenship, students could debate the question: 'Do we have the responsibility to engage in conversations about our constitution?'

To relate ideas about participation to their own lives, students could explore ways in which they contribute and participate in school and outside of school (for example, a cultural group or scouts), and the reasons for this.

To explore how they can contribute in their own schools, students could be involved in the creation of rules and protocols for the classroom. In this process, students could analyse what needs to be considered when creating these rules. To extend this further, students could then compare the democratic approach of rule setting to the concept of democracy in our constitution.

Encourage students to consider ways in which they could make a practical difference in their communities. They could identify a need in the community, which they could contribute towards, (for example, volunteering to support an environmental group). Students could work together to formulate an action plan to work with a group and then share their ideas.

Ask questions to promote the development of students' critical and independent thinking.

- What is the constitution?
- Why have a constitution?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of a written constitution?
- How does it feel to be part of discussions about the constitution?

Model ways in which students could apply their critical thinking, for example, "I wonder what I need to find out to explore my hat more?" Consider ways in which this could be communicated.

In order to extend the students' thinking, give construction feedback about the possible impacts of the consequences they have identified for having the constitution in one written document or the status quo remaining.

Prompt students to consider how ideas related to citizenship underpin involvement in the constitution.

Direct students to a range of opinions related to the review of the constitution, for example, **James Allan**, **NewstalkZB**, and **videos**.

Give feedback to the students related to their progression of understanding.

Ask questions to explore *participating and contributing*.

In what ways do you, and could you, participate and contribute as a:

- member of your family?
- member of your class?
- member of your community?
- citizen of New Zealand?

Model how students could assert their own opinion/ point of view while actively listening to others.

Prompt students to consider what it means to be critical and informed citizens.

Give feedback to support students to:

- plan how they are going to work with communities and groups
- create ways in which they can actively engage.

Prompt students to consider how they could participate in conversations about the constitution, for example, by writing to an MP or submitting on legislation.

Direct students to look at: **Empowernz.co.nz** (an example of constitution writing by young people).

Concepts

- constitution
- democracy
- government
- rules
- rights
- tikanga
- rangatiratanga

Appropriate activities (such as creating concept maps, walls, and circles) can help to draw on students' understandings and build upon these, make connections between contexts, and transfer understandings from one context to another. Further explanation of these activities can be found in the **approaches to building conceptual understandings resource**.

Command words

- describe
- explain
- examine
- analyse
- critically analyse
- interpret
- comprehensively
- in-depth

Interpretation of these words can vary within learning areas, so exposing students to questions associated with **command words** will help their understanding.

Co-construct meanings with students, and within learning areas with teachers, to develop a holistic view of these words.

Specific knowledge and understanding required, for example:

- How the key competencies form an integral component of *The New Zealand Curriculum*
- How constitutions work in other countries that are similar/ dissimilar to ours, drawing on the experiences of the students and their families where possible
- The principles underpinning the constitution

The key competencies website provides material on what key competencies may look like in leading teaching and in learning: keycompetencies.tki.org.nz/

The UK has a constitution that is in multiple areas: www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/research/uk-constitution

The USA has one written constitution: www.usconstitution.net/constkids.html

The **Constitution Conversation resources** and instructional guide 1 will be useful to refer to.

Values

With the focus of these support materials being on the development of understanding of the constitution, use the ideas to help students:

- express their own values
- critically analyse values, and actions based on them
- make ethical decisions and act on them.

Resources

Teaching resources

Building Conceptual Understandings Series – access to PDFs
UNICEF resource that explores the nature of children’s citizenship in part one
Citizenship – This website contains citizenship teaching materials for Levels 2 and 5

www.ssol.tki.org.nz/
www.unicef.org/eapro/Children_as_Active_Citizens_A4_book.pdf
www.education.citizenship.govt.nz/

Constitution Conversation resources

Constitution Conversation website
New Zealand’s Constitution: The Conversation so Far
Hosting a meeting – for a range of resources to support hosting, including conversation cards to initiate discussions
New Zealand Constitution booklet
New Zealand Constitution Conversation videos
Our Constitution external links
Perspectives on the constitution – video clips

www.ourconstitution.org.nz/Our-Constitution
www.cap.govt.nz/store/doc/The_Conversation_So_Far.pdf
www.ourconstitution.org.nz/Host-a-Meeting

www.ourconstitution.org.nz/store/doc/NZC_Booklet.pdf
www.youtube.com/user/NZConstitution/videos
www.ourconstitution.org.nz/External-Links
www.ourconstitution.org.nz/New-Zealands-Constitution/Perspectives

Legislation

Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand’s explanation of New Zealand’s constitution

www.teara.govt.nz/en/constitution/page-1

Other countries’ constitutions

The Constitution of the United Kingdom
The United States Constitution explained for children

www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/research/uk-constitution
www.usconstitution.net/constkids.html

Other sources of information

Introduction to the constitution by Rt. Hon. Sir Kenneth Keith, ONZ
Constitution writing by young people
International civic and citizenship education study publications in response to New Zealand’s involvement in ICCS in 2008
The NSW Government’s glossary of command words
NewstalkZB article on the implications of one written constitution

James Allan discussion on changing an unwritten constitution

www.cabinetmanual.cabinetoffice.govt.nz/node/68
www.empower.co.nz
www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/iccs

www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_hsc/glossary_keywords.html
www.newstalkzb.co.nz/auckland/news/nbp01/708473116-public-opinion-sought-over-written-constitution-for-nz
www.nzcpr.com/guest332.htm