

# 4. Engaging with the constitution

## Social Studies (Level 5)



### Overview

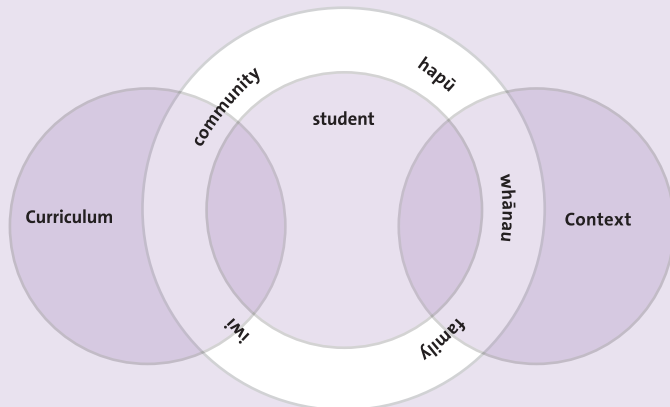
This resource provides support for social studies teachers to help students to critically analyse the methods used to engage New Zealanders in the constitution conversation. These materials use the Facebook page and website for the 'Constitution Conversation'. It is envisaged that the teaching and learning 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 the students 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

*Suggested key conceptual understandings*

- Students will understand that the rules about how we live together, and what we value, are reflected in formal and informal ways.
- Students will understand their role in the development and implementation of these rules and values.

### Curriculum

*Social Studies – Level 5*

- Understand how systems of government in New Zealand operate and affect people's lives, and how they compare with another system.
- Understand how the Treaty of Waitangi is responded to differently by people in different times and places.
- Understand how people define and seek human rights.

### Resources that support the understanding of our constitution

- Our Constitution website
- Constitution Conversations cards
- Treaty of Waitangi Constitution resources
- Civics Education
- What is a Constitution?
- An essay on New Zealand's Constitution
- New Zealand Constitution booklet
- Constitution Conversation resources

### Link to Social Studies – Level 4

Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities.

### Monitoring the development of conceptual understanding

Initially, assess each student's understanding of the key ideas in order to track their ongoing progress and to modify your teaching.

*Facebook page:*

“Be part of it! It’s your constitution, it’s your conversation ...”

“Just wondering ... What values (as humans) do we share?”

*Constitution Conversation website:*

“Be part of the ... Constitution Conversation.”

“If you think Aotearoa New Zealand is a special place to live in, you’re not alone. The Constitution Conversation is a chance for all New Zealanders to share their aspirations for this country and what matters to them most about how it’s run.”

“The Constitutional Advisory Panel will be listening to your views and reporting to Government on what New Zealander’s think about our constitution.”

To continue learning (or establish prior learning), about the constitution, students could create a first definition and second definition table of key words associated with the constitution (for example, constitution, democracy, government, rules and rights). Students could then complete their own definitions. They can either seek a second definition from a peer, or can fill this in during the learning to monitor their progress of understanding.

To help students understand the ways in which people have been, and can be, engaged in conversations about the constitution, students could discuss the methods that they know about (or can find out about from the Constitution Conversation resources) and how these are aimed at different levels, for example, at a personal, school, community, and national level. Students could then consider why it is important to have different methods of engagement.

To further develop an understanding of different methods of engaging people, students could rate, on a scale of 1–10, the effectiveness of the different methods of engaging with the Constitution Conversation. Possible criteria could include:

- supporting conversations about the constitution
- making connections for people
- building relationships
- sharing resource information
- networking
- collaborating.

Note: Possible methods identified could be adverts, Facebook, meetings, Youtube, the Constitution Conversation website, Twitter, and print resources, and any other methods that students identify.

To help make connections with their own learning, students could consider their personal levels of engagement with constitutional conversations. Students could draw a dial (similar to a fire risk dial) showing high, medium, and low engagement and mark on their own levels of engagement before, during, and after their learning about the constitution. Students could then share their dials with their peers and discuss conditions that support engagement.

**Finding out**

Drawing on prior knowledge and experience (possibly from engaging with learning from instructional guides, 1, 2 and 3), ask:

- Why do people believe it is important to engage in conversations about the constitution?

To establish knowledge and understanding of the methods and purposes of engaging people with the Constitution Conversation, ask:

- What methods were used, and could be used, to engage people with the Constitution Conversation?
- What are the purposes of the materials produced for the Constitution Conversation?

To support students to understand how to critically engage with the methods, model the rating of one method, giving reasons for your rating and possibly co-constructing criteria for the rating. For example, what constitutes a 5 out of 10, as opposed to a 9 or 10 out of 10?

**Values and perspectives**

Ask questions to support students to critically evaluate factors such as bias.

- Is a range of perspectives covered in the material that has been produced?
- Which perspectives are dominant and which ones are more invisible? Why?

**Reflecting and evaluating**

Ask questions to prompt students to critically evaluate their own and peers’ participation in the Constitution Conversation:

- How effective are the methods that are being used to engage people with the conversation? Why?
- What helps or hinders people’s engagement in conversations about the constitution?

*Constitution Conversation website:*

“Choose how you get involved – find out more about our constitution, make a submission, share your ideas ...”

To help understand their own role in constitutional decisions and rule making, students could undertake a concept debate responding to the question: “Is it important for young people to have a say in the development of rules in New Zealand?” Using a community of inquiry approach, students will seek deeper meaning by openly listening to, considering, and reflecting on, other students’ points of view.

To further deepen students’ understanding of appropriate ways in which young people could be engaged in constitutional conversations, the students (in groups) could design an “Engagement Strategy” that will encourage students to consider one element of the constitution. Students could draw on their prior learning (through the learning supported by the instructional guides) or new learning related to one element of the Constitution Conversations:

- **New Zealand’s Constitution**
- **Treaty of Waitangi**
- **New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990**
- **Electoral Matters**
- **Māori Representation**

The Engagement Strategy should show:

- the rationale for young people to engage with the element (Why is it important?)
- an outline of the possible methods that could be used to engage students and why these have been chosen
- a detailed presentation of one of these methods (for example, webpage, video presentation, and so on).

After hearing from all groups, students could consider what elements are important to them and what they could personally do about it, for example, presenting a submission, and/or sharing ideas online.

**So what?**

Prompt students to consider why it is important for people to engage in conversations about the constitution.

Model using a **community of enquiry** to promote safe and open dialogue between students. This will involve modelling, wondering, thinking, and talking, in a reflective way.

**Now What?**

Ask questions to support students to make connections with participating and contributing in their schools, community, and New Zealand. For example:

- How can our voices be heard now, and in the future, in our school, community and nationally, in aspects of the constitution?
- If you were asked to get students actively involved in conversations about the constitution how would you do it?

**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:**

- The role of the constitution and what it incorporates
- Knowledge of the concept of citizenship and how that may contribute to participation in the constitution
- The current role of the Waitangi Tribunal in response to the adherence to the Treaty of Waitangi
- Knowledge of the functions of Parliament and government

The **Constitution Conversation resources** and instructional guides 1 and 2 will be useful to refer to, as well as the **citizen teaching units**.

Waitangi Tribunal resources:

[www.waitangitribunal.govt.nz/resources/school\\_info/](http://www.waitangitribunal.govt.nz/resources/school_info/)

Parliamentary services resources:

[www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/AboutParl/Education/Resources/](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/AboutParl/Education/Resources/)

**Key Competencies**

The focus of learning can support the development of:

*Participating and contributing* – through developing an understanding of what it means for the students themselves to contribute to conversations around political issues.

*Thinking* – by reflecting on how and why people vary in their viewpoints.

*Relating to others* – by listening actively, recognising different points of view, and sharing ideas.

*Using language symbols and text* – through the analysis of visual representations of our constitution.

**Values**

With the focus of this instructional guide being on the engagement with the constitution, use the ideas to help students:

- express their own values
- critically analyse values and actions based upon them
- discuss disagreements that arise from differences in values
- make ethical decisions and act on them.