

Exploring Our Rights: Understanding the Declaration on the Rights of Deaf Children

Grade Level: Primary School

Objective:

- To introduce young children to human rights and specifically the rights of deaf children.
- To foster empathy, respect, and understanding towards individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- To encourage critical thinking and reflection on how we can support and advocate for the rights of all children.

Materials Needed:

- Picture books about deaf children and sign language
- Copies of the Declaration on the Rights of Deaf Children (see here: <https://wfdeaf.org/rightsdeafchildren/>)
- Whiteboard or flip chart
- Markers
- Craft materials

Lesson Duration:

- Approximately 45-60 minutes.

Procedure:

Introduction (10 minutes):

- Gather the children in a circle and begin by discussing the concept of rights.
- Ask questions like:
 - "What does it mean to have rights?"
 - "Do you know what rights are?"
 - "Do you think all children have the same rights? Why?"
 - "Can you think of rights that Deaf children have that are different to those of hearing children's?"
 - "Can you think of an example where you felt like a situation was unfair because you are deaf?"

Introducing Deafness (10 minutes):

- Show pictures or read a storybook that features deaf children or characters who use sign language. Some examples include: Shira's Voice by Hila Almog, For Deaf Kids: Know Your Language Rights, What is Language Deprivation by Avril Hertneky, Bonnie and the Deaf Bake Squad; and Sky the Deaf Home Run Hero by Mickey Carolan to name a few. We do not recommend reading decodable books about deaf children in this context.
- Explain that deafness means we don't hear like others. Emphasise that being deaf is just one way people are different, but we still have the same feelings and thoughts as everyone else.

Learning about the Declaration (15 minutes):

- Present the child friendly video of the Declaration on the Rights of Deaf Children done in Auslan. You can also present the one created for the World Federation of the Deaf.
- Discuss some of the rights mentioned in the Declaration, such as the right to education, communication, and participation in society.

Discussion and Reflection (10 minutes):

- Lead a discussion about the rights of deaf children. Encourage children to share their thoughts and ask questions.
- Ask questions like:
 - "Why is it important for deaf children to have the same rights as everyone else?"
 - "How can we do our part to make sure ALL deaf children feel included and respected?" (This question focuses on deafblind children, deaf and disabled children who are often left out of the dominant deaf cohort without either).
 - "What can we do to support the rights of all children, including those who have disabilities?"

Wrap-up Activity (10 minutes):

- Depending on the time and resources available, engage the children in a creative activity related to the lesson. They could draw pictures of ways to include deaf children in activities, create posters with messages of inclusion. While this is happening, select one child at a time to sign their version of one of the key articles from the Declaration and film this.

Conclusion:

- Summarise the key points of the lesson, emphasizing the importance of respecting the rights of all deaf children, including those who are deafblind or deaf and disabled.
- Encourage children to think about how they can be advocates in their own lives.

Extension:

- Encourage children to share what they learned with their families or friends.
- Explore additional resources about deaf culture and Auslan.
- Invite a guest speaker who is deaf or works/has worked with deaf children to talk to the class and share their experiences.