

# YOUTH JUSTICE LESSON PLAN

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## Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick

Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick (PLEIS-NB) is a non-profit organization. We create materials about the law and the justice system to help people learn about laws in New Brunswick. We have a number of pamphlets, posters, and videos about youth and the law.

If you have questions about youth justice or would like more information about the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the changes to the way we deal with youth crime in Canada you can contact PLEIS-NB to receive free copies of our other youth justice products, or visit our website at [www.youthjusticenb.ca](http://www.youthjusticenb.ca).

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**The following PLEIS-NB materials are required for this lesson plan. You can access these materials online or by contacting our office.**

#### Part 1

- A Chance for Change video and guide
- Youth Justice Quiz
- Restorative Justice/ Out of Court Responses Handout

#### Part 2

- Rights Word Web
- Youth Rights PowerPoint Presentation
- “Do You Know Your Rights?” Notes
- Teacher Feedback Form
- Student Feedback Form

## OVERVIEW

**SUBJECT:** Language Arts, Health and Physical Education, Law, etc.

**GRADE(S):** 6 - 12

**DESCRIPTION:** This is a two-part lesson plan. The first part is an introduction to the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) and explains how youth are held accountable by meaningful consequences in the Youth Criminal Justice System. The second part focuses on the rights youth have under the YCJA.

It is important that youth understand their rights and responsibilities under the law. Many youth are unfamiliar with their rights. There are many myths surrounding youth justice and young people may not fully understand and appreciate the consequences of crime.



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## **FORMAT OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES:**

Students have many ways of learning, knowing, understanding, and creating meaning. Research into the links between learning styles and preferences and the physiology and function of the brain has provided educators with useful concepts on the nature of learning.

Therefore, an awareness of Howard Gardner's multiple-intelligence theory has shaped the creation of this lesson plan to include a variety of activities aimed at helping all students, regardless of their learning style understand and learn about the Youth Criminal Justice Act. These include:

- Lecture
- Overheads
- Video
- Small and large group discussions
- Role play
- Individual work

## **GENERAL CURRICULUM OUTCOMES (Grades 6-8):**

- recognize that contributions from many participants are needed to generate and sustain discussions
- contribute thoughts, ideas, and questions to discussion and compare their own ideas with those of peers and others
- ask and respond to questions to seek clarification or explanation of ideas and concepts
- contribute to, and respond constructively, in conversation, small-group and whole-group discussion
- elaborate personal reactions to what is read and viewed by providing some extended explanations, examples, and supporting arguments

## **GENERAL CURRICULUM OUTCOMES (Grades 9-12):**

- Examine other ideas and synthesize what is helpful to clarify and expand their own understanding.
- Articulate, advocate, and justify positions on an issue or text in a convincing manner, showing an understanding of a range of viewpoints.
- Consistently demonstrate active listening and concern for the needs, rights, and feelings of others.
- Use writing and other ways of representing to explore, extend, and reflect on the basis for their feelings, values, and attitudes.
- Integrate information from many sources to construct and communicate meaning.
- Critically evaluate the information they access.
- Ask discriminating questions to acquire, interpret, analyze, and evaluate ideas and information.



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# YOUTH JUSTICE LESSON PLAN - PART 1

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## The Youth Criminal Justice Act

“On April 1, 2003, the *Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA)* came into force, replacing the *Young Offenders Act (YOA)*. The *YCJA* builds on the strengths of the *YOA* and introduces significant reforms that address weaknesses in the *YOA*. The *YCJA* provides the legislative framework for a fairer and more effective youth justice system.”

[www.justice.gc.ca](http://www.justice.gc.ca)

## Overview

**DURATION:** Approximately 1 hour of classroom time. Due to time constraints select the activity that best suits the age and learning style of your audience. Additional activities may be used to continue class discussion in later classes.

**LANGUAGE:** English

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

- explain when and why the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* became law
- gain a better understanding of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* and how it affects youth justice issues
- discuss youth justice issues and possible solutions
- understand their rights and responsibilities under the *Act*
- provide support for youth who are experiencing problems
- learn more about meaningful consequences, rehabilitation and reintegration
- Apply their new knowledge of the *Act* to various scenarios in a mock Community Justice Forum

## PROCEDURE

Hooks are an important way to capture a classroom’s attention, get students excited about learning and focus their thinking on a particular topic.

This interesting fact should do just that. Before students enter the room, write the following in large letters across the board:

**Did you know that Canada has had the highest rate of jailing youth in the industrialized world?**



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[www.youthjusticenb.ca](http://www.youthjusticenb.ca)



## Introduction (2 minutes)

“Canada has recently created a new law and a new system of dealing with young people who break the law. Can anyone tell me the name of this new law?”

Allowing students to think about this for a moment will activate their prior knowledge of the subject. However, many students may still believe that the *Young Offenders Act* exists. This would be good time to let them know that the new law is called the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* and replaced the *Young Offenders Act* in April 2003.

Note: The *Youth Criminal Justice Act* replaced the *Young Offenders Act* of 1984. The *YCJA* makes distinctions between violent and non-violent offences, encourages out-of-court measures and gives direction for their appropriate use. The *YCJA* was passed by the government on February 2002 and was implemented April 1, 2003.

## Classroom Activity

Choose either the KWL Chart (recommended for middle school) or the Youth Justice Quiz (recommended for middle school or high school). You can print out copies of the chart and quiz from our website at [www.youthjusticenb.ca](http://www.youthjusticenb.ca).

### KWL Chart (5-10minutes)

Advanced organizers can assist students to transfer or apply what they know to what they are learning.

In a KWL Chart:

- K stands for Know - What do I already know about this topic?
- W stands for Will or Want - What do I think I will learn about this topic? What do I want to know about this topic?
- L stands for Learned - What have I learned about this topic?

Options for this activity include: Photocopies of KWL Chart for individual work, Overhead of KWL Chart for whole class work, or use of Chalk/Wipe Board for whole class work.

Place your KWL chart on the board in front of the class and ask students to brainstorm what they already know about the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.

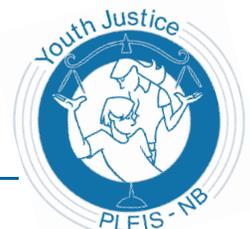
(Write their responses in the first column of the chart, “What We Know.”)

Then ask students what they want to find out about the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.

(Write their questions in the second column of the chart, “What We Want to Know.”)



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The table should look like this:

<b>What I KNOW</b>	<b>What I WANT to know</b>	<b>What I LEARNED</b>

### Youth Justice Quiz (10 minutes)

“Before we go any further, let’s get a better understanding of what you already know about youth crime and Youth Justice in Canada.”

After the Quiz, review the answers with students and discuss any questions they may have. If students are not very talkative, try asking them about the answers that surprised them.

### Mini-Lecture (10 minutes)

“As we have already discussed briefly, the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* replaced the *Young Offenders Act* in April of 2003 and promotes accountability and meaningful consequences proportionate to the seriousness of the offence for youth, aged 12 - 17 suspected, charged with, accused or convicted of a criminal offence.”

Using either an overhead projector or handouts, provide students with “The Guiding Principles of the YCJA” from the video guide for *A Chance for Change* (handout #2) and discuss the guiding principles listed below.

- **Crime prevention** – Youth crime can be better prevented when the factors that can contribute to it are addressed. Research shows that factors such as poverty, family violence, substance abuse and high unemployment can all have a part in whether youth engage in crime.
- **Meaningful consequences** – Community-based sentences and out-of-court responses are used for less serious offences to include communities and victims of youth crime in the process. This can help reduce rates of youth in custody and help non-violent youth repair harm that they have done.
- **Rehabilitation** – Youth in conflict with the law need to help to promote good behaviour. Guidance and support can help youth become responsible citizens. Access to treatment and long-term support can help achieve this goal.
- **Reintegration** – To prevent re-offending, youth need help in returning to their communities. A commitment to maintaining existing services and developing new programs can support youth in being productive in their communities. Examples of such services or programs can be those that assist in learning life skills, finding employment, or participating in recreational activities.”



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“Let’s now take a closer look at ‘meaningful consequences’. For less serious, non-violent offences it may be more effective to deal with the youth in the community rather than in the courtroom. Under the new *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, the police must consider a series of *extrajudicial* or ‘out-of-court’ options before they send a case to the crown prosecutor. The officer must determine what would be the most appropriate and meaningful response to the specific situation:

- Would a verbal warning be enough?
- Would a written caution that goes home to the parents be enough?
- Would a meeting at the police station with the parents be enough?
- Could they refer the youth to a community program that can help them stay out of trouble?
- Or should they forward the file to the Crown Prosecutor and have the young person brought to court?”

### **Video – A Chance for Change** (10-15 minutes)

“In order to put all of this into perspective, we will watch a short movie that will show us some real life examples of how youth have been held accountable outside the courts for the crimes committed here in New Brunswick. The movie is entitled; *A Chance for Change*.”

#### **Introduction to the video**

*A Chance for Change* introduces viewers to some of the out-of-court measures (extrajudicial measures) that the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* provides for. It depicts youth who have committed typical youth crimes being held accountable in the community and making reparations to those affected by their actions. The video is intended to encourage discussion.

#### **Discussion** (10 minutes)

“As we saw in the movie, these were depictions of real life examples of how youth have been held accountable outside the courts.”

Ask students if they can explain how the youth in the video were held accountable. A student in the class will probably mention the Community Justice Forum. This would be a good time to take a closer examination at what that means.



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“As we saw in the video, one type of program that could be used as an alternative to court is a Community Justice Forum. This involves bringing together the parents, police, the victim(s) and their supporters, grandparents, teachers, counsellors or anyone else who may be able to help with a solution. These people meet with the young person who committed the crime to discuss the incident and find an appropriate and meaningful consequence. Everyone has the opportunity to discuss how the incident has affected them and the youth is expected to take responsibility for their actions. Each of the participants is given the opportunity to make recommendations for the type of “punishment” they think should be given. A trained facilitator will help the group come to an agreement. A written contract is written and signed by the teen. If the teen completes each part of their agreement their file is closed and they will not have to go to court or have a youth court record.”

“Understanding what it means to have a youth record is important.”

Ask students if they know the possible consequences of having a record and write their responses on the board.

Possible consequences include:

- being refused employment
- being fired from a job you already have
- may keep you from travelling outside of Canada (ie. Grad trips, family vacations, university, working abroad)

“Some people think that your record automatically gets destroyed when you turn 18, but that is NOT TRUE. The age when your record closes depends on how old you were at the time of the crime and how you have behaved since then. It is also important to keep in mind that serious youth crimes do occur and the Youth Criminal Justice Act is prepared to deal with them in a serious manner.”

Group Activity – Your Turn to Decide (20 mins)

“Now that you have a better understanding of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, and know how important it is to provide youth with meaningful consequences, you are going to have the opportunity to decide what type of punishment is appropriate for the following incidents.”

Explain that the class is going to be divided into groups of six or seven for an activity. Students will have a chance to be a part of a Community Justice Forum. Explain that once in their groups they will have to choose a role. Place the following roles on the board:

- Youth accused of committing the crime
- Parent
- Teacher
- Victim
- Victim’s support person
- Police officer
- (optional) Community Member
- (optional) Grandparent



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[www.youthjusticenb.ca](http://www.youthjusticenb.ca)



Once each group has been given a scenario their first task is to read it aloud. Then they must each chose a role from the list on above and begin their discussions. As part of a Community Justice Forum, students will have to decide on the most meaningful and appropriate consequences for the youth in the scenario. It is important to remember that the youth must have accepted responsibility for what happened to be given the opportunity to participate in an out-of-court program.

Note: A separate copy of the scenarios below may be downloaded and printed from our website - [www.youthjusticenb.ca](http://www.youthjusticenb.ca).

- 1) H.'s parents offered to pay H. to clean out the car while they were at work. H. was removing the floor mats when he found the spare key. H. had a beginner's license but was not yet licensed to drive alone. He/She decided to get in some practice and took the car out for a drive. H. did not get far from home when he/she lost control of the car on a sharp turn and hit the neighbour's fence causing considerable damage.
- 2) T. is caught by a teacher using drugs in the school bathroom. The teacher is shocked as T. is a top student and athlete. T. is devastated that in getting caught he/she will no longer be able to play on the school team as they head into the finals.
- 3) J., having just turned 16 leaves home and school determined to make it on his own. Unable to find work he finds himself on the street struggling to get by. He finds himself under arrest when he is caught shoplifting from the local grocery store
- 4) Two older youth T. and C. were bored and looking for some excitement when R., a younger kid, comes along the narrow path on his/her bike. Just for fun the older teens block the path and refuse to let the bike pass. The R. gets off the bike and tries to walk around them but is scared off and runs away leaving the bike behind. The T. and C. insist that they were just joking around, and they assumed that when R. left the bike they could just take it.

## EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

- Continue with Group Activity – *Your Turn to Decide*. If students have had time to complete the activity in their groups, have them discuss their decisions with the class. Have the rest of the class suggest other options for meaningful out-of court responses aloud in a discussion, or individually in journal writing.
- Take a closer look at Restorative Justice and Out-of-Court Responses by having a discussion. Ask students what they see are the strengths to the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*? And what are the weaknesses? (A handout on Out-of-Court Responses is available at [www.youthjusticenb.ca](http://www.youthjusticenb.ca))
- Hold a discussion about the factors that affect youth crime. Such as:
  - Poverty
  - Peer Pressure
  - Alcohol & Drug Abuse
  - Lack of Family Support
  - Education
  - Boredom
  - Unemployment

Then have students suggest ways that the community can help improve these circumstances.

- Give students the option to create their own role-plays that depict youth in conflict with the law. Have students present their scenarios and hold a class discussion about possible consequences.
- Allow students to express themselves in writing. (Journal, Fiction, etc)



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# YOUTH JUSTICE LESSON PLAN - PART 2

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## Do You Know Your Rights?

This lesson plan uses a slide presentation, a word web and an activity sheet for participants. These materials are available for download or printing from our website at [www.youthjusticenb.ca](http://www.youthjusticenb.ca) or by contacting PLEIS-NB to obtain a copy.

### Objectives:

- To familiarize students with the special rights provided to them under the Youth Criminal Justice Act.
- To encourage students to be responsible members of the community by demonstrating consequences for unacceptable activity.
- To encourage effective note-taking strategies.

### Pre-lesson Activity:

- Ask the students “**What is the Youth Criminal Justice Act?**” *Anticipated response should include- “special laws that apply to people between the ages of 12 and 18”*
- Ask the students “**What special rights do young people have under the Youth Criminal Justice Act?**” Write their suggestions on the board.
- Tell the students that today they will be learning about the special rights given to young people under the Youth Criminal Justice Act through a presentation and note-taking activity.

### Principal Activity:

- Set up the first slide of the “Do Your Know Your Rights” presentation on the screen or overhead projector.
- Hand out the student worksheet and word web. Tell the students that while you are giving the lecture, they are to fill in the blanks using keywords from the presentation. This will be handed in for assessment at the end of the class. The word web is a tool to help them follow the presentation. Encourage them to take notes on it for future reference.
- Deliver the lecture orally with the visual aid of the presentation, ensuring that it is paced at a rate that the students can follow and remain interested.
- Give the students a few minutes complete the activity sheet and the question for reflection at the bottom of the sheet.

### Post-Activity:

- Ask the students “**Did we miss any rights when we were brainstorming before the presentation? Which ones?**” Write the additions on the board.
- Ask the students “**Are any of the suggestions not rights?**” Erase any suggestions that are not actually rights.
- Encourage the students to write the list on the back of their word web.

### Assessment:

- The worksheet should be marked as either correct or incorrect using the answer key provided.
- The reflection question should demonstrate an understanding of youth rights and why young people are given special rights based on the presentation given and past personal experience. It should be marked as either complete or incomplete.



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