

# *Talking Law:* An OJEN Resource for Teachers of ESL & ELD Students

## About the *Talking Law* workshops series

Developed in collaboration with ESL teachers, SWIS staff and justice sector volunteers, OJEN's *Talking Law* workshop series is a collection of 2-hour long scenario-based workshops written in plain-language which introduce ESL students to the basics of Canadian Law.

The workshops give newcomer youth the opportunity to direct their own learning by collectively identifying their interests and needs in a particular legal area and requesting their teacher to work with a lawyer (who specializes in this particular field) to deliver a workshop in response to their needs.

The collection of workshop resources provides teachers with vocabulary exercises and knowledge-building activities which prepare students for the lawyer's visit to the classroom. Once a volunteer lawyer has been recruited, s/he works with the teacher to deliver information about the justice system through a workshop which features scenario-based learning activities to respond to common issues and questions. The session also highlights where newcomer youth and their families can go for legal assistance in their communities.

OJEN attempts to recruit volunteer lawyers who come from newcomer backgrounds themselves, and during each workshop, youth have the opportunity to ask about the various career paths available to them in the justice sector.

The *Talking Law* workshops are currently offered in the following five areas:

**Employment Law**

**Human Rights Law**

**Criminal Law**

(with an emphasis on Youth Criminal Justice)

**Immigration & Citizenship Law**

**Civil Law**

## How to use the *Talking Law* workshop materials

The *Talking Law* workshop series encourage the use of a wide range of interactive activities – allowing students multiple opportunities to communicate in both oral and written formats with their teachers, fellow students and the justice sector volunteers. The activities incorporate both guided instruction and interactive, experiential learning to encourage literacy development, oral communication skills, questioning techniques, and critical thought in students.

Each *Talking Law* workshop package includes:

- **Simplified definitions** of relevant legal terms and concepts
- **Vocabulary exercises** for reinforcing these legal terms and concepts
- **Plain language scenarios** for discussing topical legal issues
- A handout outlining **contact information for local legal resources** for students and their families

### Teachers...

As the teacher, you know your class dynamics, learning levels, and what works best to get ideas across successfully. We encourage you to speak with the justice sector volunteer before s/he comes into your class to discuss how s/he can best interact with students and what level of language is most appropriate. You can help facilitate the workshop by assisting the volunteer to give out materials, work with the students through the various activities and manage the class. The volunteer may need your assistance in keeping students' attention and will look to you for cues that he/she is speaking for too long or at a level that is too difficult for students to grasp.

### Justice Sector Volunteers...

Part of your role is to help the students become more familiar with the justice system in Canada and to think about their rights and responsibilities as they participate in this system.

- Remember to simplify your language and try to avoid using overly technical language so that students can follow your presentation and do not become overwhelmed with information.
- Speak slowly and clearly and try to use examples and visuals to explain the material (students enjoy hearing first hand experiences which help to explain complex ideas).
- Ask students for their opinions and insights and leave enough time for questions.
- Keep in mind that some students may be intimidated by having a member of the justice sector visit, so try to keep the tone informal and friendly.

## TEACHING STRATEGIES & ACTIVITY IDEAS

The following is a list of teaching strategies and activity ideas that teachers and justice sector volunteers may choose to use:

- in advance of the justice sector volunteer's visit;
- during the delivery of the *Talking Law* workshop; or
- as a follow-up activity to the justice sector volunteer's visit.

It is expected that teachers will assess the predominant learning styles and abilities of students within their class in order to best judge the appropriateness and use of each strategy.

**K, W, L Chart** This activity is a great introduction to any of the *Talking Law* workshops. "K, W, L" Charts or "Know, Want to know, Learned" charts are a simple way to assess the classroom's prior knowledge of a topic before beginning the lesson. Simply draw three columns on a piece of chart paper and label them left to right with "Know", "Want to know", and "Learned". In the first column ask students to list things which they already know about the topic. These are usually gained from students' background knowledge. In the second column ask students to list what they would like to know or learn from the workshop. This will provide you and the justice sector volunteer with some direction and guidance prior to running the workshop. (Be sure to provide this list to the justice sector volunteer if this is done in class prior to his/her visit.) Finally, once the workshop is complete, as a follow-up activity, have the students fill in the third column with the things that they learned during the workshop.

**Anticipation Guide** This is another activity which is useful prior to the justice sector volunteer's visit or during the introduction of a *Talking Law* Workshop. Present the students with a question or topic of discussion. (e.g. "What are human rights?") Ask students about their opinions on the issue. This activity will help students to identify their existing beliefs and attitudes on a particular subject before reading any of the literature in the workshops or learning new things from the justice sector volunteer. These thoughts can be revisited after the workshop has concluded.

**Cloze Procedure** All of the workshops in the *Talking Law* series use this teaching strategy as a way of assessing reading comprehension. **Fill-in-the-blank** and **word searches** figure in the workshop resource package as student handouts. Another way of incorporating cloze procedure in the classroom is using a **jigsaw cloze**: simply copy and cut-out the **legal terms and concepts** section of any workshop and hand out separated terms and definitions to the students. Have students find the person who hold the match to their own card.

### **Cooperative Learning**

The *Talking Law* workshops provide students with opportunities to explore working together as a group to accomplish a common learning goal. For example, consider trying the **ESL mock criminal trial** with your class as a follow-up activity to the criminal *Talking Law* workshop. OJEN mock hearings are based on experiential learning, and aim to increase students' legal knowledge and leadership skills, while teaching them how to approach legal issues and articulate their rights. Students take on the roles of lawyers, witnesses, court clerks, court services officers, court reporters and members of the media – in order to act out a hypothetical court case. The range in roles allows for varying abilities and levels of participation; lawyers collaborate in teams to draft and present their legal arguments, witnesses focus on their testimony, court staffs explore their courtroom responsibilities and members of the media are tasked with writing an article about the case. Classroom preparation culminates in a presentation of the case before a real judge or lawyer in a courthouse or classroom. Another example of a follow-up activity which emphasizes cooperative learning is a group research project like an **on-line scavenger hunt** to find information about a specific area of law or legal instrument.

### **Dictogloss**

An excellent pre-workshop exercise for the **discussion scenarios** found in all of the *Talking Law* Workshops. Choose a text from the workshop and read it aloud to the class. Have the students attempt to recreate the text solely from hearing it read. They can work together in groups or on their own. The goal is not to replicate the text exactly, but to identify key words and themes when recreating. This exercise is great at modeling correct forms of English and allows students to practice their listening and recall abilities.

### **Value Line**

This activity can be used as great follow-up activity to a *Talking Law* workshop. Have students form a line shoulder to shoulder in the classroom. Instruct the students that there are four positions from this line; two in front and two behind. They are represented as follows: one step forward if you agree, two steps forward if you strongly agree, one step backwards if you disagree, and two steps backwards if you strongly disagree. Instruct the students to quickly move to a position off the line once a statement has been read aloud. Encourage students to choose a position, but if they are undecided they can remain on the line and explain why. Present the students with a statement on a subject explored during a *Talking Law* workshop and observe the division of the class. For example, after completing the Immigration and Citizenship *Talking Law* workshop, you might try a statement like: "all permanent residents should be given the right to vote in local (municipal) elections." Ask the students why they chose to move and to explain their decisions. This activity opens several avenues of discussion and provides the students with a visual representation of differing opinions in the class. This activity can be used to create groups for further activities where individuals of similar or differing opinions can continue to work in a cooperative environment.

### **Four Corners**

Similar to the activity mentioned above, Label the four corners of the room with Strongly Agree, Strongly Disagree, Moderately Agree and Moderately Disagree. Read out a statement and have students move to the corner of the room that best represents

their point of view. Give students time for discussion with others of the same opinion. Have a spokesperson from each group present their case to the class and give them time to ask questions or challenge other groups. Finally, give students the opportunity to move to a different corner if their opinion changes. Four Corners is a great activity for getting students to think at a more creative and evaluative level, and also facilitates debates on differences of opinion.

### **Concept Formation**

The legal information contained in the *Talking Law* workshop series can be difficult for students to comprehend. Consider utilizing this inductive approach to thinking about data sets, or classification of – often student generated – information. This teaching strategy puts the students in control of classification as opposed to “Concept Attainment” where the teacher has control of the data set. An example of implementing this strategy in an ESL setting might be done with categorizing terms (such as laws or definitions), or concepts (such as human rights issues or discussion scenarios), or pictures (as in criminal law workshop) and then asking students to explain their classification. It also provides an opportunity for the integration of social theory through a variety of cooperative learning tactics such as “Three-Step-Interview” and “Place Mat” activities mentioned later on in this guide.

### **Graphic Organizers**

There are a number of useful graphic organizers that can be implemented with any of the workshops. The visual representation of information is also very helpful in an ESL setting to communicate meaning as well as illustrate “comparison and contrast” and “cause and effect” relationships. Some examples of graphic organizers include: time-lines, cycle diagrams, T-charts, venn diagrams, story maps, flow charts, and problem solution out-lines. For more information about each of these examples and how to apply them refer to “*Beyond Monet: The Artful Science of Instructional Integration*”.

### **Graffiti**

This activity is particularly useful in an ESL/ELD setting. Any of the vocabulary or discussion topics mentioned in the *Talking Law* workshops can be used with this technique. Put students in small groups and provide them with one piece of chart paper and enough markers for each person in the group (consider using different coloured markers to identify students input). Each piece of chart paper should have a topic, concept, or word that you would like students to brainstorm about, perhaps a human rights, or other legal issue (these can be the same or different from group to group). Ask students to write the topic in the centre of the chart paper. Give students 30 seconds to think about the topic and then 1-2 minutes to simultaneously record their ideas on the paper. When students are finished, have them pass the chart paper to the next group. Repeat the same activity as above until the chart has returned to its original group. Alternately, have students write down a term from the workshop materials, and pass the paper around to see who can define them. Have a class discussion about the collective ideas of the group as a wrap-up.

### **Place Mat**

Put students in small groups and provide them with one piece of chart paper and enough markers for each person in the group. Have students place a circle or square in

the centre of the paper and then divide up the remaining space so that each person in the group has a section to write. Identify a word, concept, or question and ask students to write it down in the central circle/square. Give students some time to brainstorm ideas, write answers, and/or think of terms and ideas related to the central circle/square. Students should write these down in their individual sections. Students should come up with ideas on their own first and then discuss and compare with other students in their group. This activity can be combined with a “Gallery Walk”, where students move around the room viewing other groups’ chart papers and sharing key ideas about the central circle/square.

**Mind Maps** Have students create a visual representation of a particular word, concept, or idea. This can be done individually, in small groups, or as a class, using a variety of paper sizes. Students place the central topic in the centre and arrange related words and ideas around the central word, from most to least complex. Students should include images, pictures, and symbols that relate to the key words, and connect their ideas with lines. Once students have completed their mind maps, have a discussion about the relationships between the various components that students included in their mind maps.

**Guided Writing** Consider employing this technique to walk students through the writing process. Especially useful in the ESL classroom, this instructional approach guides students through writing a specific piece of text such as an essay, report, summary, or interview. By presenting the students with models of different types of writing, they can be taken through the writing process with the teacher. The lawyer templates in the ESL mock criminal trial are a good resource for this writing activity.