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## WHAT IS THE INTENT OF THE LAW?

### OUTCOMES

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify at least two purposes for laws in our society
- Identify at least one intent of those who create laws
- Identify and analyze problems in the application of laws
- Practice generating alternative solutions to problems
- Practice identifying and evaluating consequences and solutions to problems
- Communicate effectively with others

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Blackboard/flip chart
- Chalk/markers

### HANDOUTS

- 1 No Vehicles in the Park
- 2 Who Can Go in the Park?

### TRANSPARENCY OR POSTER

Who Can Go To The Park? Student Answer Grid

### PREPARING TO TEACH THIS LESSON

- Write up and post the lesson objectives.
- Copy handouts and prepare all materials.
- Make an overhead transparency called “Who Can Go To The Park – Student Answer Grid.” If you do not have an overhead projector or overhead transparencies, make a poster following the example given. You can make the grid on the board, on an overhead transparency, or on flipchart paper.
- Read this lesson carefully and try to answer some of the questions about local laws and law-making in advance. In particular, you should be aware of:

- Who makes laws in your community? Is it a city council? A county legislature? You should also know who is in charge of that law-making group. Is there a chairperson for the county council?
- Who is the mayor of your city? The county executive? Generally speaking, be able to use titles appropriate to your jurisdiction.
- Who should students contact if they want to give propose or suggest changes to local legislation?
- What is the process for creating and amending local laws?

If you are planning to invite a city council member or the local government leader, he or she may be able to answer these questions.

## **COMMUNITY RESOURCE PEOPLE**

Invite a city council member or city administrator to assist you with this lesson. Send a copy of the lesson when you confirm the date, time and location of the class. After he or she has received the lesson, discuss how you will work together to teach it.

## **SUMMARY**

At the end of each lesson is a summary section. It is very important that the lesson period be timed to allow sufficient time to complete the debrief (summary) with the students. During this reflection time the students can discuss the information learned, clarify any concerns and analyze the skills that they have practiced. This is a critical step in the learning process and must not be neglected.

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## **PART ONE: LAWS AND ORDINANCES (5 minutes)**

### **1**

Review the outcomes of the lesson with students. If a Community Resource Person has joined you for this lesson, introduce him or her now.

### **2**

Ask the following questions to begin the lesson. Record students' answers on the board or flip chart paper. Note: These questions are based on your local specifics; be sure to insert the correct terms where applicable.

- Who governs our [city/county/township/etc.]? Who makes the laws?

*The answer to this question varies from state to state. Check local information. In many communities the city council or another established governmental body is elected. They make laws for the city.*

- Do you know any city laws?

*City laws are sometimes called ordinances. Some examples may include dog leash laws, parking laws, zoning, smoking bans in restaurants and other public places, etc.*

- Who is in charge of the city council?

*Again, the answer to this question varies. In many cities, an administrative manager or the chairperson of the city council is in charge.*

- Who is the mayor in our city? Who are the members of our city council?

*Use the titles and names that are appropriate for your jurisdiction.*

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## **PART TWO: NO VEHICLES IN THE PARK (50 minutes)**

### **1**

Distribute copies of “**Handout 1: No Vehicles in the Park**”, which can be found at the end of this lesson plan.

### **2**

Read aloud as the group follows along.

Ask the following questions:

- What does this law say?
- Why did the city council pass this law? What is it designed to do?
- Will everyone understand this law? Is it clear?

### **3**

The class should be divided into small groups. If possible, put students into eight groups with a maximum of five students in each group. Name each group A - G.

Tell the students that many citizens are dissatisfied with this law and are planning to protest the council's decision to pass this law. The students will serve as council members. They should imagine that various residents have complained and want the council to make exceptions to the law. They will consider cases that follow and decide if they would allow an exception to the rules. Remind students to consider the intent of the law and what the law actually says.

#### 4

Distribute **“Handout 2: Who Can Go in the Park?”** which can be found at the end of this lesson plan.

After distributing the handout, ask different groups to start with different scenarios. For example, group A could start with case 1 and group B could start with case 2. When those groups finish that scenario, they can finish as many of the other scenarios as possible. Instruct students they have twenty minutes to complete their work. Write the ending time on the chalkboard. While the students are working, circulate around the room to listen to their discussions. The Community Resource Person should do the same, if one is present.

Have students read each of the situations. They should make the following decisions for each of the scenarios presented:

- Will they allow the vehicle in the park? Why or why not?
- What alternative solutions can they suggest?

#### 5

While the groups are working, project the overhead transparency or poster that shows the Student Response grid. (If you were unable to make one, write one on the board that looks like the example at the end of this lesson.)

After you post the grid, circulate around the room to observe students at work. When the groups are ready to report, ask each group for its decision and record responses for each case on the grid. Be sure to ask each group for its rationale in reaching a decision for each scenario as well. Remind students that there are no right or wrong answers.

#### 6

Lead a discussion on the differences in the decisions and why the students think these differences occur. Let the groups that have different answers share some of their most compelling arguments for the decision that they came to. Allow other groups to respond to these arguments.

NOTE: The following questions are provided for the instructor to use only if students are having difficulty with their own analysis. If at all possible, let the students ask and answer their own questions. Use these only if there are gaps or if they need prompting.

**1. Mario Velázquez lives on one side of town and works on the other. He will save 10 minutes if he drives through the park.**

- *Will you allow Mario to drive through the park? Why or why not?*
- *Is it important for Mario to be at work on time?*
- *Would it save energy and gas if he were allowed to drive through the park?*
- *Suppose he oversleeps and could lose his job if he is late?*
- *What might happen if you only allow Mario to drive through the park?*

**2. There are many trash barrels in the park. People put litter there to help keep the park clean. The sanitation department wants to go in to collect the trash.**

- *Will you allow the sanitation department to drive through the park? Why or why not?*
- *Will people expect a large park in the truck? Will people be careful if they do not expect a large truck in the park?*
- *Will people come to a dirty park?*
- *Is it unhealthy to allow trash to pile up in the park?*
- *Will people be careful if they do not expect a large truck in the park?*
- *How will the trash get removed if sanitation workers cannot come to pick it up?*

**3. An ambulance with a seriously injured victim of a car accident needs to get to the hospital quickly. The shortest route is through the park.**

- *What other alternative trash control methods can you suggest?*
- *Will you let the ambulance drive through the park? Why or why not?*
- *Will a speeding vehicle be dangerous?*
- *What if the patient will die if the ambulance is not permitted to cut through the park?*
- *What if the person is only sick (not dying)?*
- *If you decide to let emergency vehicles in the park, how do you define an emergency vehicle?*

**4. Two police cars are chasing a suspected bank robber. If one officer cuts through the park, she can trap the suspect's car between the patrol cars.**

- *Will you allow the police car to drive through the park?*
- *Does it matter if the bank robbers are armed and dangerous?*
- *What if the bank robbers had already shot an innocent bystander?*
- *Would it make any difference if this were the only opportunity for the police to catch the robber?*
- *Will small children be aware of the possibility of a police car speeding through the park?*
- *If you allowed emergency vehicles in the last example, does a police car qualify as an emergency vehicle? Why or why not?*

**5. Some of the children who visit the park want to ride their bicycles there.**

- *Will you allow the children to ride their bicycles in the park? Why or why not?*
- *Is a bicycle a vehicle?*
- *Does it matter if the children used their bicycles as transportation to the park?*
- *Does it matter if there are special bike paths in the park?*
- *Would you allow skateboards, rollerblades, or scooters?*

**6. Mr. Thomas wants to take his baby to the park in a baby stroller.**

- *Will you allow the baby stroller in the park? Why or why not?*
- *Is a stroller a vehicle?*
- *How would parents with small children get to the park if they were prohibited from using a stroller?*
- *Is it fair to prohibit people with small children from bringing a stroller to the park?*

**7. The government donates a military tank to the city. It is to be placed in the park as a monument to the town's veterans who died in a war.**

- *Will you allow the tank in the park?*
- *In normal use, a tank is a vehicle. Is it still a vehicle when it is a monument?*

**8. Takisha likes to go to the park with her friends. Takisha uses a wheelchair that has a motor.**

- *Will you allow the wheelchair in the park?*
- *Is a motorized wheelchair a vehicle?*

- *Are there laws that protect a person's right to take a wheelchair into the park?*

**NOTE:** *The Americans with Disabilities Act protects the rights of a person in a wheelchair to have access to a public park.*

**7**

Lead a discussion about the differences that came up when students talked about their decisions and reasons for each scenario. Ask students why they think those differences occur.

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**PART THREE: REWRITING THE LAW (15 minutes)****1**

Ask the students the following questions:

- Is the law clear as it is written?
- Does it need to be rewritten?
- What needs to be changed?
- How should “emergency” situations be provided for in the law? Who should decide what constitutes an emergency?
- What is the appropriate penalty for violating this law?
- Should the penalty be written into the law?
  - ✓ What are the benefits, if any, to putting the penalty in writing?
  - ✓ What are the downsides, if any, to putting the penalty in writing?

**2**

Work with a partner to rewrite the law. Share your new version of the law with others. Which is the best version? Why?

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**PART FOUR: SUMMARY (10 minutes)****1**

Ask students the following questions:

- Has the rewritten law eliminated all of the problems? Look back at each of the cases on Handout 2 and discuss any potential problems that could still arise even though the law has been rewritten.
- Should a law's intent be considered when interpreting what it means? Explain.
- If you think a local ordinance should be re-written, what steps can you take to make it happen? Whom should you contact? What if you wanted to change a state or national law? What steps can you take and whom should you contact? (If students do not know these answers, you or the Community Resource Person should try to give them the information they need.)
- Do youth courts take the intent of the law into account when they make decisions? Should they? How can the decision-making process be revised to consider the intent behind the laws?
- How can we use the information that we learned in today's lesson?

**2**

Thank students and the community resource person(s) for their participation.

## HANDOUT 1

### NO VEHICLES IN THE PARK

Washington has a lovely, quiet park right in the center of the city. The city council wants to make sure that the park stays safe and unpolluted. The members do not want the park disturbed by city noise. In the park you can find grass, trees, flowers, playgrounds, a road, and picnic areas. To make sure that the park stays this way, the city council passes a law.

At all entrances to the park the following sign is posted:

**NO VEHICLES IN THE PARK**

## HANDOUT 2

### WHO CAN GO IN THE PARK?

**1. Mario Velazquez lives on one side of town and works on the other. He will save 10 minutes if he drives through the park.**

- What does the law say about whether this vehicle would be allowed in the park?
- Do you think this scenario violates the intent of the law?
- Will you allow the vehicle in the park? Why or why not?
- What alternative solutions can you suggest?

**2. There are many trash barrels in the park. People put litter there to help keep the park clean. The sanitation department wants to go in to collect the trash.**

- What does the law say about whether this vehicle would be allowed in the park?
- Do you think this scenario violates the intent of the law?
- Will you allow the vehicle in the park? Why or why not?
- What alternative solutions can you suggest?

**3. An ambulance with a seriously injured victim of a car accident needs to get to the hospital quickly. The shortest route is through the park.**

- What does the law say about whether this vehicle would be allowed in the park?
- Do you think this scenario violates the intent of the law?
- Will you allow the vehicle in the park? Why or why not?
- What alternative solutions can you suggest?

**4. Two police cars are chasing a suspected bank robber. If one officer cuts through the park, she can trap the suspect's car between the patrol cars.**

- What does the law say about whether this vehicle would be allowed in the park?
- Do you think this scenario violates the intent of the law?
- Will you allow the vehicle in the park? Why or why not?
- What alternative solutions can you suggest?

**HANDOUT 2, continued****5. Some of the children who visit the park want to ride their bicycles there.**

- What does the law say about whether this vehicle would be allowed in the park?
- Do you think this scenario violates the intent of the law?
- Will you allow the vehicle in the park? Why or why not?
- What alternative solutions can you suggest?

**6. Mr. Thomas wants to take his baby to the park in a baby stroller.**

- What does the law say about whether this vehicle would be allowed in the park?
- Do you think this scenario violates the intent of the law?
- Will you allow the vehicle in the park? Why or why not?
- What alternative solutions can you suggest?

**7. The government donates a military tank to the city. It is to be placed in the park as a monument to the town's veterans who died in a war.**

- What does the law say about whether this vehicle would be allowed in the park?
- Do you think this scenario violates the intent of the law?
- Will you allow the vehicle in the park? Why or why not?
- What alternative solutions can you suggest?

**8. Takisha likes to go to the park with her friends. Takisha uses a wheelchair that has a motor.**

- What does the law say about whether this vehicle would be allowed in the park?
- Do you think this scenario violates the intent of the law?
- Will you allow the vehicle in the park? Why or why not?
- What alternative solutions can you suggest?

**TRANSPARENCY OR POSTER**  
**WHO CAN GO TO THE PARK?**  
**STUDENT ANSWER GRID**

Case	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E	Group F	Group G
Commuter							
Trash Trucks							
Ambulances							
Police Cars							
Bicycles							
Baby Strollers							
Tank							
Wheelchair							