

# LAWS ARE BASED ON VALUES

#### **OUTCOMES**

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

- Identify values held by different persons
- Examine differing values
- Discuss how society's laws are based on values

#### **MATERIALS NEEDED**

- Chalkboard/ flip chart
- Chalk/markers

### **HANDOUT**

Laws are Based on Values

#### PREPARING TO TEACH THIS LESSON

- Write up and post the lesson objectives
- Copy handouts and prepare all materials
- If you do not already know, find out about local curfews, school dress codes, state requirements for compulsory school attendance and whether your state allows for the death penalty.

### **COMMUNITY RESOURCE PEOPLE**

Invite a lawmaker from the local, state, or national legislature who can discuss how laws are made reflecting a variety of values. 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.

# PART ONE: WHAT ARE VALUES? (50 minutes)



Review lesson outcomes with students. Introduce the Community Resource Person, if one is assisting you today.

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Write the word "value" on the chalkboard or flip chart. Ask students to define it. Record student answers. Ask the following questions to spark a thorough discussion (especially if students have trouble coming up with a definition):

- Is it what something costs?
- Can it be something that has no price?

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Have students give the value of some things they own or have at their homes. (Examples: sports jacket, bike, TV, etc.)



Tell students that there is another meaning for the word "value." A "value" is also a standard or a strongly held belief upon which you base your actions or decisions. Your family, church, and other influences in your life set these standards. Ask the students if they can identify any actions that they take that are based on their values.

(Examples: do not lie, respect your grandmother, get a good education, etc.)



Ask the students if people have different values. Have them give examples. (Examples: going or not going to church, having or not having an abortion, etc.)

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Distribute "Handout 1: Laws are Based on Values," which can be found at the end of



this lesson plan.

Read it aloud. Give students a few minutes to think about their answers, then have them mark "yes" or "no" on the handout.

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Invite students to pick one partner and to sit next to that person. (Encourage them to pick someone across the room so they will have the chance to stretch their legs.) Students should take eight minutes to discuss their Handout 1 and answers with their partner. Write the ending time on the chalkboard or flipchart paper. You and the Community Resource Person, (if one is present,) should circulate around the room to listen to their discussions. Give a one-minute warning when time is nearly up.

Read each question and have the students take a position by a show of hands. Tell those who answer "yes" to raise their hands. Tell those who answer "no" to point their thumbs down. After each question, ask a few students to share the reasons for their answer with the class. Use the discussion points that follow only if students do not raise them or if you want to clarify any points.

## 1. Do you think students should be home early on school nights?

What values do curfews reflect? Do you share these values? Explain why or why not. Discuss whether there is a curfew law in your city. Discuss the meaning of a "court ordered curfew."

### 2. Do you think students should be able to wear anything they want to school?

What values do dress codes reflect? Do you share these values? Explain why or why not.

Dress and grooming are normally the responsibility of students and parents. However, students are expected to be dressed appropriately as determined by school officials in accordance with community standards. Students should be reasonably neat and clean while at school. Courts have generally allowed restrictions to be placed on students where school officials have been able to show that the dress or grooming of a student:

- a. Presents an obvious health or safety hazard in the school;
- b. Is disruptive to the educational process;
- c. Is disruptive in the school or classroom; or
- d. Is contrary to a reasonable requirement of a course or school activity.

# 3. Would you be a passenger in a plane piloted by a woman?

What values do laws against gender discrimination reflect? Do you share these



values? Explain why or why not.

The decision to ride in the plane would be a personal choice and not legally considered to be gender discrimination unless the airline denied a woman a job as a pilot because of her gender.

### 4. Do you approve of a men having more than one wife?

What values do restrictions on marriage reflect? Do you share these values? Explain why or why not.

Bigamy is a crime in every state of the United States. State marriage and divorce laws reflect our values supporting monogamous relationships and the sanctity of the nuclear family. Do you know of other cultures where the laws support or allow multiple spouses?

# 5. Do you think anyone over the age of 21 should have the right to own a gun?

What values do restrictions on gun ownership reflect? Do you share these values? Explain why or why not.

The issue of gun control versus the right to bear arms is very controversial. Many argue that adults should have the right to own guns either for their own protection or enjoyment (e.g., hunting or target practice) and that this right should not be taken away from law-abiding citizens. Others argue that the availability of guns to all people contributes to a more violent society.

# 6. Would you allow people to say anything they want? Anywhere they want to?

What values do protections for free speech reflect? Do you share these values? Explain why or why not.

The First Amendment generally guarantees freedom of speech unless the speech is obscene, defamatory or threatening. Some would argue that there should be more restrictions on expression because of the overly violent and sexual nature of some speech. Ask students when and where they would regulate freedom of speech (e.g., no loud speaker in a hospital zone).

**NOTE:** The First Amendment protects against government (not private) limits on speech. Also, while government is usually not allowed to censor the content of speech, government can make reasonable regulations that deal with the time, place and manner in which individuals express themselves.

## 7. Do you think having an education is important?

What values do compulsory (required) education reflect? Do you share these values? Explain why or why not.



Every child who is living within a state and is between the ages of six and twenty-one (or younger or older as specified by state law) and not a graduate of high school has the right to an education provided at the state's expense. However, there is no right to free education beyond high school. In addition, all states have compulsory attendance laws that mandate that all children between the ages of six and sixteen (or younger or older according to state law) must attend school. Many view a strong education system as a key component of equal opportunity in our society.

# 8. Would you support the death penalty by electric chair for someone who killed your sister?

What values does the death penalty reflect? Do you share these values? Explain why or why not.

The most controversial form of sentencing is the death penalty. At the time of this publication, 39 states have laws that authorize capital punishment in certain cases. To check for updates or to learn whether your state allows it, go to: www.deathpenaltyinfo.org.

Some of the values involved in approving capital punishment are: the sanctity and value of the victim's life; the impact on the victim's family; the need to deter crime; the need to hold the killer accountable for his/her actions; and the need to make society safe and civilized. Some of the values involved in disapproving of the use of capital punishment are: that it fails to deter other murders; that life is sacred and the use of capital punishment violates that tenet; that legal appeals in capital cases involve great delay and expense; and that the death penalty is cruel and unusual punishment.

# 9. Would you approve of the death penalty if a fifteen-year old kills a friend during an argument?

The Supreme Court ruled in 2005 that it is cruel and unusual punishment (and unconstitutional) to impose the death penalty for those who had committed their crimes before the age of 18. The case was <u>Roper v. Simmons</u>, No. 03-0633. For the values involved, see answers from 8 above. To see the Court's reasons, go to: <u>www.oyez.com</u> and type "Roper" in the search engine box.

# 10. Do you think it is okay for your parents to punish you any way they want if you do something wrong?

What values do laws against child abuse and neglect reflect? Do you share these values? Explain why or why not.

All states have laws that protect children from neglect and abuse. The legal definition of child abuse includes physical abuse, abandonment, and failure to provide adequate support or care.

Some of the values involved in allowing parents the right to choose any method of punishment are:



the parents know what works and what does not for their children; family matters are private and should be free from government interference; family values and traditions differ; and interfering in family matters strains the relationship among all family members.

Some of the values involved in not allowing parents the right to choose any method of punishment are: children have basic human rights that must be protected by the government; violence breeds violence and this cycle must be broken to save future children; and parents have no intrinsic right to treat children in a manner that is harmful.



Ask students if law addresses any of these values. If so, ask them what they think the laws are.

# PART TWO: SUMMARY (5 minutes)



Ask students:

- Should people have different values?
- Should everyone be alike?
- What is good about having different values? How is it sometimes a problem?



Brainstorm other laws that are based on values. Discuss the values involved.

(Examples: no smoking, drinking age, environmental laws, NC-17 movies and magazines, laws regulating abortion, bicycle helmets, recycling laws, animal protection laws, etc.)



If a Community Resource Person is helping with class, ask him or her to discuss what happens when lawmakers with different values disagree.

Is this the best way to makes laws for our community or our country? How do lawmakers protect values and concerns of people who hold view not shared by the majority of lawmakers?

What role to courts play in this process of protecting the values of people?





Have each student to tell at least two of their neighbors one thing that he or she learned during the class.



Thank the students and the Community Resource Person for their participation.



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# HANDOUT LAWS ARE BASED ON VALUES

- 1. Do you think that students should be at home early on school nights? Why or why not?
- 2. Do you think students should be able to wear anything they want to school? Why or why not?
- 3. Would you be a passenger in an airplane piloted by a woman? Why or why not?
- 4. Do you approve of a man having more than one wife? Why or why not?
- 5. Do you think that anyone over the age of 21 should have the right to own a gun? Why or why not?
- 6. Would you allow people to say anything they want? Anywhere they want to? Why or why not?
- 7. Do you think having an education is important? Why or why not?
- 8. Would you approve of the death penalty by electric chair for someone who killed your sister? Why or why not?
- 9. Would you approve of the death penalty if a 15-year old kills a friend during an argument? Why or why not?
- 10.Do you think it is okay for your parents to punish you any way they want if you do something wrong? Why or why not?



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