

# CHILDREN'S ASSEMBLY – SESSION PLAN

**SPRING REBELLION, CARLTON GARDENS MELBOURNE, 12/10/2019**

Materials developed by The Philosophy Club: [www.ThePhilosophyClub.com.au](http://www.ThePhilosophyClub.com.au)

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**At the beginning of the workshop, invite parents – if they wish – to add their contact details to our contacts sheet so they can stay in the loop about the progress of this initiative.**

**2:00pm** *Session begins. Children begin to assemble all together in one space.*

**2:05pm** *MC addresses the full Assembly:*

**Welcome to our Children's Assembly!**

**This Children's Assembly is modelled on a special kind of meeting called a People's Assembly. It's a democratic meeting, so we're all going to be listening carefully to what each other is saying.**

**Democracy isn't just about voting. It's also about making decisions together. We're all participating. That's what we mean when we talk about 'participatory democracy'. And People's Assemblies are a way of achieving participatory democracy.**

**What makes *this* People's Assembly special is that it's designed for children aged 8 and up. We'll be using language and ideas suitable for that age group, but if you belong to a different age group, you're still welcome to be here!**

**This session will run until 3:30pm.**

**We're going to begin with an activity in small groups, with about ten kids per group.**

**We'll be using these hand signals to show agreement: 'jazz hands' pointing up (high) for 'I agree'; pointing down (low) for 'I disagree'; pointing out (shoulder height) for 'uncertain' or 'I don't mind'.**

**Let's practice! I'm going to say some things, and you can use the hand gestures to show how you feel – agree, disagree, or somewhere in between:**

*(After each statement, watch for responses – do kids understand the hand gestures?)*

- **"Vegemite should be banned."** *(Watch for responses)*
- **"Kids should be allowed to stay up late."** *(Watch for responses)*
- **"Schools should close on sunny days so we can play outside all day."** *(Watch for responses)*

**2:10** *Divide into break-out groups, about ten kids per group.  
Issue instructions on where to go, and who will be helping/facilitating.*

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*The following takes place in the break-out groups:*

**2:15** *Run a quick warm-up game. (Game options to be explained prior to the session beginning.)*

**2:20** *Facilitator and participants introduce themselves.*

*Suggested manner of introduction: Go round the circle and each person says their name, their age, and a sound that they like to hear – e.g. raindrops on the roof, popcorn popping, etc.*

**2:22** *Facilitator's introduction:*

**Today we're going to be *deliberating* together. Deliberating means carefully considering and discussing things.**

**The things we'll be deliberating about today are real-life issues affecting us here in Victoria: issues that affect people, our society, and other living things in our natural environment.**

**These are issues that our State Government needs to make decisions about, and the Government Ministers need your help to make the best decisions.**

**So we're going to take some time today to think together about which decisions YOU think the Government should make. And then we can let the Ministers know YOUR views, and what advice YOU are offering to help them make the best decisions.**

**You're going to be deciding whether particular ideas should get a RED LIGHT or a GREEN LIGHT.**

**Red light means STOP. The Government should STOP or PREVENT this from happening.**

**Green light means GO. The Government should GO AHEAD with this. The Government should PROTECT it..... RESTORE it.... or PROVIDE MONEY to make it happen.**

**Amber light means UNDECIDED: We need to discuss this further before making a decision.**

**Now we're going to split up into four small groups (or pairs, if the group is small) to think about different ideas. Have a talk with your partner/group and try to decide: Should the idea you're given get the RED LIGHT, the GREEN LIGHT or the AMBER LIGHT?**

*Facilitator: For efficiency, indicate how to divide the group into four pairs/subgroups (i.e. who teams up with whom).*

- 2:25** *Facilitator: **hand out one issue card to each pair/subgroup.** In total, there should be four issue cards distributed across your break-out group. (Note that other break-out groups will have a different set of cards. See Appendix for the content of all eight issue cards.)*

***Allow five minutes deliberation time in pairs/subgroups.***

*After a couple of minutes, offer a time prompt ('a couple more minutes') and ask the children to appoint someone to be their spokesperson and report back to the break-out group.*

- 2:30** ***Reconvene group and ensure the four spokespeople are ready to report.***

**I'd like to go around the group and hear back from each of our spokespeople. When it's your turn to report back, here's what I want you to do:**

- **Read aloud your 'issue' and the 'introduction' (printed in bold type on your card).**
- **Place your card under the coloured light you've chosen.**
- **Give your reasons for why you decided to place it there.**

**Everyone else: please listen quietly – but you can use the hand gestures to show if you agree, disagree, or somewhere in between.**

*Allow five minutes total for all spokespeople to report back. Encourage hand gestures in response, but **do not invite group discussion until after all spokespeople have completed the steps above!***

**2:35    Group discussion of controversies, counter-arguments and rebuttals**

*Allow ten minutes for group discussion (with your group of approx. ten participants).*

*Facilitator will need to run this in a tightly structured way since time is short.*

*Begin with an issue that was hard to decide (e.g. placed under Amber light). Try to address the most controversial issue/s in the ten minutes available.*

*Elicit arguments and counter-arguments. Allow the 'right of reply'.*

**2:45 pm    Run a quick game** (Game options to be explained prior to the session beginning.)

**2:50 pm    Thank participants, and move everyone to the full Assembly area.**

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*The following takes place in the full Assembly:*

**2:55pm    MC reconvenes the full Assembly.**

*Facilitators of break-out groups each speak in turn.*

- *Facilitator of break-out group (1) reports back briefly on a single issue and gets a child to place the relevant card on the big traffic lights (Red, Amber or Green) and re-state their reason/s.*
- *Facilitator of break-out group (2) reports back briefly on a single issue (that hasn't been mentioned yet) and gets a child to place the relevant card on the big traffic lights (Red, Amber or Green) and re-state their reason/s.*
- *...etc... Cycle around the break-out groups until all eight issues have been stated, cards have been placed, and reasons given.*

**3:05pm    Full Assembly discusses controversial issues.**

*Allow 20 minutes to discuss controversial issues in the full Children's Assembly.*

*Tackle 'Amber light' issues first.*

*Encourage hand gestures to show agreement, disagreement or 'in between'.*

**3:25pm    Wrap-up:**

- **Summary**
- **Next steps** (possible submission to Parliament)
- **Closing reflections** (invite final thoughts?)
- **Contacts sheet:** Check that parents have had the opportunity to add their details to our contacts sheet so they can stay in the loop about the progress of this initiative.

**3:30 pm    Thanks & session ends.**