Meerilinga™
promoting positive childhoods

A Rights based approach in Early Childhood Education and Care

TEACHING GUIDE AND LESSON PLAN

CONTENTS

The Rights of the Child, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ensure that all children are treated with dignity and respect.

Key rights include:

- *Right to survival and development* – access to food, shelter, healthcare, and education.
- *Right to protection* – from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence.
- *Right to participation* – to express opinions and be heard in matters affecting them.
- *Right to non-discrimination* – all children have equal rights regardless of race, gender, or background.

These rights aim to ensure children's well- being and full potential in a safe, supportive environment.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

"Learning our rights-together" offers simple, practical images and text to help young children begin to understand their rights through shared reading and guided conversations. Using "Learning about our rights- together", educators can gently introduce important ideas about safety, kindness, and being heard, all while supporting emotional and social development.

The rights within the book have been collated and collected by Educators using the children of Meerilinga's voices. We found these rights resonated and were important to the children within our service between the ages of two-five years old.

Here's how educators can frame these discussions for little learners:

Empowerment Through Knowledge;
What to teach: Children have the right to be safe, to learn, to be cared for, and to be listened to.
How to say it: "This book tells us that everyone has the right to be safe and cared for. Did you know *you* have these rights too?"

Promoting Self-Confidence
What to teach: Knowing they have rights helps children feel important and valued.
How to say it: "When you tell me how you feel, I listen. That's because you have the right to be heard." "Your ideas are special. What would you like to tell the class today?"

Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment
What to teach: Everyone has the right to feel safe and cared for at home, school, and everywhere.
How to say it: "It's our job to keep each other safe. What are some ways we do that in our classroom?" "If someone is hurt or scared, what can we do to help them feel better, who can we talk too?"

Encouraging Advocacy (in early forms)
What to teach: Children can speak up for themselves and others, even in small ways.
How to say it: "If you see someone being left out, what can you do?" "You can always tell a teacher if something doesn't feel right."

By using simple language, engaging images, and relatable stories, educators can plant the seeds of rights-based understanding in young children. These early conversations not only teach

LESSON PLAN, 2-5 Year Olds
"I Belong, I Matter"

Lesson Plan: "I Belong, I Matter!"

Age Group: 2–5 years
Duration: 30–40 minutes (split into short sessions throughout routines)
Theme: Children's Rights – Feeling Safe, Loved, and Heard
Teaching Style: Storytime + Play + Music + Art
Core Concepts Introduced:

- I have people who care for me.
- I can play and learn.
- I can be safe.
- I can say how I feel.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the lesson, children will:

- Recognise that they are important and cared for.
- Express simple needs and feelings (e.g., "I need help," "I feel happy").
- Begin to understand fairness and kindness.
- Identify basic "rights" using child-centered language.
- Identify our safe hand network, the 5 people we trust to take responsibility for our rights.

Materials Needed:

- Storybook, "Learning about our Rights-Together" Meerilinga Version
- Emotion picture cards
- Crayons, markers, big paper/floor books
- "Five people I trust" template. Appendix 1

Key Terms in Child-Friendly Language:

Right	Simple Phrase
Right to be safe	"I can be safe."
Right to play	"I can play and have fun."
Right to be heard	"I can say what I feel."
Right to learn	"I can learn and grow."

Story Time (5–7 minutes)

Book Suggestions:

- *"Learning about our rights-Together" Meerilinga*
- *"When I'm feeling.." Series*
- *Emotional Flash Cards*

While Reading:

- Pause to point at pictures.
- Act out small emotions or actions.
- Ask the children why they think they feel this emotion.

Yarning Circle: "My Rights" (5 minutes)

Use simple picture cards (or a felt board):

- "I can eat when I'm hungry."
- "I can play with friends."
- "I can learn things.
- "I can say what I feel."
- "Someone loves me."

Encourage children point, choose, or say "yes" or "no" with thumbs up/down.

Using emotion flash cards during sessions gives the children faces to identify with.
Discussions were initiated, why could they be feeling this way, how could we help them, who could we talk too?

Below: Child Image, "I am happy when I'm with my friends".

Puppet Play: "What's Kind?" (5–7 minutes)

Use stuffed animals or puppets in short, simple scenes:
Example:

- One puppet takes all the blocks. The other is sad.

Ask: "Was that kind?" "What should we do?"
Teach: "We share," "We listen," "We help each other."

Music & Movement (5 minutes)

"I Have a Voice" (to the tune of "Twinkle Twinkle"):
I have a voice and I can say,
What I feel and how I play.
I can eat and I can sleep,
I have toys that I can keep.
I am loved and I am strong,
I belong where I belong.

Art Activity: "This is Me!" (5–10 minutes)

Art Prompt:

Give each child a big sheet to draw their own face outline or body. Ask:

- "Draw what makes you feel happy, sad!"- discuss the emotions and what can cause these.
- "Draw who helps you feel safe."

Write children's voices on their page for display.

Extension for Parents:

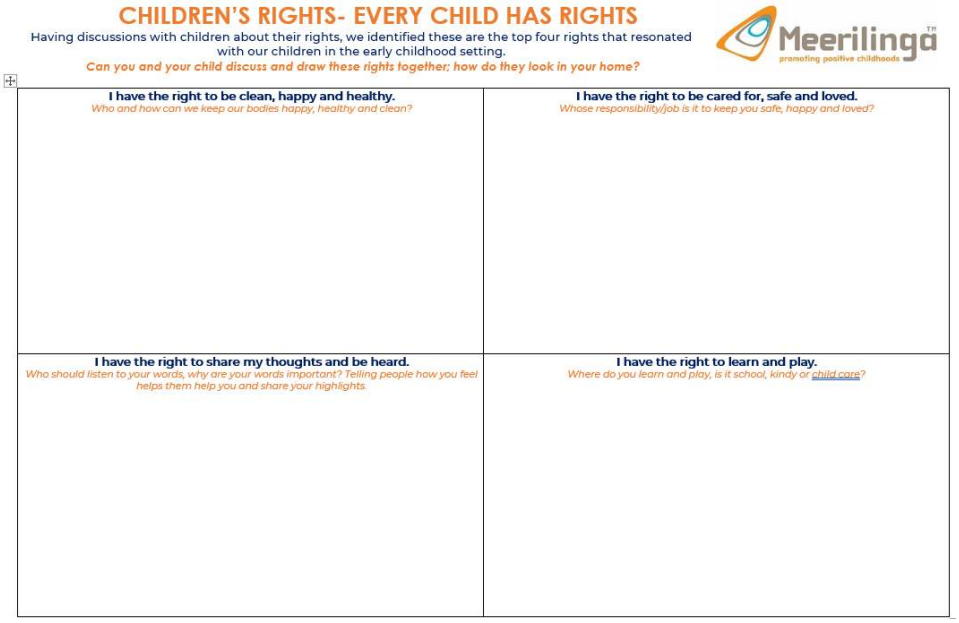
Send home a mini poster with:

- 4 child rights in picture form, appendix 2
- A suggestion for a bedtime conversation:

"What made you feel loved today?"

Tips for Educators:

- Keep explanations short and repeat often.
- Focus on empathy and feelings more than legal language.
- Use names and examples from the children's daily lives.
- Make the rights part of your classroom routine (e.g. "We listen because everyone has the right to be heard.")



CHILDREN'S RIGHTS- EVERY CHILD HAS RIGHTS

Having discussions with children about their rights, we identified these are the top four rights that resonated with our children in the early childhood setting.

Can you and your child discuss and draw these rights together; how do they look in your home?

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I have the right to be clean, happy and healthy. *Who and how can we keep our bodies happy, healthy and clean?*	**I have the right to be cared for, safe and loved.** *Whose responsibility/job is it to keep you safe, happy and loved?*
I have the right to share my thoughts and be heard. *Who should listen to your words, why are your words important? Telling people how you feel helps them help you and share your highlights.*	**I have the right to learn and play.** *Where do you learn and play, is it school, kindy or child care?*

Send home activity: Children's rights mini poster for families to complete with their child, initiating conversations about children's rights, drawing their child's image of how they interpret these rights. How do they look to them?
(See page 19)

Lesson Plan, 3-7 Year Olds
"My Rights, My Voice!"

Lesson Plan, "My Rights, My Voice"

Theme: Introduction to Children's Rights
(UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)
Age Group: 3–7 years
Duration: 1 hour (can be broken into 2–3 short sessions)
Focus Areas: Literacy, Social-Emotional Learning, Art
Book Basis: Use a picture book that introduces children's rights in simple language, e.g.:

- *"Learning our rights- together" Meerilinga Edition*
- *"We Are All Born Free"* (Amnesty International)
- *"For Every Child"* (UNICEF)
- Or a custom-made classroom book called *"My Rights, My Voice"*

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the lesson, children will be able to:

- Identify basic rights (e.g., the right to play, learn, be safe, be heard).
- Express how it feels when their rights are respected.
- Recognize that all children everywhere have the same rights.
- Practice empathy and inclusion.
- Identify our safe hand network, the 5 people we trust to take responsibility for our rights.

Materials Needed:

- Storybook, "Learning about our Rights-Together" Meerilinga Version
- Storybook, "Its my body" Elise Gravel
- Large chart with simplified rights (UN Rights of the Child, Child Language)
- Drawing paper, markers, crayons
- "Five people I trust" template, appendix 2

Preparation:

- Pre-read the book and highlight key rights, that link to the children within the service.
- Create a "Rights Tree" or "Rights Wall" in the classroom that resonates with children of the classroom.

Lesson Steps:

Circle Time Introduction (10 minutes)

Talk:

"Today, we're going to learn about something very special – our rights! Rights are things that help us stay safe, happy, and grow strong."

Ask:

- "What do you think you need to feel and keep your body happy, healthy and safe?"
- "Do we know what kind and unkind behaviours are? Who should we talk to and what should we do if we feel people are not showing us kind safe behaviours?"
- "Do you think all children around the world need the same things?"
- "Do children of different ages need different things?"
- "Who can we talk too if we feel we aren't feeling safe and happy at school or home?"
- "Do you know who's job or responsibility it is to make sure you have your rights met?"

Action:

- Class brainstorm of their voices and input in mat session- read back daily see if children can think of new ones during the week to add and share in different sessions.
- Class limits poster, "What behaviours do we like in our class?" Encourage the children to advocate the ones that mean the most for them, create a display with their images and words for room reminders.

Story Time (15 minutes)

- Read Aloud: Storybook, "Learning about our Rights-Together"
- Stop and Discuss: After each page or key right:
- "Why do you think this right is important to you?"
- "How does this right keep our body safe, happy and healthy?"

Educators reading "Learning about our rights-Together" during yarning/ intentional mat sessions. Stopping, initiating conversations on their rights and feelings.

Below: Child image, "we have the right to have fun and not be hurt"

Explore the Rights (10 minutes)

Introduce the Rights Chart:

Use pictures and short phrases:

- "I have the right to a home"
- "I have the right to food and water"
- "I have the right to be heard"
- "I have the right to play and learn"

Art Project:

- "Draw Your Right" – Each child draws a picture of a right that matters to them.
- Add each drawing to the "Rights Wall" displays wall for families to sight. *(see practise examples)*

Role Play or Puppet Show:

Set up small scenarios:

- A child not getting a turn at play (Right to play)
- A child speaking up about feelings (Right to be heard)
- A friend sharing food (Right to be cared for)

Let children act out what *should* happen.

Discussion Topics:

- "Which right is your favourite?"
- "How can we help our friends feel safe and loved?"
- "Whose responsibility is it to make sure we have our rights met?"

Extension Activity (Optional for Home):

Send home a "Rights Passport" – a small booklet with 4–5 rights and space for drawings or notes from family discussions.

Notes for Educators:

- Use inclusive, culturally sensitive examples
- Revisit these rights regularly through classroom rules and routines
- Empower children to use their voices respectfully in class decisions

LINKS AND CONNECTIONS TO LEARNING OUTCOMES OF THE EYLF V2.0

By engaging and leading lesson plans supporting The Rights of the Child, Educators can link their experiences and child's learning to the following Early Years Learning outcomes, principals, and practise:

- Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity
- Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

EYLF Principles

- Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships:
  These lessons foster trust and safety as children express themselves through play and guided conversations.
- Partnerships with families:
  Home extension activities involve families in ongoing learning about children's rights.
- High expectations and equity:
  Every child's voice and perspective are valued, regardless of age or ability.
- Respect for diversity:
  The plan embraces each child's identity, voice, and experience of belonging.

EYLF Practices

- Holistic approaches:
  These lessons integrate emotional, social, cognitive, and language development through connected activities.
- Responsiveness to children:
  Children's ideas, feelings, and drawings guide ongoing conversations and learning opportunities.
- Learning through play:
  Puppet play, art, and music offer playful, meaningful ways to explore fairness, rights, and feelings.
- Intentional teaching:
  Educators plan and scaffold learning about empathy, safety, and belonging through guided dialogue and reflection.
- Learning environments:
  Visual displays (e.g., "Our Voice" board) reflect children's contributions and promote inclusion and agency.
- Assessment for learning:
  Observations of children's responses, drawings, and language can inform future planning.

LINKS AND CONNECTIONS TO NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS

By engaging and leading lesson plans supporting The Rights of the Child, Educators can link their experiences and child's learning to evidence the following Quality Area Standards:

QA 1.1.1- Approved learning framework; Curriculum decision making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.
QA 1.1.2- Child centred practise; Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, cultures, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
QA 1.2.1- Intentional teaching; Educators are deliberate purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.
QA 1.2.3- Child directed learning; Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.

QA- 2.1.2- Health practices and procedure; Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
QA 2.2.1- Supervision; At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
QA 2.2.3- Child protection; Management, Educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse and neglect.

QA 3.2.1- Inclusive environment; Outdoor and Indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation to engage every child in quality experiences.

QA 5.1.1- Positive educator- child relationships; Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel safe, secure, confident and included.
QA 5.1.2- Dignity and rights of the child; The dignity and rights of the child are maintained.
QA 5.2.1 Collaborative learning; Children are supported to collaborate, learn and help each other.
QA 5.2.2- Self regulation; Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviours of others and communicate effectively.

QA 6.1.2- Parent views are respected; The culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision making about their child's learning and well being.
QA 6.2.3- Community and Culture; The service builds relationships and engagement with its community.

(Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018)

LINKS AND CONNECTIONS TO THE NATIONAL CHILD SAFE PRINCIPALS

By engaging and leading lesson plans supporting The Rights of the Child, Educators can link their experiences and child's learning to evidence the following Child Safe Principals within practice:

Principal 1: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational, leadership, governance and culture

This resource will support you to embed a culture of safety and rights by making these concepts part of your everyday practice. The "Learning our rights-together" storybook and lesson plans reinforce that children's wellbeing is central to everything we do, not just in policies but in classroom routines, conversations and expectations. When children learn they are important, safe and heard, it builds a service wide culture that is grounded in child safety.

Principal 2: Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

By engaging children in mat sessions, conversations and sharing the book "Learning our rights-together" that supports child friendly language about children's rights supports their sense of inclusion and empowers them to feel heard in decisions that affect their world. Learning about their rights helps children recognise and respect both their own rights and those of others, fostering empathy, confidence, and a strong sense of belonging.

Principal 3: Families and community are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

Home extensions found in this teaching guide and lesson plans like the Rights Passport, suggested conversation starters, and safe hand networks will encourage families to continue rights-based learning at home. This creates a shared language of safety and strengthens the partnership between home and your service in protecting children's wellbeing.

Principal 4: Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and procedure.

Discussing children's rights in intentional teaching practices like the yarning moments and following the conversation starters from the resource guide on the belief all children, regardless of background, culture, or identity, have rights, fosters a sense of fairness, inclusion, and empathy. These meaningful discussions help embed the concept of rights for all into daily practice and encourage reflective thinking among children and educators, upholding and supporting evidence of equity and diverse needs are respected in our practice and policy.

Principal 5: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

The lesson plans “I belong I matter”, and “My rights, My voice” in the teaching guide support educators in helping children understand and advocate for the rights that matter to them. By embedding these practices, children are empowered to speak up for their own safety and wellbeing, as well as that of others. Ensuring that all people working with children are suitable and well-supported reinforces a strong culture of child safety, where respect, care, and protection are reflected in everyday practice and interactions.

Principal 7: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education.

By teaching children about their rights in classroom settings and embedding these into daily routines and practices, educators create a strong foundation for safety and respect. By using the “Learning our rights-together” and teaching guide supported by ongoing training, ensures staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness needed to keep children and young people safe. This also builds confidence in the child to speak up and know their rights and the adults’ responsibilities around them.

Principal 10: Policies and procedure document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

Following the lesson guide for the book “Learning our rights-together” teaching and embedding children’s rights into intentional teaching moments, yarning circles, daily conversations and sharing this learning with family and community, provides clear evidence that policies and procedures are actively supporting a child-safe environment. This approach shows how the organisation upholds safety, inclusion, and respect in daily practice, aligning with documented commitments to protect and empower all children and young people.

LINKS AND CONNECTIONS TO THEORISTS

By engaging and leading lesson plans supporting The Rights of the Child, Educators can link their experiences and child's learning to evidence the following Early Childhood Theorists within practice:

Lev Vygotsky: Sharing language as a tool for social development, Emphasising the importance of relationships and interactions between children and more knowledgeable adults and Educators.

By following the teaching plans, the experiences link to Lev Vygotsky's theory of using language as a tool for social development. Through meaningful conversations about rights, children engage in dialogue with educators, more knowledgeable adults, who guide their understanding and support their learning. These interactions strengthen relationships, promote trust, and help children develop socially, emotionally, and cognitively within a supportive and respectful environment.

Erikson: Understanding trust vs mistrust, Children are developing their sense of autonomy and independence, if encouraged children will become confident and secure.

Guiding and using the provided plans and resources links to Erikson's theory fostering trust, autonomy, and independence. When educators create safe, respectful environments where children's rights are acknowledged and valued, it builds a foundation of trust. Encouraging children to express their views and make choices helps them develop autonomy and confidence, leading to a stronger sense of identity and emotional security.

Bowlby: Attachment theory, treating children with compassion and empathy can help them view educators as a secure base, allowing them to explore their environment safely.

Teaching and learning about children's rights in the classroom supports Bowlby's Attachment Theory by promoting compassionate, respectful interactions that help children feel safe and valued. When educators treat children with empathy and uphold their rights, they become a secure base from which children can confidently explore their environment, form healthy relationships, and develop emotional resilience.

Bronfenbrenner: Ecological System Theory, Children's growth is influenced by a complex interplay of various system, each impact the child's experiences, behaviours, and development.

Guiding children in learning about children's rights supports Bronfenbrenner's theory by shaping positive relationships and environments around the child. It strengthens their immediate setting and encourages respect and support across families, communities, and systems, promoting healthy development and wellbeing.

Malaguzzi: Reggio Emilia, Children have endless ways to express themselves- They have a hundred languages.

Teaching and learning about children's rights links to Malaguzzi's Reggio Emilia philosophy by recognising that children have many ways "a hundred languages" to express their thoughts, feelings, and rights. By honouring their range of forms of expression, educators empower children to communicate their ideas, advocate for themselves, and actively participate in shaping their learning and environment

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

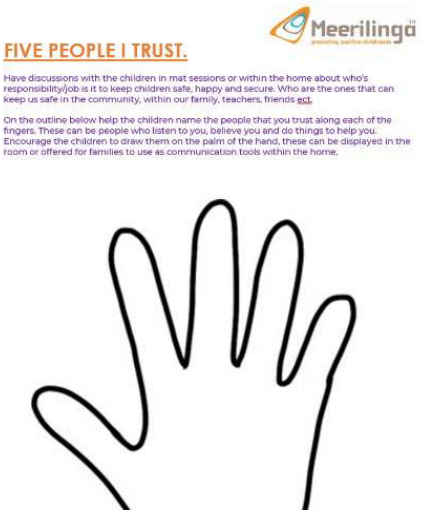
At Meerilinga Kingsley, this project began in our Pre-Kindy room as a learning inquiry into kind and unkind behaviours. Educators noticed that children were naturally curious about the concepts of fairness, emotions, and friendship. Through intentional teaching and child-led discussions, this initial exploration evolved into a deeper investigation into what it means to feel safe, happy, and healthy—core elements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Regular mat sessions are held where Educators actively listen and document children's voices—either through direct quotes, drawings, or visual cues—on a visible board or wall display.

These contributions are regularly revisited, valued, and embedded into daily routines, planning, and learning experiences, ensuring that children's perspectives inform classroom practice and foster a sense of belonging, agency, and respect.

Sorting activities with rights, help young children identify, sort, and reflect on their rights, with support from educators who scaffold thinking through visuals, open-ended questions, and modeling.

Through mat-time discussions about the people who help keep them safe, healthy, and happy, children begin to recognise and name their "safe people." These conversations build trust and support children in identifying who they can turn to for help.



Children then create a Safe Hand Network, drawing a hand and naming a trusted adult on each finger. This activity builds awareness of personal safety and can be shared with families to strengthen learning at home.

(Safe hands template, see page 20)

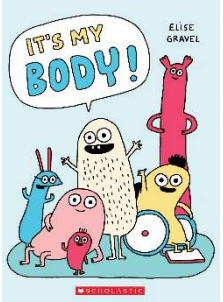
RESOURCES AND LINKS

Meerilinga;
"Learning about our Rights-Together".
meerilinga.org.au

The Feelings Series.. Trace Moroney
"When I'm feeling.."
Available at Kmart & Online

Child Friendly Posters and Information
Children's version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child | UNICEF

Behaviour/Emotion Flashcards & Sorting Games
Twinkl.com.au



"Its my body" Elise Gravel
Available at Kmart & Online

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS- EVERY CHILD HAS RIGHTS

Having discussions with children about their rights, we identified these are the top four rights that resonated with our children in the early childhood setting.

Can you and your child discuss and draw these rights together; how do they look in your home?

I have the right to be clean, happy and healthy. *Who and how can we keep our bodies happy, healthy and clean?*	**I have the right to be cared for, safe and loved.** *Who's responsibility/job is it to keep you safe, happy and loved?*
I have the right to share my thoughts and be heard. *Who should listen to your words, why are your words important? Telling people how you feel helps them help you and share your highlights.*	**I have the right to learn and play.** *Where do you learn and play, is it school, kindy or child care?*

FIVE PEOPLE I TRUST

Have discussions with the children in mat sessions or within the home about who's responsibility/job is to keep children safe, happy and secure. Who are the ones that can keep us safe in the community, within our family, teachers, friends etc.

On the outline below help the children name the people that you trust along each of the fingers. These can be people who listen to you, believe you and do things to help you.
Encourage the children to draw them on the palm of the hand, these can be displayed in the room or offered for families to use as communication tools within the home.