

Declarations of Interdependence Contest

Teacher's Guide

The following offers some guidance and optional tips for planning and carrying out the **Declarations of Interdependence Contest** project with your students. You are welcome to use whatever methods and considerations that best fit with your practice, your students, and your professional judgment.

Contents

1. Creating a Declaration of Interdependence as an Educational Activity: Why & Why Now?
2. What kind of class is this best suited for?
3. Considering how it fits with your standards and curriculum
4. Will you create a school-wide Declaration or classroom-level Declaration?
5. Who will create the Declaration?
6. Choosing a medium for your Declaration
7. How will your students create their Declaration?
8. Qualities of a Great Declaration
9. Individual Student Assessment (for your own purposes)
10. Adaptation / Special Needs

Attachments

Appendix 1: Interdependence Unit: Lessons

Appendix 2: Interdependence Unit Graphic Organizer

Appendix 3: Appreciating Interdependence Activity

Appendix 4: Teacher Notes Template for Chosen Medium

Appendix 5: Qualities of a Great Declaration

Appendix 6: Some Historical Examples

1. Creating a Declaration of Interdependence as an Educational Activity: Why & Why Now?

The Declarations of Interdependence contest affords your students a timely opportunity to reflect on relationships of mutual support and benefit and to express their understanding of those relationships in powerful ways. This theme of *interdependence*, although found in many disciplines and topics that students may work with in all grades, is presented here in an engaging and timely package.

The contest is timely because of the national celebration of the 250th anniversary of our nation’s Declaration of Independence. As the work of *independence* was the prelude to a much longer journey of learning how to make *interdependence* work, so the 250th celebration could be followed by an experience in exploring interdependence.

Authoring their Declaration together, students can take ownership of it, together, exemplifying the very theme they are speaking to. And that sense of responsibility is a powerful catalyst for learning.

2. What class(es) is this best suited for?

Elementary: Any general class, every grade level. The topic spans several subject areas and creating the Declaration can integrate a variety of skills.

Middle/Junior High and High Schools: The topic is interdisciplinary and the Declaration project could be “based” in any class, but social studies (civics / history / economics) and English/Language Arts might be the most natural “home base” for the project.

See (3) below for the range of curricular areas that the activity can touch on.

3. Considering How it Fits with your Standards & Curriculum

The following are some of the more obvious potential curricular connections to the theme. You may well see other connections.

English/Language Arts

- Reading: Skills of reading comprehension and interpretation would be needed if your students are to read materials with the intent of informing or inspiring them in the creation of their Declaration of Interdependence.
- Writing: Any writing included in their Declaration of Interdependence will require skills in composition and organization, word choice, grammar, punctuation, and more. Poetic forms will add another dimension.

Social Studies

- Civics: Civics offers abundant opportunity for reflection on interdependence between citizens at every level, and between communities, people of different backgrounds and perspectives, between states, regions, and nations.
- History: History provides many examples of how people and systems affect each other and can support or not support mutual advancement, and how recognition of interdependence, or a lack of recognition of interdependence, can affect the fates of societies.
- Economics: Economics can highlight the interdependence of people and resources within communities and nations, between nations, and across different kinds of systems, including natural systems.

Science

- Environment/Ecology: Ecological systems, in which we and our communities are nested on on which we depend, offer many examples of interdependence.

Arts

- Applying any of the arts, whether through written form, visual, dramatic, musical or other, to express the ideas of interdependence developed by the students
- Arts themselves may provide examples of interdependence—for example, how the members of a band or orchestra need and depend on each other.

4. School-Wide Declaration or Classroom-Level Declaration?

This is up to you and your school community to decide. Submissions from whole schools or from individual classes or even student organizations are eligible.

5. Who will create the Declaration?

This is up to you. You can involve all students in the activity, or just a smaller group (e.g., as an optional extra credit activity, or a school organization). If a whole-school Declaration will be created, you might consider selecting delegates from each class. Alternatively, you might find a way for all students in multiple classes to participate in creating a Declaration that will represent the whole school in your submission.

6. Choosing a Medium for Your Declaration

The Declaration of *I*ndependence is, as you know, a written document. For purposes of this Declarations contest, we are opening the media/formats up to a wider range of options, including:

- Written/Text

- Oral/Spoken
- Visual/Graphic
- Dramatic
- Musical

See **Appendix 4** for a planning template you could fill out for whichever medium you and your students choose.

A recent example of a group-created visual form of Declaration of Interdependence can be seen here: <https://cortada.com/art2026/ted-democracy-2026/>

7. How Will Your Students Create their Declaration?

This question involves development of the *content* to be included in the Declaration and *process* (what students are going to be doing, individually and together). This is up to you, the teachers, as lesson designers. However, we have developed the outline of several lessons (**Appendix 1, 2, and 3**) that could be used to help students work with the theme of interdependence.

Kinds of Interdependence Recognized in Your Declaration

In their Declarations, students can consider and express the theme of interdependence in any way they wish. Forms of interdependence that could be recognized in the Declaration could include but are not limited to:

- inter-personal interdependence—how we need, rely on, and help each other;
- community interdependence, whether “community” is the classroom, the school, neighborhood, town or city;
- inter-generational interdependence—how the generations, from our ancestors to our elders to youth of today and tomorrow need, rely on, and help each other;
- international interdependence—how nations need, rely on, and help each other;
- ecological interdependence—how we and systems in the natural world need and rely on each other;
- how difference and diversity of any kind is or could be a source of strength and resilience for all;
- how independence and interdependence relate to each other, their tension and/or mutual support.

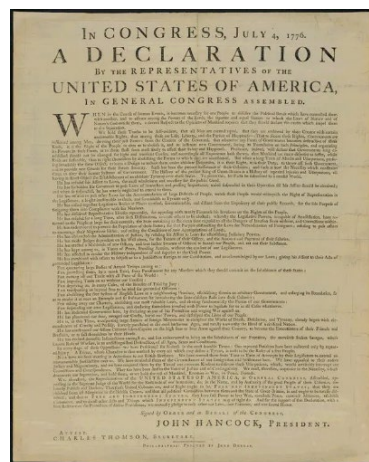
The Structure of the Declaration

There is no prescribed structure for your students’ Declaration—the actual statement being made. However, the Declaration of Independence offers one example of a structure, laid out in the following way:

1. It has an introduction, explaining the reason for the document;
2. It has a preamble, expressing core ideas and values;
3. It offers statement of concerns & grievances;
4. It has a conclusion—the Declaration itself.

Your students’ Declaration of *Interdependence* could have a similar structure, or it could have a very different kind of structure. And if it is created in a medium other than text, it might have a very different kind of structure.

Appendix 5 includes two historical examples of text-based Declarations of Interdependence that illustrate a different kind of structure.



8. Qualities of a Great Declaration (for purposes of this contest) (Repeated as Appendix 5)

The following are qualities that the review committee will look for in evaluating submissions. Some of these qualities will be evaluated based on what your students affirm in the submission (e.g., inclusivity and teamwork), while others will be evident in the Declaration that they’ve created.

Inclusivity and Teamwork: Everyone in the class or school (whoever is submitting the Declaration) had a voice and hand in contributing to it (this criterion to be self-evaluated)

Authenticity and Conviction: The Declaration isn’t just an abstract or objective statement but conveys that its authors truly appreciate, value, or desire what is being declared.

Clarity: The content is understandable by the audience without explanation.

Expansiveness: Shows or explores multiple dimensions or varieties of interdependence.

Illumination: Shows the reader or viewer something new; expands the way people think.

Evocativeness: Will get the reader or viewer to feel, to relate, and to see.

Inspiration: Gets people to feel inspired about what is or what could be.

Reflection-Provoking: Gets the reader or viewer to think about how they think, act, or relate.

Scientific & Historical Accuracy: Describes interdependence in ways that are true or ring true, and not in ways that are inaccurate or misleading.

Original: Work is original to the students to the greatest extent possible, minimizing the use of elements (e.g., quotes, images, etc.) created by others.

Presentation: Framed in a way that invites viewers to explore it and gain from it.

Technical Quality: Shows care put into details, such as form, conventions, spelling, etc.

9. Individual Student Assessment (for your own purposes)

As with any group activity, assessment of individual performance—if you choose to do that—takes special consideration. Participation, level of contribution, self-evaluation, and peer-evaluation are all possible things to assess and ways of assessing them.

10. Adaptation / Special Needs

As with any lesson or activity, you can adapt the chosen subject matter and process of participation to individual learner needs.

APPENDIX 1: Lessons Related to Interdependence Leading to Creation of Students’ Declaration

APPENDIX 2: Interdependence Graphic Organizer

APPENDIX 3: Appreciating Interdependence activity

APPENDIX 4: Teacher Notes Sheet for Chosen Medium

APPENDIX 5: Qualities of a Great Declaration

APPENDIX 6: Historical Examples of Declarations of Interdependence

APPENDIX 1. Optional Lesson Outlines

Interdependence (or “Inter-dependence”) Lesson A

(to be adapted as needed for grade level, curriculum, and learner supports)

See 1st Graphic Organizer in Appendix 2

Questions:

- How do things depend on other things (how are things inter-dependent?)
 - How do we depend on each other (how are we inter-dependent?)
1. Scales through which to answer the above:
 - In our families
 - In our classroom
 - Among friends
 - As a school
 - As a neighborhood, town, or city
 - As other kinds of communities in our lives (groups with shared interests, faith communities, etc.)
 - As a nation
 - As a group of nations
 - As all of humanity
 - As a living planet
 2. Dimensions (Ways) through which to view and answer the above (not every one may apply):
 - Socially
 - Emotionally / Psychologically
 - Politically
 - Economically
 - Environmentally (Ecologically)
 - Other

Interdependence (or “Inter-dependence”) Lesson B

(to be adapted as needed for grade level, curriculum, and learner supports)

See 2nd Graphic Organizer, Meeting Our Needs Together, in Appendix 2

Where is the interdependence in and around our own lives?

1. Draw **yourself** in the center circle
2. In each of the outer circles, write a kind of **need** that we have (for example, health; food; support; etc.)
3. Think / talk / share / *write in* **who** helps you meet those needs.

Interdependence Lesson B

Interdependence is something that we started exploring in Lesson 1. Building on that:

- What is good about our interdependence?
- What is challenging about our interdependence?
- How can we do better at being interdependent?
- What do we want to value and celebrate about interdependence?
- What we want to achieve with it?

Interdependence Lesson C: Appreciating Interdependence

See Appendix 3

Interdependence Lesson D:

Drafting a Declaration of Interdependence for the Contest

- In 2026, we celebrated the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.
- The Declaration of Independence is a reflection of values and a statement about freedom – a key guiding document that reminds us of why we are as a nation.
- Our nation won independence from England, and we accepted a new challenge: how to live and work together as a free nation, and eventually as a wider world.
- **Taking what we’ve learned and reflected on about *interdependence*, we are invited to draft a Declaration of Interdependence that can, like the Declaration of Independence, serve as a statement of our values and reminder of our ongoing work as citizens, communities, and a nation.**

Decisions & Questions (To be adapted by the teacher as needed)

Deciding on the Content and Medium

- What aspects of interdependence should we touch on in our Declaration?
- What medium do we want to use?

Deciding How to Create Our Declaration

- Who will create the Declaration?
- Based on the medium we chose, what elements should we include? How should we organize them?
- What resources will we need?
- Who should do what? How will we share in the work?
- How much time will we need to allow for creating our Declaration?

Creating the Best Declaration We Can

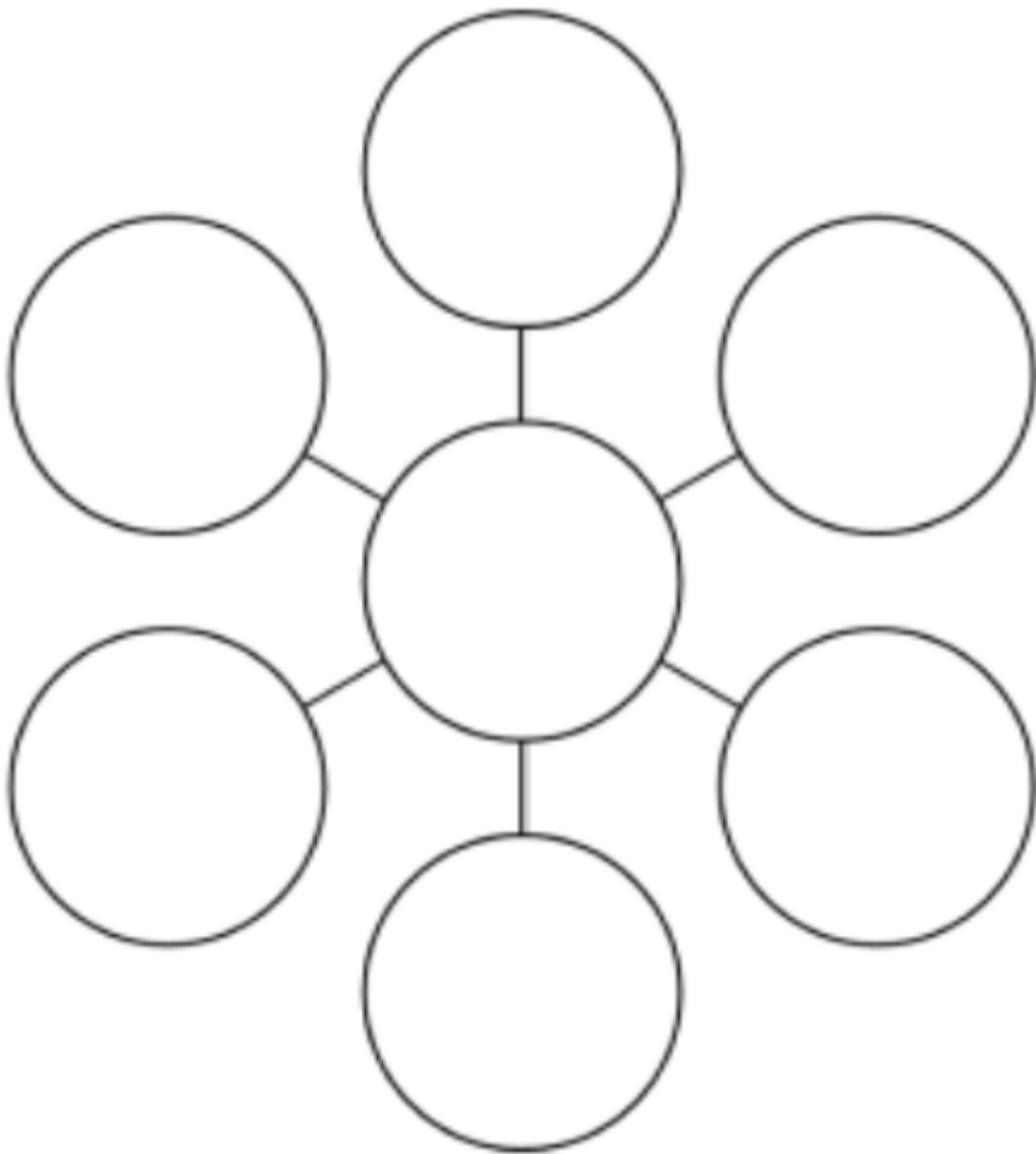
- Is everyone being allowed to contribute in our shared creation?
- Are we combining well our different ideas, perspectives, skills and strengths to demonstrate how we can use interdependence?
- Are we keeping the evaluation criteria in mind to help make sure we are creating the best Declaration we can?
- Are we working within the rules and guidelines of the contest?

APPENDIX 2: Interdependence Graphic Organizers

- 1. How Are We Interdependent? (Table)**
- 2. Meeting Our Needs, Together (Bubble Map)**

How are we interdependent...		
	Describe	Draw (On separate sheet if needed)
in our families		
among our friends		
as a class		
as a school		
as a neighborhood		
as a town or city		
as a nation		
as a family of nations, as all of humanity		
as a living planet		

Interdependence: Meeting Our Needs



Appendix 3: Appreciating Interdependence activity



© NASA / WILLIAM ANDERS

All of You on the Good Earth, Apollo 8, Rising Earth from the Moon, December 24, 1968

COMPASSION PAUSE: Appreciating Interdependence

Relevant Works: *All of You on the Good Earth, Apollo 8, 12/ 24/1968*, © NASA
Facilitation: Self-Guided
Provided in audio and text formats

During a later mission (Apollo 11 - 1969), Neil Armstrong descended towards the lunar surface. The success or failure of the first Moon landing depended on the skills, reactions and expertise of this one man. But Armstrong was always modest about the achievement, and he pointed instead to the thousands of people who had made the mission possible.

At its height, NASA estimates that a total of 400,000 people across the United States were involved in the Apollo programme. The number includes everyone from astronauts to mission controllers, contractors to caterers, engineers, scientists, nurses, doctors, mathematicians, cleaners, teachers, family...

1. Think of an event in your life such as an accomplishment or something that contributed or contributes to your well-being now (e.g. getting a job, earning a degree, learning a sport or playing a musical instrument, or even a more minor event). Start to consider all the people who contributed to this event or accomplishment. Try to list everyone who played a role, even a minor role. If there are people whose names you don't know, list them by their role, profession or some other designation. What pleasant or neutral sensations do you notice in your body? What emotions do you feel when you think of these individuals?
2. Now consider the people you listed. Who did they themselves depend on? Who did they need in order to be able to play the role they played in enabling your accomplishment? If there are people whose names you don't know, list them by their role, profession or some other designation. If there are groups of people, you can name those too.
3. Total up the number of people you come up with through this process.
4. Are you surprised by the number of people on whom this one event in your life depended? How many of these people were strangers or people you do not know very well?
5. What benefits might there be if we developed a greater appreciation of this type of interdependence?

This insight activity asks you to consider all of the people who were involved in helping you to achieve something significant in your life. If we look deeply at anything in our lives, we can begin to see a web of individuals who were involved in creating things that you value. Objects, food, drink, our homes all involve countless contributions by individuals who you may or may not meet. These people are connected to you, even though you do not know them personally. This connection can be a foundation of gratitude for others. Notice if thinking about this leads to a feeling of connection or appreciation of others. If it feels natural to do so, take a moment to send out a thought of gratitude for all who are helping you.

**Provided by the Shades of Compassion Foundation in collaboration with
Life University's Compassionate Integrity Training**

APPENDIX 4: Teacher Notes Sheet for Chosen Medium for the *Declaration*

FOR *WRITTEN/TEXT* MEDIUM OF DECLARATION

How to Create as a Group	Medium-Specific Quality Factors	Medium-Specific Assessment (if applicable)	Needs in terms of space, time, materials, and other staff support

FOR *ORAL/SPOKEN* MEDIUM OF DECLARATION

How to Create as a Group	Medium-Specific Quality Factors	Medium-Specific Assessment (if applicable)	Needs in terms of space, time, materials, and other staff support

FOR *VISUAL/GRAPHIC* MEDIUM OF DECLARATION

How to Create as a Group	Medium-Specific Quality Factors	Medium-Specific Assessment (if applicable)	Needs in terms of space, time, materials, and other staff support

Declarations of Interdependence – Teacher’s Guide

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FOR *DRAMATIC* MEDIUM OF DECLARATION

How to Create as a Group	Medium-Specific Quality Factors	Medium-Specific Assessment (if applicable)	Needs in terms of space, time, materials, and other staff support

FOR *MUSICAL* MEDIUM OF DECLARATION

How to Create as a Group	Medium-Specific Quality Factors	Medium-Specific Assessment (if applicable)	Needs in terms of space, time, materials, and other staff support

APPENDIX 5: Qualities of a Great Declaration

The following are qualities that the review committee will look for in evaluating submissions. Some of these qualities will be evaluated based on what your students affirm in the submission (e.g., inclusivity and teamwork), while others will be evident in the Declaration that they’ve created.

Don’t worry about maximizing every one of these qualities, however. We expect that submissions will be stronger in some ways than in other ways.

Inclusivity and Teamwork: Everyone in the class or school (whoever is submitting the Declaration) had a voice and hand in contributing to it (this criterion to be self-evaluated)

Authenticity and Personality: The Declaration isn’t just an abstract or objective statement but conveys that its authors truly appreciate, value, or desire what is being declared.

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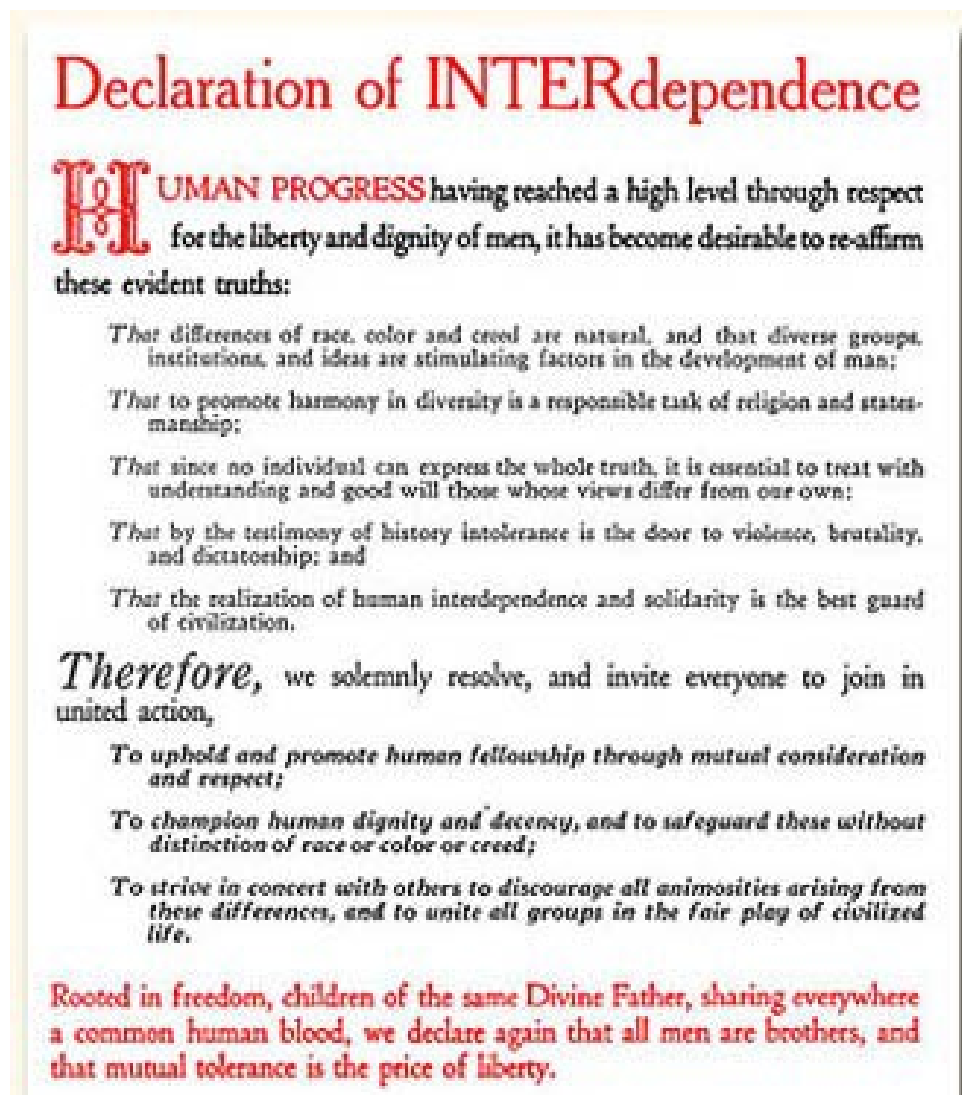
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Presentation: Framed in a way that invites viewers to explore it and gain from it.

Technical Quality: Shows care put into details, such as form, conventions, spelling, etc.

APPENDIX 6: Some Historical Examples

Below are examples of written Declarations of Interdependence created in the 1940s and 1970s, respectively. Note that these were written by adults. They are not necessarily offered as exemplars, and you shouldn't use these as models. They are meant only to give you an idea of how others have approached the content and structure of a Declaration of Interdependence.



Declaration of Interdependence

We the people, facing a world crisis, realize the imperative to reaffirm the truths that differences of age, color and belief are natural; that diverse groups, institutions and ideas should be viewed as stimulating elements for the creative development of all; and that to generate unity in diversity is the responsibility and challenge before women and men of every nation.

We therefore urge all to join in cooperative action —

- To inspire, release and coordinate our human and material resources;
- To nurture the will to live and thereby rescue the future from the angry condemnation of the past;
- To champion the uniqueness of the person, human dignity and universal rights;
- To develop a real sense of interdependence based on reciprocity;
- To assist other institutions in our society in working toward greater understanding of global problems;
- To insure that all factors of life are returned to balance, for the health and good of all;
- To strive together to discourage hostility, elusiveness and brute aggressiveness;
- To foster an enlightening synthesis through education, planning, human encounter and service.

Being sisters and brothers of a common origin, no longer sufficient unto ourselves, we hereby declare the supreme value of Interdependence as the door to our survival and fulfillment — for we the people shall kindle the torch of hope, shall link hands over the earth.