

## Introducing Children's Rights Issues

(Suitability: Adaptable for Children or Youth)

**Purpose:** The primary purpose of this section is to encourage students to participate in the National Child Day on-line initiative. This section provides several learning activities addressing five issues which focus on participation and protection (the questions will be launched on the site on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2000). Both content and participatory strategies can be effectively integrated into existing Social Studies or Language Arts curricula, although educators will need to make adaptations as appropriate to best suit their students learning needs, interests and abilities.

The questions are based on:

1. participation (e.g., expressing views, Article 12 of CRC)
2. anti-discrimination (e.g., ethnicity, disability, Article 2 of CRC)
3. anti-poverty (e.g., adequate resources, Articles 6, 27 of CRC)
4. non-violence (e.g., conflict resolutions, Article 19 of CRC )
5. environment (e.g., community, Canada, world, Article 29 of CRC)

**Participatory Strategies:** These strategies are especially appropriate when dealing with children's rights, when there can be many varying points of view on an issue, rather than one right answer:

1. Responsive Writing;
2. Class discussion;
3. Project Work; and
4. Role Play.

### 1. Responsive Writing

Depending on individual student preference and literacy skill level, responsive writing can involve short stories, simple sentences, point form, or poems.

Some different ways to help students get their responsive writing started are for them to use sentence starters such as:

I think . . .	I have decided . . .
I understand . . .	If I had to choose . . .
I am going to . . .	I care . . .
I am discovering . . .	I am learning . . .
I wonder . . .	The reason for . . .
I want to . . .	I need to . . .

### 2. Class Discussion

This strategy encourages participation by students responding to open-ended questions that are similar to the ones that will be posted on this web site. This strategy is fundamental to children's rights education, since it allows students to learn about their rights, as well as to examine and analyse issues for themselves. Class discussions will provide opportunities for students to discuss how they may like to

answer the questions found on the web site. This exercise will also develop group participation skills such as listening and speaking in turn, which are important for respecting other people's rights.

Please encourage your students to log-on to this web site once the discussion is complete so that the Government of Canada can hear from them.

(Please feel free to create your own questions around these 5 issues.)

**Questions Suitable for Teens:**

- What are some ways for youth to play meaningful roles in society?
- How might youth feel if treated unfairly or differently from others because of something like their age, skin colour, or choice of clothes?
- Is poverty a problem in your school or community? What do you see that indicates poverty?
- How might physical or verbal conflict hinder a person's learning?
- What sort of actions can we take to protect people, water, air, plants, and the earth from harm in our world?

**Questions Suitable for Pre-Teens:**

- Why is it important that your views be heard?
- What might be the effects of not having enough food, clothes, or a decent and safe place to live?
- How do you think students might feel if someone makes fun of them because of how they dress? Why is such treatment unfair?
- What problems might children have if they feel unsafe when at school?
- Who do you know helps to protect things in our environment, and what do they do?

**Questions Suitable for Children:**

- Why is it important that people listen to children's ideas?
- How might children feel if not allowed to play in a game at school because some thought they weren't so good in sports?
- What might happen to children who do not get enough food to eat, a home to live in, or clothes to wear?
- What might you do with your classmates and teacher to help keep the classroom safe?
- What do you think needs to be done to protect what lives in this world?

3. Project work

This strategy encourages participation by students exploring and researching the issues presented on this site so that they are better able to express their thoughts and ideas when answering the questions on this site. Projects are useful for teaching and learning about children's rights and for helping students to see links between their school studies and the world beyond school. In addition, projects give students practice at expressing their own findings and views on issues -- a right accorded to all children and youth in the CRC, and an important skill for promoting and advocating human rights.

Projects are also useful because student work can be exhibited in the school to communicate children's rights to other students, or a project can involve a school-wide event;

- the school chooses a rights-related theme, and creates a collaborative bulletin board display of student artwork as well as their responses to the questions on this site
- the school organizes a National Child Day event such as lunchtime fundraiser for a local

children's charity or non-profit organization, and perhaps, participating in this online initiative becomes a school-wide event

- the school organizes a United Nations General Assembly Session of their own on a particular right or issue and classes represent country leaders; concluding the Session could involve some encouraging words to students on taking part in this online opportunity to feed into a real United Nations meeting

#### 4. Role Play

This strategy encourages participation by students responding to open-ended questions about the issues found in this web site through playing a role and trying to take the perspectives of others. Younger students, for example, can listen to a story and then respond to questions by playing imaginary roles with or without hand puppets; in doing so students can act out alternative ways of interpreting a scene, a situation, or a character. Older students, for example, can improvise in order to bring to life events which are unfamiliar to them.

A role play will enable children and youth to explore the issues in more depth, and thus, they may be better able to respond to the questions on this site.

Role play can help improve understanding of a situation and encourage empathy towards those who are in it;

- for example, in a roleplay about **anti-poverty** (Articles 6, 27 of CRC), students could think of a situation where someone might be excluded from something like taking part in sports because participation requires expensive equipment.

During the roleplay, it might be useful to stop the action at a crucial point to ask the students about what is happening;

- for example, during a roleplay about **non-violence** (Article 19 of the CRC), ask students to think of ways that the conflict situation could be resolved peacefully, then ask the participants to play out those possible endings.

Teachers and students need to respect the heritage and the feelings of classroom members;

- for example, a roleplay about **discrimination** (Article 2 of the CRC) based on ethnicity needs careful handling if there are ethnic minorities in the classroom, so that students belonging to them will not feel marginalized.