

Teaching Children's Rights

An Interdisciplinary Educational Manual
for School Teachers



The Needs & Best Interest of the Child
Equality & Non-discrimination
Protection & Development
Participation & Inclusion

LEARN | **RIGHT**

**STUDENTS
AGE 9-18**

**Fact sheets,
planning tools
and student
activities**

LEARN | RIGHT gives advice on, implements and evaluates education projects with human rights as a method and end goal.

Our vision is to contribute to the development and dissemination of a human rights based pedagogy that aims to strengthen people's participation and empowerment in a democratic society based on the respect for human rights.

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About the author:

Maria Lokke Rasmussen has more than 20 years of experience in human rights capacity building and human rights education including 17 years with the Danish Institute for Human Rights. She has worked with national human rights institutions, civil society, civil servants and the justice sector in Denmark, Greenland, Europe, Central Asia, Asia and Africa.

Acknowledgements:

This publication is based on the two manuals: "Put Children's Rights on the Agenda" (2014) targeting teachers in Greenland's primary school and "Children's rights in the education process" (2017) targeting secondary school teachers in Belarus. The author has developed the manuals on behalf of Greenland's Children's rights institution in cooperation with the Danish Institute for Human Rights and the Danish Institute for Human Rights, respectively.

LEARN | RIGHT and the author are indebted to both institutions for dedicating their time and expertise to develop the manuals.

Both manuals was developed with the participation of local specialists and teachers in Greenland and Belarus respectively. Special recognition is due to all those brave and dedicated experts who have tested the tools and activities in the manuals and shared their ideas and experiences.

This publication is developed to give a broader audience access to the approach and resources developed for the two other manuals. Thus besides being in English, this publication is made generic to work in different national contexts and for different age groups.

As it will be seen, many of the activities in this publication are adapted from activities developed, adapted and re-arranged by other specialists. **LEARN | RIGHT** and the author is indebted to all these human rights professionals out there and send our sincere hope that they will continue working tirelessly together with us to teach about, through and for human rights

How to Use the Manual

This education manual includes facts sheets, activities, and tools enabling you as a teacher to:

- Plan your teaching programme on children’s rights;
- Reflect on how to create a learning environment that respects and promotes your students’ rights;
- Strengthen children’s rights and the involvement of students and parents at your school.

The manual is especially suitable for students aged 9-18 but can be adapted to other age groups.

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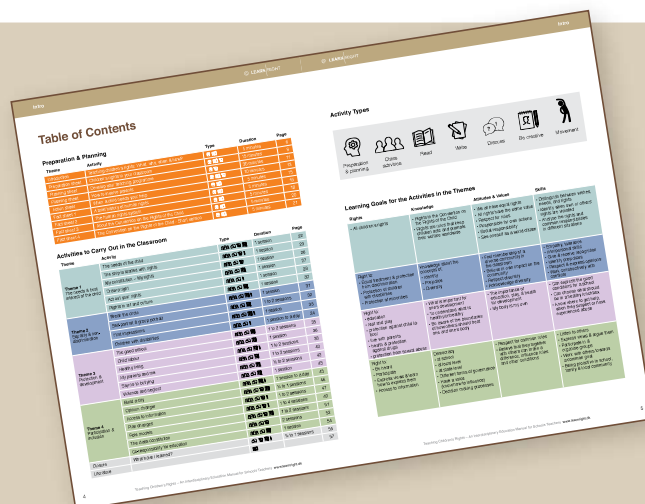
In the table of contents you find an overview of the activities and materials in the manual. It is divided into a preparation & planning section with activities to carry out in the classroom.

The activities are structured into four themes which each addresses one of the four key principles in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: 1) The needs & best interest of the child, 2) Equality & non-discrimination, 3) Protection & development and 4) Participation & inclusion. Thus by carrying out activities from all four themes you will address all parts of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The table of contents provides an overview of the overall learning objectives addressed in the activities under each theme as well as the types of learning methodologies the activities apply and their approximate duration.

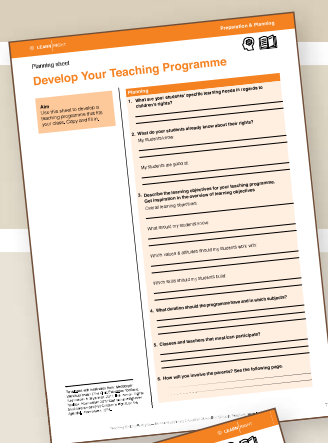
Choose activities that suit your class’ learning needs and the time you have available and which will guarantee a variation in methods.

Use the planning sheets as an inspiration to plan your programme.



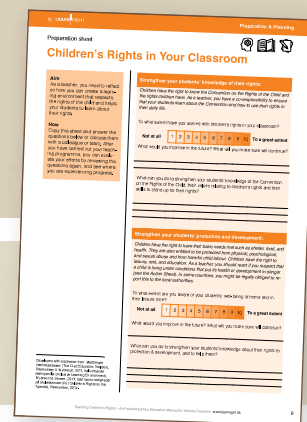
Preparation sheet

Answer the questions on the sheet to get an overview of the themes you want to focus on in your class, and decide how to include children’s rights in your class schedule.



Planning sheet

Fill in the planning sheet to create an overview of your teaching programme on children’s rights, and get inspiration on how to involve parents. Compose your programme by mixing the manual’s activities with small presentations by you as introduction to or summary of the activities.



Action sheet

Read this sheet and get inspiration on how to assist students who need help. The sheet focuses on the good conversation and how to react if rights are violated.



Fact sheets

Use the fact sheets to gain a better understanding of human rights and children’s rights.

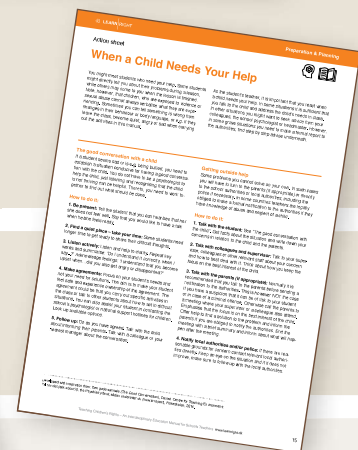


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Activity Types



Learning Goals for the Activities in the Themes

Rights	Knowledge	Attitudes & Values	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All children's rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child Rights are rules that keep children safe and promote their welfare worldwide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We all have equal rights All rights have the same value Respect for rules Responsible for own actions Social responsibility See oneself as a world citizen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distinguish between wishes, needs, and rights Identify when own or others' rights are violated Analyse the rights and common responsibilities in different situations
Right to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equal treatment & protection from discrimination Protection of children with disabilities Protection of minorities 	Knowledge about the concepts of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identity Prejudice Diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel membership of a diverse community in the classroom Believe in own impact on the community Respect diversity Acknowledge diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empathy, tolerance Interpersonal skills Give & receive recognition Identify prejudices Respect & express opinions Work constructively with conflicts
Right to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> education rest and play protection against child labour live with parents health & protection against drugs protection from sexual abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is important for one's development To understand what is healthy/unhealthy Be aware of the boundaries of how others should treat one and one's body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The importance of education, play, & health for development My body is my own 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can express the good conditions for a school Can choose what should be in a healthy lunchbox Know where to get help, when they suspect or have experienced abuse
Right to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be heard Participate Express views & learn how to express them Access to information 	Democracy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> at school at local level at state level Different forms of governance Have a voice (know how to influence) Decision making processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect for common rules Believe that they together with others can make a difference, influence rules and other conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to others Express views & argue them Participate in & organise groups Work with others towards a common goal Being proactive in school, family & local community



Introduction

Teaching Children's Rights

What are Children's Rights?

All human beings have the same basic needs regardless of their age, gender, colour, religion, nationality, ethnicity and place of residence or any other status. These needs include amongst other food, shelter, education, health and protection from discrimination and abuse in any form as well as the right to participate in society, and the freedoms of thought, speech, religion, assembly and movement, and the right to a fair trial.

In the aftermath of the 2nd World War the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted in the United Nations (UN) in 1948, declaring that it is a right for all human beings to have their basic needs met. The declaration is based on the understanding that people whose basic needs are not met, do not only suffer, but are also more inclined to engage in conflicts like war.

Following the UDHR, a range of international sets of rules for human rights, called conventions, have been adopted. They target the rights of specific vulnerable groups or key human rights issues, see the factsheets for an overview.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is among the nine core international human rights conventions, also called treaties. It was adopted by the UN on November 20th 1989. Since then it has been ratified by 196 countries who agree to protect children's rights in accordance with the convention. The CRC is thus the human rights convention that most countries have signed and ratified. The only exception (at the time of publishing) is the United States of America who has signed the convention but not ratified it and thus are not legally bound by the convention.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child describes the rights which are especially relevant to protect children and their development, equality, and democratic participation.

You can find an overview of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the fact sheets.



Why teach Children's Rights?

By ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC) a country agrees to strive to make the Convention widely known by both adults and children (Article 42.). Moreover, the CRC prescribes that the education of the child should be directed to:

"the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom" as well as "the preparation of the child for a responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin." ...as it reads in Article 29 of the CRC.

Thus, by teaching children's rights in your class you will contribute to fulfilling the international obligations that your country has agreed to. In some countries, you will be able to find these obligations reflected in national legislation, guidelines, and rules.

Even more importantly, your teaching in children's rights will assist your students in knowing their rights and make them understand how they should be treated, and how to treat others. Education in children's rights will create space for your students to explore, discuss, challenge, and develop their own opinions and values. It can help your students to develop respect and understanding for others, build tolerance for diverse views and appearances, build skills to engage in social relations and in democratic communities, as well as to take responsibility for and act to realise their potential in life.

Your students can use these skills in the classroom, but also more generally in school, at home, and in their future lives. Furthermore, teaching children's rights helps to reduce bullying, promote children's self-esteem, make children more resistant to sexual and violent abuse, and pave the way for their democratic participation.

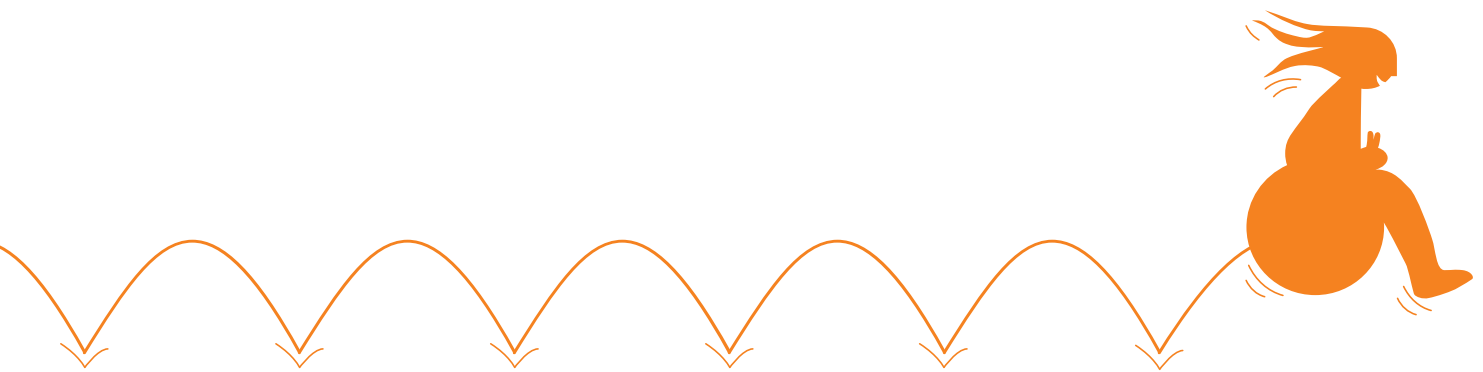
When to teach Children's Rights?

Human rights education is a lifelong process aiming at continuously building knowledge, skills, and attitudes & behaviours for all human beings to claim their rights and respect the rights of others. It is important that children are educated in children's rights from an early age, throughout their education, and later in life. This is also the recommendation by the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education & Training adopted in 2011 to aid the increased roll out of human rights education worldwide.

Children's rights education can be included and integrated in almost all subjects. Both as a knowledge component but also as a practise in terms of choosing to apply human rights supportive learning methodologies and creating a human rights

based learning environment. Some subjects directly address human & children's rights education. These may include Social Science, History, Religion and Philosophy classes. But other subjects will also form a good outset, e.g. Language classes, Biology, Math, Arts, and Community Lessons. Do not hesitate to try new ways of incorporating children's rights in the subject you teach. You can also look into developing special extracurricular classes that focus on children's rights.

In the *Table of Contents*, you can find the learning objectives for the different themes addressed in the teaching manual. Some may relate directly to subject learning objectives.



How to teach Children's Rights

It is not sufficient that children's rights learners only know about children's rights, they also need to be able to act upon that knowledge to claim their rights and respect and defend the rights of others. To achieve this, learners need the skills to apply, promote and protect human rights, and the supporting values & attitudes to do so.

Thus, it is important that teachers and schools acknowledge children's rights as more than a topic that students should learn about in certain subjects. Children's rights also need to be practised and reflected widely in the teaching methods that teachers apply, in the learning environment of the classroom, and in the school's work environment. This may also be described as, *through* respecting human rights in the classroom teachers work for strengthening learners to enjoy and exercise their own rights and respect those of others.

These learning dimensions are described in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011) Article 2, 1 & 2, stating that human rights education and training are about:

"...providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviours, to empower them to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights.

...encompasses: (a) Education about human rights, which incl. providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection; (b) Education through human rights, which incl. learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners; (c) Education for human rights, which incl. empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their right and to respect and uphold the rights of others."

In figure 1 you can find an illustration of the relation between these learning dimensions.

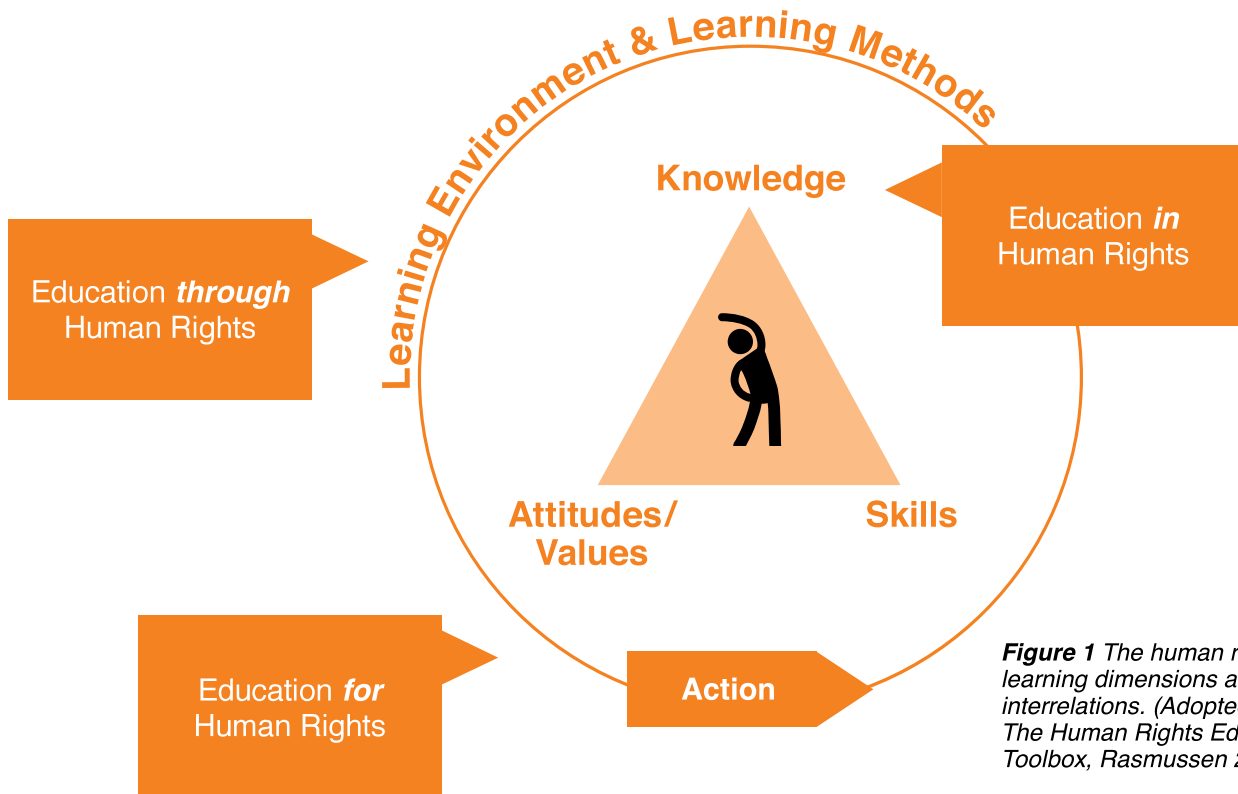


Figure 1 The human rights learning dimensions and their interrelations. (Adopted from *The Human Rights Education Toolbox*, Rasmussen 2012)

Translating the learning dimensions into practise means that we as teachers should follow the following human rights principles in our planning and implementation of education programmes:

Participation & Empowerment:

- Apply interactive methods that activate learners' experiences, knowledge & reflections;
- Engage learners, create responsibility, and active participation;
- Create space for expressing thoughts and ideas, ensure everyone is heard.

Accountability:

- Set clear learning objectives and be accountable to them;
- Respond to learners' needs;
- Practise what you preach – walk the talk;
- Stick to schedules and rules agreed upon;
- Make learners co-accountable for the learning and the learning environment.

Developed with inspiration from: *The Human Rights Education Toolbox*, Rasmussen, 2012. The application of HRBA principles builds on Ampora Tomas' version of the principles – PANEL – in the Toolbox applied to the practice of a learning environment and learning methodologies.

Non-discrimination, Equality & Vulnerable groups:

- Address equality when setting goals, composing groups, etc.;
- Be inclusive of learners with special needs;
- Create a space where everyone has equal opportunities to participate;
- Respect cultural diversity, challenge discriminatory patterns and prejudice among learners and teachers;
- Remember that treating all learners equally is not necessarily treating them in the same way, as the learners will have different needs to reach the same goals.

Links to the human rights framework

- Make clear links to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the international, regional & national human rights system (see fact sheets) in learning objectives and content;
- Keep a holistic focus on human rights, including how they are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated;
- Teach the history of human rights and its broad background in philosophy, religion, law, & politics.

The 'Preparation Sheet – Children's rights in your classroom', can assist you in reflecting on the learning environment in the classroom and setting goals for your children's rights teaching programme.

Preparation sheet



Children's Rights in Your Classroom

Aim

As a teacher, you need to reflect on how you can create a learning environment that respects the rights of the child and helps your students to learn about their rights.

How

Copy this sheet and answer the questions below or discuss them with a colleague or team. After you have carried out your teaching programme, you can evaluate your efforts by reviewing the questions again, and see where you are experiencing progress.

Strengthen your students' knowledge of their rights:

Children have the right to know the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the rights children have. As a teacher, you have a co-responsibility to ensure that your students learn about the Convention and how to use their rights in their daily life.

To what extent have you worked with children's rights in your classroom?

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	To a great extent
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What would you improve in the future? What will you make sure will continue?

What can you do to strengthen your students' knowledge of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, their values relating to children's rights and their skills to stand up for their rights?

Strengthen your students' protection and development:

Children have the right to have their basic needs met such as shelter, food, and health. They are also entitled to be protected from physical, psychological, and sexual abuse and from harmful child labour. Children have the right to leisure, rest, and education. As a teacher, you should react if you suspect that a child is living under conditions that put its health or development in danger (see the Action Sheet). In some countries, you might be legally obliged to report this to the local authorities.

To what extent are you aware of your students' well-being at home and in their leisure time?

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	To a great extent
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What would you improve in the future? What will you make sure will continue?

What can you do to strengthen your students' knowledge about their rights to protection & development, and to help them?

Developed with inspiration from: Medborger Værktøjskassen (The Civic Education Toolbox), Rasmussen & Wybrandt, 2011; Inkluderende læringsmiljø (Inclusive Learning Environment), Wybrandt & Jensen, 2013; Sæt børns rettigheder på skoleskemaet (Put Children's Rights on the Agenda), Rasmussen, 2014.

Strengthen your students' participation:

Children have the right to be heard and to influence decisions that affect them. If children are to be active and dynamic citizens, their opinions should be respected – also when they do not fit stereotypical thinking.

To what extent do you engage your students in decisions in the classroom and in your education programmes?

Not at all

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

 To a great extent

What would you like to improve in the future?
 What will you make sure will continue?

What can you do to teach your students about democracy in schools and channels of influence in the local community?

Strengthen your students' knowledge of equal treatment:

Children have the right not to be discriminated on the base of their gender, disability, culture, religion, economic status, etc. Equal inclusion of all students regardless of their background, and mutual respect among the students are important for the child's wellbeing and for them to develop as valuable members of the community.

To what extent do you involve and engage your students equally regardless of their gender, background, language, and abilities?

Not at all

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

 To a great extent

What would you like to improve in the future?
 What will you make sure will continue?

What can you do to improve your students' self-esteem, tolerance, and empathy?

Planning sheet



Develop Your Teaching Programme

Aim

Use this sheet to develop a teaching programme that fits your class. Copy and fill in.

Planning

1. What are your students' specific learning needs in regards to children's rights?

2. What do your students already know about their rights?

My students know:

My students are good at:

3. Describe the learning objectives for your teaching programme. Get inspiration in the overview of learning objectives

Overall learning objectives:

What should my students know:

Which values & attitudes should my students work with:

Which skills should my students build:

4. What duration should the programme have and in which subjects?

5. Classes and teachers that must/can participate?

6. How will you involve the parents? See the following page.

Developed with inspiration from: Medborger Værktøjskassen (The Civic Education Toolbox), Rasmussen & Wybrandt, 2011; The Human Rights Toolbox, Rasmussen 2012 Sæt børns rettigheder på skoleskemaet (Put Children's Rights on the Agenda), Rasmussen, 2014.

Programme

7. Plan your teaching programme

This is an example of a short programme. Choose your own activities according to your identified learning objectives and time available. Choose activities within each theme and ensure variation in activity types.

Programme	Name of activity	Type of activity	Session
THEME 1: Needs & best interest	The needs of the child		1 lesson
	My constitution- my rights!		1 lesson
THEME 2: Equality & non-discrimination	Self-portrait & group portrait		1-2 lessons
THEME 3: Protection & development	The good school		1 lesson
	Violence and neglect		1 lesson
THEME 4: Participation & inclusion	The good school		1 lesson
	Class constitution		1 lesson
	Plan changes		1 lesson
Wrap up	What have I learned		1 lesson

Evaluation

8. How was the programme?

9. How will you continue to strengthen children’s rights in the classroom?

Look at the preparation sheet again



Planning sheet

How to Involve Parents

Aim

It is a good idea to involve the parents of your students. Parents are key to upholding children's rights and can be a resource in contributing to the learning process. Perhaps they also work with or otherwise deal with topics that relate to the themes you are planning to include in your class' programme and might have time to contribute to specific lessons or class excursions.

Reflection

1. **What do you think the parents know about children's rights, and what do they not know?**

2. **What would you like to share with the parents about children's rights?**

Skills: _____

Values: _____

Attitude: _____

3. **How would you like the parents to contribute to the teaching programme?**

Planning

4. **When should the meeting(s) with the parents be held?**

For instance, before and after your class' teaching programme.

5. **Agenda items**

Which items and what should they lead to?

In what order?

6. **Involve your students**

Should your students be involved in the meetings and your planning? (how):

7. **Choose children's rights activities to try out**

8. **Write an invitation**

Keep in mind: Why are you inviting the parents, what are they getting out of the meeting(s), where, when, and for how long. Write an interesting invitation and use images and symbols.

 Developed with inspiration from: Medborger Værktøjskassen (The Civic Education Toolbox), Rasmussen & Wybrandt, 2011; Værktøjskassen Forældremødet (The Tool Box: Parent-Teacher Conference), Jensen & Wybrandt, 2010; Sæt børns rettigheder på skoleskemaet (Put Children's Rights on the Agenda), Rasmussen, 2014.

9. Develop the meeting agenda

This is an example. During the meeting keep in mind to:

- Personally greet all parents
- Give all parents time to speak
- Make sure that the parents feel comfortable
- Follow the agenda and keep an eye on the time

Agenda	Duration	Activity
Introduction	20 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome & Introduction • Who are we, why are we here, agenda • Parents introduce themselves and talk in pairs about their expectations.
Item 1	20 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are children’s rights? • Activity: “The needs of the child”
Item 2	20 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s rights in school and at home? • Discuss in pairs and follow-up in plenum
Break	15 min.	
Item 3	20 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teaching programme on children’s rights • What have you planned for the class? • How can the parents contribute?
End of meeting	20 min.	Debriefing and evaluation

10. Prepare the practicalities

E.g.: Venue, seating arrangement, decoration, catering (for instance communal eating), who is doing what, etc.:

Summary

11. Write a summary • Max 2 A4 pages • Refer to agenda • Use pictures & symbols

Key points and decisions:

Action sheet



When a Child Needs Your Help

You might meet students who need your help. Some students might directly tell you about their problems during a lesson, while others may come to you when the lesson is finished. Note, however, that children, who are exposed to violence or sexual abuse cannot always verbalise what they are experiencing. Sometimes you can tell something is wrong from changes in their behaviour or body language, or e.g. if they leave the class, become quiet, angry or sad when carrying out the activities in this manual.

As the student's teacher, it is important that you react when a child needs your help. In some situations it is sufficient that you talk to the child and address the child's needs in class. In other situations you might want to seek advice from your colleagues, the school psychologist or headmaster. However, in some grave situations you need to make a formal report to the authorities, find step by step advise underneath.

The good conversation with a child

If a student seems sad or is e.g. being bullied, you need to establish a situation conducive for having a good conversation with the child. You do not have to be a psychologist to help the child, just listening and recognising that the child is not thriving can be helpful. Thereto, you need to work together to find out what should be done.

How to do it:

- 1. Be present:** Tell the student that you can hear/see that he/she does not feel well. Say that you would like to have a talk when he/she feels ready.
- 2. Find a quiet place – take your time:** Some students need longer time to get ready to share their difficult thoughts.
- 3. Listen actively:** Listen and help to clarify. Repeat key words and summarise: 'Do I understand it correctly, when I say...?' Acknowledge feelings: 'I understand that you become upset when...did you also get angry or disappointed?'
- 4. Make agreements:** Focus on your student's needs and not your need for solutions. The aim is to make your student feel safe and experience ownership of the agreement. The agreement could be that you carry out specific activities in the class or talk to other students about how to act in difficult situations. You can also assist your student in contacting the school's psychologist or national support hotlines for children. Look up available options.
- 5. Follow up:** Do as you have agreed. Talk with the child about informing their parents. Talk with a colleague or your nearest manager about the conversation.

Getting outside help

Some problems you cannot solve on your own. In such cases you will have to turn to the parents (if appropriate) or directly to the school authorities or local authorities, including the police if necessary. In some countries teachers are legally obliged to make a formal notification to the authorities if they have knowledge of abuse and neglect of a child.

How to do it:

- 1. Talk with the student:** See "The good conversation with the child". Get facts about the situation and write down your concerns in relation to the child and the parents.
- 2. Talk with colleagues and supervisor:** Talk to your supervisor, colleagues or other relevant staff about your concern and how to best deal with it. Think about how you keep the focus on the best interest of the child.
- 3. Talk with the parents (if appropriate):** Normally it is recommended that you talk to the parents before sending a notification to the authorities. This is however NOT the case if you have a suspicion that it can be of risk to your student or in case of a criminal offense. Otherwise call the parents to a meeting where your supervisor or a colleague also attend. Emphasise that the focus is on the best interest of the child. Offer help to find a solution to the problem and inform the parents if you are obliged to notify the authorities. End the meeting with a brief summary and inform about what will happen after the meeting.
- 4. Notify local authorities and/or police:** If there are reasonable grounds for concern contact relevant local authorities directly. Keep an eye on the situation and if it does not improve, make sure to follow up with the local authorities.