

A MINNESOTA
HUMAN RIGHTS
EDUCATION
EXPERIENCE

Taking the Human Rights Temperature of Your School

Who, What, Why, and How!

For more information on *This is My Home*, and bringing human rights education to your school, please contact:

University of
Minnesota
Human Rights
Resource Center
612-626-0041
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WHO?

Students grades 5-12
Teachers
Staff
Administrators
Parents/Guardians

WHAT?

Materials:
Taking the Human
Rights Temperature
Questionnaire;
The Universal Declara-
tion of Human Rights

HOW?

1. Have participants evaluate their school's human rights climate, i.e. take its "temperature," by completing the survey questionnaire below. It might be appropriate to have participants conduct research into school conditions, using the survey items below, prior to completing the instrument or developing an action plan.
2. Prepare for class discussion by creating a 1-4 rating scale on a chalkboard or paper. Then have participants call out responses to each item.
IMPORTANT NOTE: Participants might not wish to make their own responses public. Consider collecting the questionnaires and redistributing them so that participant anonymity can be assured.
3. Discuss the findings of the survey, drawing on the following questions to move from analysis and evaluation to the development of an action plan.

WHY?

- To assess human rights conditions within the school community
- To reflect critically on forces at work within the school that affect the human rights climate
- To develop an action plan to improve the human rights climate within the school



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HOW? CONTINUED...

a. In which areas does your school appear to be adhering to or promoting human rights principles?

b. In which areas do there seem to be human rights problems? Which of these are of particular concern to you? Elaborate on the areas of concern, providing examples and identifying patterns of human rights violations.

c. How do you explain the existence of such problems?

* Do they have to do with age, disability, class, gender, race/ethnicity, or sexual orientation dimensions?

* Are the issues related to participation in decision-making? Who is included and who isn't?

* Who benefits and who loses as a result of the existing human rights violations?

* Are there other explanations to consider?

d. Have you or any of your fellow community members contributed in any way to the construction and perpetuation of the existing climate? (e.g. by acting in certain ways or by not acting in certain ways---ignoring abuses or not reporting incidents)

e. Are those participants completing the questionnaire representative of the population of the school?

* Would you expect different results from a different group of

people? In what ways might another group's responses differ and why? Should these differences be of any concern to you and to the school community? When determining which human rights concerns need to be addressed and how to address them, how can you be certain to take into account the perspectives and experiences of different people?

f. What needs to be done to improve the human rights climate in your school? What action(s) can you and your group take to create a better environment where human rights values are promoted and practiced?

"...discrimination threatens the rights and privileges of the inhabitants of this state and menaces the institutions of democracy..."

The Minnesota Human Rights Act

INTRODUCTION

The questions in this survey are adapted from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The relevant UDHR articles are included parenthetically in each statement. Some of these issues correlate more directly to the UDHR than others. All of these questions are related to the fundamental human right to education found in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It asserts:

Everyone has the right to education... Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

When discrimination is mentioned in the questionnaire below, it refers to a wide range of conditions: age, culture, disability, friendship associations, lifestyle choices, living space, race, ethnicity/culture, nationality, physical/intellectual capacities, physical appearance, sex, social class/financial status, and sexual orientation. This is a much more expansive list than that found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but is more helpful in assessing the human rights temperature in your school community.

The results should provide a general sense of the school's climate in light of principles found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Obviously more questions are needed and follow-up questioning during the discussion will enrich the assessment. These questions can help to identify specific areas of concern that need to be addressed.

Created by: D. Shiman & K. Rudelius-Palmer, *Economic and Social Justice: A Human Rights Perspective* (Minneapolis: Human Rights Resource Center, University of Minnesota, 1999)



Taking the Human Rights Temperature of Your School

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Take the human rights temperature of your school. Read each statement and assess how accurately it describes your school community in the blank next to it. (Keep in mind all members of your school: students, teachers, administrators, staff.) At the end, total up your points to determine your overall assessment score for your school. The Articles referred to in this questionnaire are a part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

RATING SCALE

- 1 - no/never
- 2 - rarely
- 3 - often
- 4 - yes/always

I am a:

- Teacher Student Parent/Guardian
 Staff Member Administrator Community Partner

- ___ 1. My school is a place where students are safe and secure. (Art. 3 & 5)
- ___ 2. All students receive equal information and encouragement about academic and career opportunities. (Art. 2)
- ___ 3. Members of the school community are not discriminated against because of their lifestyle choices, such as manner of dress, associating with certain people, or non-school activities. (Art. 2 & 16)
- ___ 4. My school provides equal access, resources, activities, and scheduling accommodations for all individuals. (Art. 2 & 7)
- ___ 5. Members of my school community will oppose discriminatory or harmful actions, materials, or slurs in the school. (Art. 2, 3, 7, 28, & 29)
- ___ 6. When someone demeans or violates the rights of another person, the violator is helped to learn how to change his/her behavior. (Art. 26)
- ___ 7. Members of my school community help me learn new skills and ways to get along with others. (Art. 3, 22, 26 & 29)
- ___ 8. When conflicts arise, my school community tries to resolve them through non-violent and cooperative ways. (Art. 3, 28)
- ___ 9. Institutional policies and procedures are implemented when complaints of harassment or discrimination are submitted. (Art. 3 & 7)

OVER 

QUESTIONNAIRE CONTINUED...

- _____ 10. In matters related to discipline (including suspension and expulsion), all persons are assured of fair, impartial treatment in the determination of guilt and assignment of punishment. (Art. 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10)
- _____ 11. No one in our school is subjected to degrading treatment or punishment. (Art. 5)
- _____ 12. Someone accused of wrongdoing is presumed innocent until proven guilty. (Art. 11)
- _____ 13. My personal space and possessions are respected. (Art. 12 & 17)
- _____ 14. My school community welcomes students, teachers, administrators, and staff from diverse backgrounds and cultures, including people not born in the USA. (Art. 2, 6, 13, 14 & 15)
- _____ 15. I have the liberty to express my beliefs and ideas (political, religious, cultural, or other) without fear of discrimination. (Art. 18 & 19)
- _____ 16. Members of my school can produce and disseminate publications without fear of censorship or punishment. (Art. 19)
- _____ 17. Diverse voices and perspectives (e.g. ethnicity, gender, ideology, race) are represented in courses, textbooks, assemblies, libraries, and classroom instruction. (Art. 2, 18, 19, & 27)
- _____ 18. I have the opportunity to express my culture through music, art, dance, and spoken word. (Art. 19, 27 & 28)
- _____ 19. Members of my school community have the opportunity to participate (individually and through associations) in democratic decision-making processes to develop school policies and rules. (Art. 20, 21, & 23)
- _____ 20. Members of my school have the right to form associations within the school to advocate for their rights or the rights of others. (Art. 19, 20, & 23)
- _____ 21. Members of my school encourage each other to learn about societal and global problems related to justice, ecology, poverty, and peace. (Preamble & Art. 26 & 29)
- _____ 22. Members of my school encourage each other to organize and take action to address societal and global problems related to justice, ecology, poverty, and peace. (Preamble & Art. 20 & 29)
- _____ 23. Members of my school community are able to take adequate rest/recess time during the school day and work reasonable hours under fair work conditions. (Art. 23 & 24)
- _____ 24. Employees in my school are paid enough to have a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being (including housing, food, necessary social services and security from unemployment, sickness, and old age) of themselves and their families. (Art. 22 & 25)
- _____ 25. I take responsibility in my school to ensure other individuals do not discriminate and that they behave in ways that promote the safety and well being of my school community. (Art. 1 & 29)

TEMPERATURE POSSIBLE = 100 HUMAN RIGHTS DEGREES

YOUR SCHOOL'S TEMPERATURE _____