

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 home to your school, please contact:

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

Students grades K-4
Teachers
Staff
Administrators
Parents/Guardians

WHAT?

Materials:
Taking the Human
Rights Temperature
Questionnaire; copies
of the Universal Decla-
ration of Human Rights



www.thisismyhome.org

WHY?

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

HOW?

1. Have participants evaluate their school's human rights climate, i.e. take its "temperature," by completing the questionnaire below. It might be appropriate to have participants conduct research into school conditions, using the questions below, prior to completing the instrument or prior to developing an action plan.
2. Prepare for class discussion by creating a 0-2 rating scale on a chalkboard or newsprint. Then have participants call out responses to each question.
IMPORTANT: Consider collecting and redistributing the questionnaires so that participant anonymity can be preserved.
3. Discuss the findings from the survey, drawing on the following questions to move from analysis and evaluation of a situation to the development of an action plan.

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 by providing examples and identifying patterns of human rights violations.

c. How do you explain the existence of such problematic conditions?

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

* Are the issues related to who does and does not participate in decision-making?

* Who benefits and who loses/suffers 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 to the creation 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. Were those completing the questionnaire representative of the population of the school?

* Would you expect different results from a different group of people? Why would you expect different results and in what ways would these results differ?

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 your school's human rights climate? What action(s) can you and your group take to create a more humane and just environment where human rights values are promoted and human rights behaviors practiced?

INTRODUCTION

The questions in this survey are adapted from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) with the relevant UDHR articles included parenthetically in each statement. Some of these issues correlate more directly to the UDHR than others but all of these questions are related to the fundamental human right to education found in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration. 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 more expansive list than that found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which allows it to be more helpful in assessing your school community's human rights temperature.

The results should provide a general sense of the school's climate in light of the principles found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but more questions and follow-up questioning during the discussion will enrich this assessment and help to pinpoint 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)

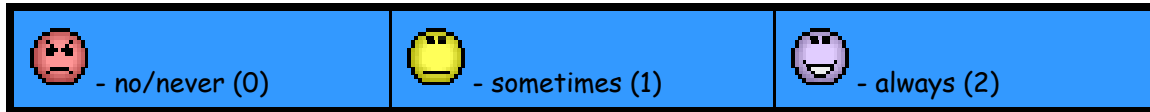
"...discrimination threatens the rights and privileges of the inhabitants of this state and menaces the institutions of democracy..."

The Minnesota Human Rights Act

Taking the Human Rights Temperature of Your School

THE STUDENT 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, and parents and guardians.) 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.



- ___ 1. My school is a place where students are safe and secure. (Art. 3 & 5)
- ___ 2. Members of my 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)
- ___ 3. Students at my school do not allow putdowns or mean actions, materials, or bad words in the school. (Art. 2, 3, 7, 28, & 29)
- ___ 4. When someone is mean to another person, the violator is helped to learn how to change his/her behavior. (Art. 26)
- ___ 5. Members of my school community care about my full development and help me when I am in need. (Art. 3, 22, 26 & 29)
- ___ 6. When conflicts arise, my school's teachers and students try to resolve them through non-violent ways. (Art. 3, 28)
- ___ 7. My school community welcomes students, teachers, administrators, and staff from diverse backgrounds and cultures. (Art. 5)
- ___ 8. In matters related to discipline (including suspension and expulsion), everyone is treated fairly and equally in deciding disciplinary actions.
- ___ 9. My personal space and possessions are respected. (Art. 12 & 17)
- ___ 10. Students at my school are able to take adequate rest/recess time during the school day and work reasonable hours under fair work conditions. (Art. 23 & 24)
- ___ 11. 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)

HIGHEST TEMPERATURE POSSIBLE = 22 HUMAN RIGHTS DEGREES

YOUR SCHOOL'S TEMPERATURE _____