

# RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS

ENERGIZERS



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## More Information on Rights Respecting Schools

*Rights Respecting Schools: Energizers* is a section within the *Rights Respecting Schools: Toolkit for Canadian Schools*. If you are reading this guide separately from the toolkit and you wish to learn more about the initiative or obtain a copy of the toolkit, visit UNICEF Canada's Rights Respecting Schools website: [www.rightsrespectingschools.ca](http://www.rightsrespectingschools.ca)

# INTRODUCTION

## Using Energizers

These energizers were created for elementary teachers as quick activities to do with their students. Each one has a rights focus and are intended to enhance a whole-school, rights-respecting approach to education. Each activity is designed to take approximately 5 to 10 minutes and require minimal preparation. Suggested grade levels are provided however all activities can be modified to fit various ages and grades. Some examples of how they can be used in the classroom include:

- daily physical activity (DPA)
- fillers
- indoor recess activities
- transition activities
- icebreakers
- classroom community builders
- cooperative games during physical education
- warm-up games in drama

## About Rights Respecting Schools (RRS)

Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) is an initiative of UNICEF Canada's Global Classroom program. This initiative uses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention) as the basis for enhancing an inclusive, participatory and respectful school culture for children and adults.

As a framework for educational improvement, the initiative helps schools address the whole learning environment through a consistent, rights-based approach. It is premised on the understanding that in order for children to want to achieve, they have to feel included, that they belong and that they matter. It brings children into early contact with the universal ideals of respect for oneself and for others, in the school community and in an interdependent world.

# TEAM MACHINE

Time: 10 minutes  
Grades K-4

## Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to have fun while practicing planning and group cooperation skills – all of which are imperative to a successful whole-school rights-respecting approach to education.

## Instructions

1. Divide students into groups of five or six.
2. Ask students to work together to make a machine. Each person will play the role of one part of the machine. Groups must demonstrate how all parts of the machine are needed in order for the machine to function. Students have fun making sounds and moving their bodies to mimic machine parts. Give some examples of machines that are easily pantomimed – a bicycle, a clock, a sewing machine, a car.
3. Give groups about five minutes to decide on a machine and rehearse their demonstration.
4. Have groups demonstrate their machine, while the audience tries to guess what it is.

Source: This energizer was adapted from the activity *Machine Building* in the *Education for Peace and Conflict Resolution: A training and curriculum support manual*, UNICEF Canada (1997).

# RIGHTS RACE

Time: 10 minutes  
Grades K-4

## Purpose

This activity can be used as a fun way to help children become aware of the various rights they have.

## Preparation

- Clear a large, open space.

## Instructions

1. Divide the students into pairs. Have them stand at opposite ends of the play area facing one another.
2. Explain that each pair is going to act out four different children's rights by assuming positions together. Ask for a volunteer and demonstrate each position (see descriptions below).
3. Explain that on your call, partners will run towards one another and meet in the middle of the play space. There they will form their position as quickly as possible. The last team to form their position will be eliminated. The remaining partners return to their original positions to play another round. The winning team is the last pair remaining in the game.

### Position Descriptions

#### Right to Education

This right is represented by a school bench. One partner kneels on one knee and the other partner sits on the knee.

#### Right to Protection from Harm

This right is represented by a circle of security. One partner stands with arms extended and finger tips touching, forming a circle. The other partner stands in the centre of this circle.

#### Right to Express Oneself and Be Heard

This right is portrayed by one person speaking and another listening. One partner stands with a hand cupped around one ear, and the other partner kneels in front with their hands cupped around their mouth.

#### Right to Rest

For this action, nobody moves.

Source: This energizer was adapted from the activity *I Have the Right To...* in the *Equitas Play it Fair Toolkit* (2008), available at: [www.equitas.org/toolkit](http://www.equitas.org/toolkit).

# CIRCLE SIT

Time: 5 minutes  
Grades K-4

## Purpose

When teaching about rights with children, one of the first things to develop is a safe space for sharing and collaborating. Bringing children together as a team and as a community is an important first step. This is a fun example of an activity that can be used to do that.

## Instructions

1. Begin by explaining that, as with any activity, students have the right to opt out if they do not feel comfortable participating. Discuss the importance of always respecting someone's choice to opt out – this is an important aspect of being part of a supportive team or community. This activity does involve being in close proximity – so discuss the fact that some people may not feel comfortable with this and could, therefore, be coached instead to help others strategize through verbal encouragement.
2. Have students form a circle with everyone facing in.
3. Ask students to step forward, closing in the circle until everyone's shoulders are touching. Then have everyone turn their bodies to their right so that they face the back of the person in front of them.
4. Ask students to take a step to their left, closing in the circle some more. Ask them to continue to step to the left into the centre of the circle. Tell students to place their hands on the hips of the person in front of them as they continue to close in the circle some more. Ask them to step again to the left to close the circle tighter. Continue with this instruction. As the circle gets closer, ask students to place their hands on the hips of the person two people in front of them. Continue to have them step to the left into the centre of the circle until the circle is formed tightly.
5. Then explain that everyone will be sitting down on the lap of the person behind them. However, should anyone feel any discomfort or pain they should immediately shout "stop" and everyone will stand up. Explain that the goal is to all sit down slowly and remain sitting as a complete circle. See how long they can hold the lap!
6. Then have them all stand up together.

# PICTURING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Time: 10 minutes  
Grades 5-8

## Purpose

This activity is a fun and energizing introduction to some of the articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention).

## Preparation

- Collect chart paper, markers and masking tape.

## Instructions

1. Divide the class into teams of 4 to 6 students. Distribute markers, chart paper and masking tape to each group. Ask each team to tape their chart paper to the wall and sit gathered around it.
2. Explain the activity as outlined below. Make it clear that this is a race. Then carry out the activity.
3. Position yourself at the farthest point from the teams. When you call for the first team member, one team member from each team will run to you. Whisper the first right to the team members. They will return to their teams and draw the children's right on the chart paper.
4. The other team members will guess which right is being drawn. When the right has been guessed correctly, another team member will run to you for the next right.
5. The game will end when one of the teams has guessed all of the rights correctly.

Source: This energizer was adapted from the activity *Draw it Right* in the *Equitas Play it Fair Toolkit* (2008), available at: [www.equitas.org/toolkit](http://www.equitas.org/toolkit).

# INCLUSION & EXCLUSION

Time: 10 minutes  
Grades 5-8

## Purpose

The following activity is an example of how to show the basic concepts of 'inclusion' versus 'exclusion', which forms the basis of Article 2. Article 2 of the Convention states that all children have rights regardless of their language, religion, sex, etc. (i.e. that no child should be treated unfairly on any basis).

## Preparation

- Collect coloured stickers (3 – 4 different colours) – amount depends on number of participants.

## Instructions

1. Ask students to form a circle, each facing outward. Have them close their eyes.
2. Explain that you will be placing a coloured sticker on each person's forehead, and that no one will be permitted to talk from this point forward. Distribute an uneven amount of two different coloured stickers. For example, for a group of 25, distribute 11 green stickers and 14 blue stickers.
3. Tell students that the point of the game is to use non-verbal communication to find all the people with the same coloured sticker and to form one group of these people. Explain that no one must be left out and that the goal is to form the group as quickly as possible.
4. Once everyone has received his or her sticker have the students open their eyes and walk around the room. Signal to them when they should begin to group themselves.
5. Repeat the game, removing the first stickers and placing new stickers on the students' heads. This time, distribute the stickers to form two groups of equal size, but also make sure that 1 or 2 students are excluded by giving them a colour different from the others. For example, for a group of 25, distribute 12 green stickers, 12 blue stickers and 1 red sticker.
6. After the game, discuss the following questions:
  - In the first game, how did you feel when you found a group to join?
  - How about in the second game, how did you feel for the person who was excluded? How did it feel to be excluded?
  - Who is often excluded in our school community?
  - What changes can we make to ensure that no one in our school community is excluded?

Source: This energizer was adapted from the activity *Inclusion... Exclusion...* in the *Equitas Play it Fair Toolkit* (2008), available at: [www.equitas.org/toolkit](http://www.equitas.org/toolkit).

# WHO AM I?

Time: 10 minutes  
Grades 5-8

## Purpose

This activity helps students consider the interdependence of children's rights.

## Preparation

- Collect clothes pins
- Write the following children's rights on small pieces of paper (or sticky notes) so that there is one per student. Note: For groups larger than 12, you will need to write each right more than once.

**Right to Non-Discrimination**  
**Right to Name and Nationality**  
**Right to Life**  
**Right to Privacy**  
**Right to an Education**  
**Right to Opinion**

**Right to Religion**  
**Right to Play**  
**Right to Protection from Sexual Exploitation**  
**Right to Protection from Abuse/Neglect**  
**Right to Protection from Work that is Harmful**  
**Right to Participate in Groups/Associations**

## Instructions

1. Clear an open space.
2. Use the clothespins to attach one children's right to each student's back.
3. Have students circulate to ask one another questions with 'yes' or 'no' answers only about the children's right on their back. Explain that the objective is to guess which children's right is on their back.
4. Once everyone knows which right is on their back, have them stop where they are and take the clothespins off their backs. Then have them reattach the clothespins to their front.
5. Have students imagine themselves as a child for whom their particular right is not upheld or realized. Then ask them to circulate throughout the room, reading the rights pinned to everyone's shirts. As they walk, have them consider their other rights that are impacted by the fact that they have been denied this particular right. Explain that as they pass someone wearing a right that could be impacted if their own right were denied, they should say, "The denial of my right could impact yours".
6. Let this continue for one or two minutes. Then bring the group back together.
7. Discuss the following:
  - What thoughts or feelings did this activity prompt?
  - What does this exercise show us about children's rights?

# COMMUNICATION CHALLENGE

Time: 10 minutes  
Grades 5-8

## Purpose

When students and adults are working together, it is important that each is using active listening skills and clearly communicating intentions, ideas, questions and concerns. This activity will demonstrate the importance of clear communication and good listening.

## Preparation

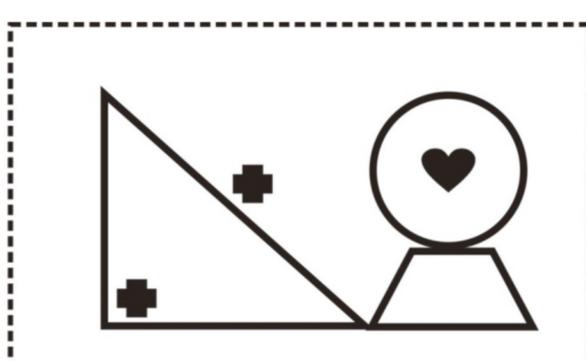
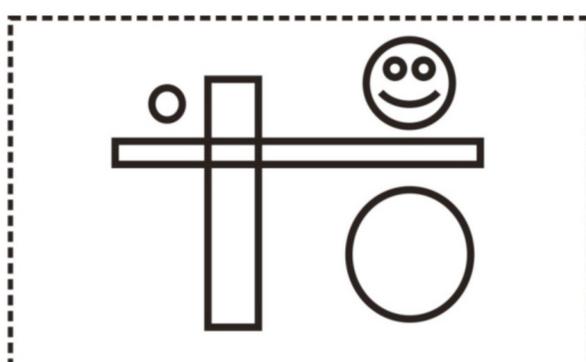
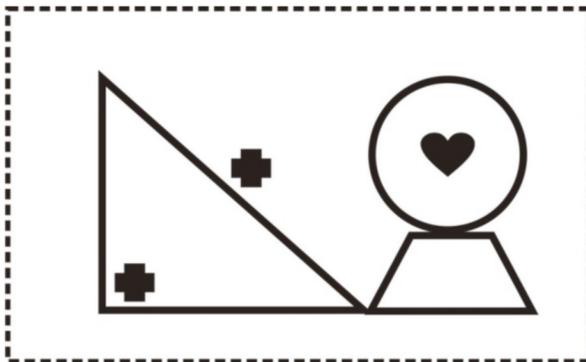
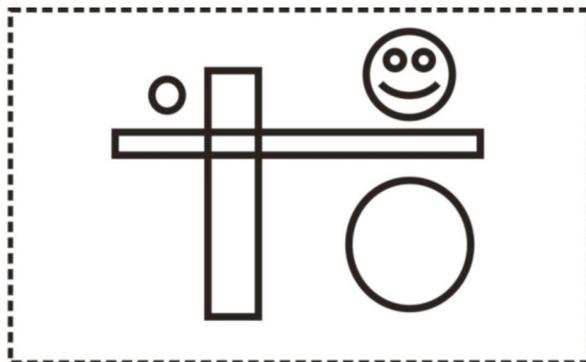
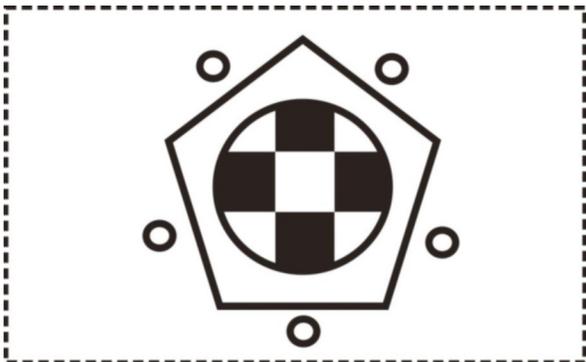
- Collect blank paper and pencils for half the group.
- Make copies of *Abstract Designs* (page 11) so that there is one per pair.
- Cut up the *Abstract Designs*

## Instructions

1. Divide the class into pairs. Have each pair sit back to back, and designate themselves Person A and Person B.
2. Give each Person A one of the abstract designs and Person B a blank piece of paper and a pencil.
3. Have Person A describe the abstract design to Person B so that they are able to draw it without having ever seen it themselves. Person B must remain silent throughout the process and listen carefully. Give them 3 minutes to complete the task.
4. When the pairs have finished, ask them to examine the drawing and see how well they did. Have them exchange the design for a new design and then switch roles so that Person A gets a chance to draw.
5. Most likely, the drawings will look nothing like they should, illustrating the importance and the difficulty of clear communication. Point out how this shows us clearly that what we think we are saying may not be what others hear.

## Abstract Designs

Cut out the following designs for the Energizer activity *Communication Challenge*.



# PAT ON THE BACK

Time: 10 minutes  
Grades 5-8

## Purpose

This activity helps build classroom community amongst students and promote positive self-esteem.

## Preparation

- Collect heavy weight paper, masking tape and markers – one per student.

## Instructions

1. Hand out one piece of paper, one marker and two pieces of masking tape to each student.
2. Have students write their name at the top of their paper, and then help each other tape the paper to their backs.
3. Ask students to circulate throughout the room to write positive messages on each other's backs. Explain that they should write messages of thanks, comments on contributions to the classroom, reminders of a moment shared together, hopes for them in their future rights-respecting endeavours, or any other positive comment!
4. Ask students to help each other remove the lists and then read their own list to themselves.