

RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS

Media Kit for
Rights Respecting
Schools

unicef 
canada

rights respecting
schools™



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RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS:

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RIGHTS RESPECTING
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ABOUT RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS

Rights Respecting Schools is a whole school initiative that uses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a basis for building an inclusive and respectful school culture. In these schools children's rights are adopted as guiding principles that inform a common set of values shared by all members of the school community. These common values create a sense of community and become the lens through which students, teachers, school administrators and parents make decisions, choose behaviour, and participate at their school.

Research on more than 1,600 UNICEF Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA) schools in the United Kingdom demonstrates that participating students have improved self-esteem and are more engaged in their learning. Students have been shown to become engaged by learning how to voice their opinions, participating in decision-making, resolving conflict peacefully, and understanding global social justice issues. They are also found to have a positive attitude towards diversity, which has led to a reduction in prejudice and bullying.

The Rights Respecting Schools initiative was developed by UNICEF Canada for Canadian schools and is implemented by a network of local and national organizations, known as the *Friends of Rights Respecting Schools*.

For more information about the Rights Respecting Schools initiative, visit rightsrespectingschools.ca.

ABOUT THE FRIENDS OF RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS

The Rights Respecting Schools initiative in Canada is facilitated by a network of local and national organizations with mandates and expertise in social justice and human rights, children's rights education, student-centred learning and global citizenship. The collaborative forum for RRS-trained facilitators from these organizations is the *Friends of Rights Respecting Schools (FRRS)*. The Friends of Rights Respecting Schools are responsible for the leadership and implementation of the Rights Respecting Schools initiative in their jurisdictions (regional or provincial/territorial).

To find out more about Rights Respecting Schools in your area, visit rightsrespectingschools.ca.



CONTENTS

- Welcome..... 6
- The Rights Respecting Schools Initiative..... 6
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child..... 7
- Example of a School Announcement..... 8
- Westmount Park School Main Page..... 9
- Chartwell Elementary School Blog.....10
- Example of a School Board Announcement..11
- Another Example of a School Board Announcement.....12
- Frequently Asked Questions13
- APPENDIX.....16

Welcome to the first steps on your school's journey towards becoming a Rights Respecting School!

This **Media Kit** was created to support you as you begin to share news of your RRS journey with your school community, your school board/district, perhaps local media and wider Friends of Rights Respecting Schools (FRRS) network.

Please share this Kit with the Communications person at your school board/district, and then connect them with your RRS Facilitator or FRRS Lead Agency.

We have included two Backgrounders: a one-page overview of the Rights Respecting Schools initiative and a one-page overview of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). These can be used as 'talking points' to provide a brief synopsis of the RRS Initiative and the CRC. There is also a two page overview that you can share or use as a basis for information to post on your school board/district website or social media.

You will also see examples of information and announcements that could be posted on your school board/district websites, and examples of blogs from our Rights Respecting Schools. We encourage you to use these as inspiration, and then create your own!

Keep the Friends of Rights Respecting Schools network in the Loop!

Please let your Lead Agency and the Friends of Rights Respecting Schools know when any events, articles or postings connected to your RRS journey are publicized or profiled in any way. If you are presenting or speaking about RRS at workshops, professional development days or any other community or education events, please share it!

THE RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

The Rights Respecting Schools Initiative is a holistic education program. It uses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to develop a culture of inclusiveness and respect in elementary schools and promotes meaningful participation and active citizenship among students.

Launched across Canada in 2011, a school becomes Rights Respecting through a process that begins with teacher training and assessing existing school practices. Throughout this process schools work with a RRS Facilitator to meet important benchmarks including;



Awareness

The school community (students, staff, teachers, parents) knows and understands the concept of children's rights, the rights children have as outlined in the Convention and how children's rights relate to school culture and to their own roles.



Student Participation

Every student has regular opportunities to be an active participant in the school community, and his or her opinions are sought and listened to by decision makers.



Teaching and Learning

The Convention is a reference point for classroom rules, formal and informal curriculum implementation and other decision-making. Adults model rights respecting attitudes and behaviour, and students are given regular opportunities to learn about and exercise their rights and responsibilities.



Leadership

Administrators are committed to promoting respect for children's rights. Children's rights are used as a lens for policies, program choices, program implementation, and other decision-making.

Children in Rights Respecting Schools have a more positive experience at school. Research in the United Kingdom has shown that Rights Respecting Schools see decreased bullying, a reduction in prejudices, improved rates of attendance and improved student self esteem and engagement in learning. Teachers also report improved job satisfaction.

The Rights Respecting School initiative is the only program of its kind in Canada. Following the national launch in 2011, a growing number of schools across the country are participating with the program currently reaching over 4,000 children.

For more information, visit rightsrespectingschools.ca.

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international treaty outlining human rights entitled to every child. These rights include the right to survival, the right to develop full physical and mental potential, the right to protection from influences that are harmful to development and the right to participate in family, cultural and social life.

UNICEF's work is guided by the provisions and principles in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Convention's Four Guiding Principles:

- Non-discrimination
- Best interest of children
- Respect for the views of children
- Rights to life, survival and development.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child took 11 years to complete and was adopted by the UN General Assembly in November 1989. Like all international treaties, countries sign the Convention indicating their intention to incorporate it into domestic law and then ratify the treaty once their domestic law reflects its principles.

Canada signed the Convention with the support of all provinces and territories on May 28, 1990 and ratified it on December 13, 1991. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most ratified UN human rights treaty in the world.

The Convention is monitored by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva Switzerland which is part of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights.

For more information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child visit [unicef.org/crc](https://www.unicef.org/crc).

EXAMPLE OF A SCHOOL ANNOUNCEMENT

Your school must be very proud to be a part of this initiative! An easy way to share the amazing things you are doing in your school is to go online. You can use your school or board/district website to share what is happening in your school; whether in the classroom, at assemblies, or at staff meetings.

Parents and the wider community are very interested in the innovative and creative things that are happening at your school, so feel free to share your updates on your school, classroom or board/district websites or blogs. Newsletters are also of course a great way to get the word out.

You can use any of the information in this Media Kit or anything that is on our website at rightsrespectingschools.ca, to create your online posting or newsletter update. We have provided examples of what Chartwell Elementary and Westmount Park have done on their websites on pages 8 and 9. Here is a sample online posting:

On our way to becoming a Rights Respecting School!

(School name) is excited to share the news that our school has begun our journey to becoming a Rights Respecting School!

Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) is an initiative that supports schools across Canada as they transform their school environment using an innovative, rights respecting approach. RRS uses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a basis for building an inclusive and respectful school culture.

This means that our students will be given even more meaningful opportunities to voice opinions, to participate fully in all aspects of their schooling, to be a valued and genuine participant in decision making that affects them, and to contribute to resolving obstacles to teaching, learning and well-being (including bullying and discrimination).

For more information on Rights Respecting Schools check out rightsrespectingschools.ca. We will keep you posted on the activities and initiatives going on at **(school name)** with Rights Respecting Schools!

Watch out for upcoming events and resources that you can use at home. Information specifically for parents can also be found here rightsrespectingschools.ca.

WESTMOUNT PARK SCHOOL MAIN PAGE

You can see that Rights Respecting Schools is featured on the school's homepage and hyperlinked directly to the RRS website!

The screenshot shows the homepage of Westmount Park School. At the top left is the school's crest and logo with the text "WESTMOUNT PARK SCHOOL Inspiring lives, building futures". To the right is the logo for the English Montreal School Board and a link for "EDU-PORTAL ACCESS". Below the logo is a navigation menu with links: HOME, OUR SCHOOL, OUR PROGRAMS, STUDENT LIFE, PARENTS, DAYCARE, ADMISSIONS, CONTACT.

The main content area features a large image of children's hands stacked in a circle on grass. To the right of this image is a "Welcome" section in English and French. The English text reads: "Welcome Westmount Park School features a multi-cultural community that focuses on the diverse needs of all its students. We endeavour to help children reach their full potential in an environment that fosters respect, cooperation and a commitment to learning." The French text reads: "Bienvenue L'École Westmount Park répond aux besoins d'une communauté multiculturelle et internationale. Le personnel de l'école s'assure de répondre aux divers besoins de tous ses élèves afin que chaque enfant puisse atteindre son plein potentiel dans un environnement qui favorise le respect, la coopération et un engagement envers l'apprentissage."

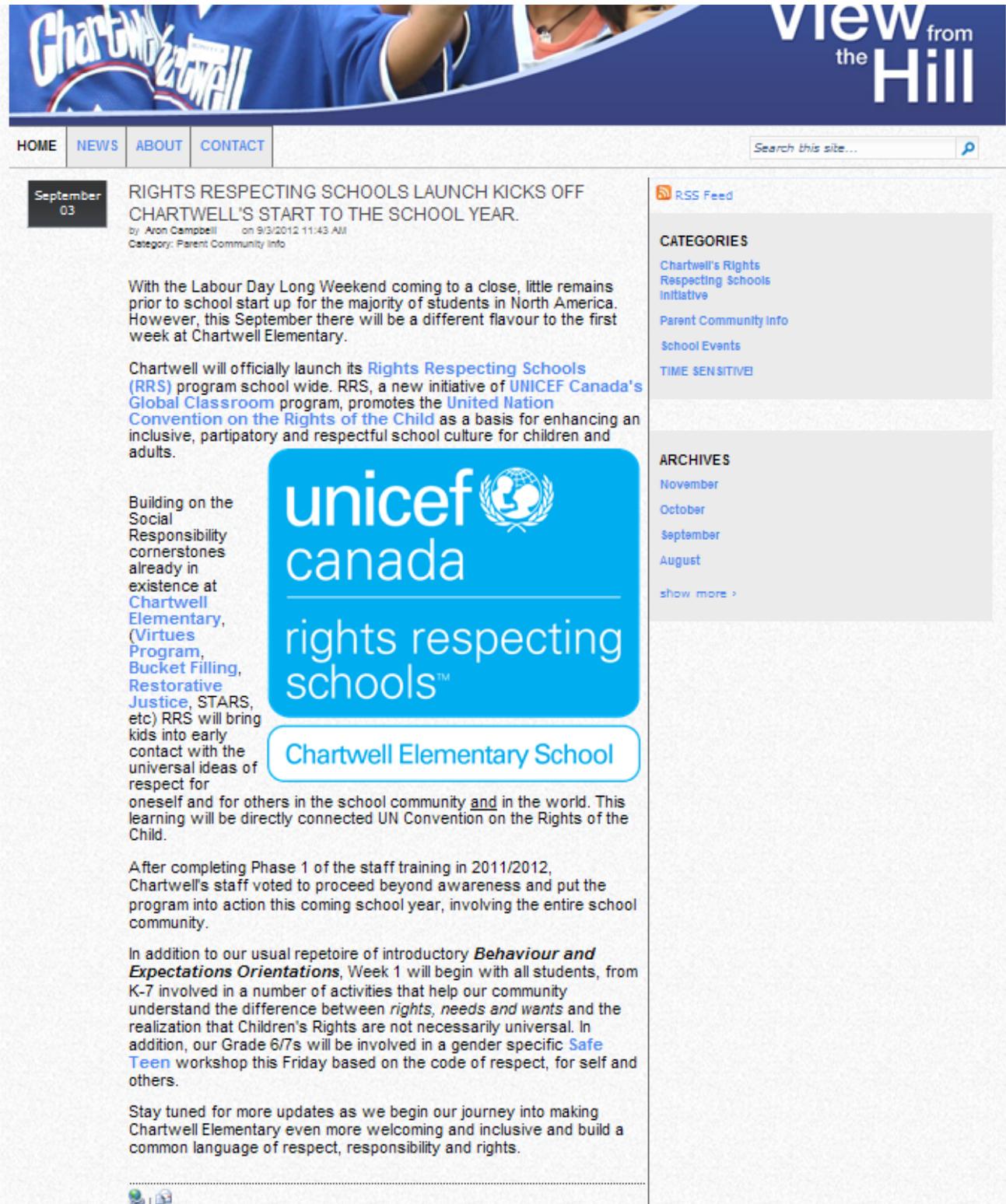
Below the main image are two columns of content. The left column is titled "Upcoming Events:" and lists events for Monday December 10, 2012 (Hot Lunch collection begins), Tuesday December 11, 2012 (After-school Allouette program (2:30), PPO Meeting (6:00 p.m.)), Wednesday December 12, 2012 (Governing Board (5:30 p.m.)), Friday December 14, 2012 (Hot lunch collection ends), and Monday December 17, 2012 (Informal sing-a-long in the gym). A link "See full calendar ..." is at the bottom. The right column is titled "WPS News:" and features two news items. The first is "CBC Winter Story Competition" by Julie Tytler, dated December 3, 2012, with a photo of two girls and text stating they won the competition and visited the CBC studios. The second is "November's Star Citizens" by Julie Tytler, dated December 3, 2012, with a photo of a group of children and text congratulating them. A "See archive" link is at the top right of the news section.

At the bottom right is a blue banner for "unicef canada rights respecting schools™" with a photo of three children and the text "Westmount Park School First Rights Respecting School in Quebec".

The footer contains contact information: "École Westmount Park School | 15 Park Place Westmount, QC H3Z 2K4 | Tel: 514-935-4388 Fax: 514-935-1290 ©2012 English Montreal School Board. All Rights Reserved. Please send comments or suggestions to webmaster@emsb.qc.ca".

CHARTWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BLOG

Chartwell Elementary School in British Columbia is a leading example of a Rights Respecting School. The following is a sample of their blog post introducing RRS to the school and community!



The image shows a screenshot of a school blog post. At the top, there is a banner with a photo of children and the text "view from the Hill". Below the banner is a navigation menu with "HOME", "NEWS", "ABOUT", and "CONTACT". A search bar is located on the right side of the menu. The main content area features a date "September 03" and a title "RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS LAUNCH KICKS OFF CHARTWELL'S START TO THE SCHOOL YEAR." by Aron Campbell on 9/3/2012. The post text discusses the Labour Day Long Weekend and the launch of the Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) program. A large blue graphic for UNICEF Canada's Rights Respecting Schools is prominently displayed, including the UNICEF logo and the text "rights respecting schools™" and "Chartwell Elementary School". The post continues with details about staff training and the program's implementation. A sidebar on the right contains sections for "RSS Feed", "CATEGORIES" (including Chartwell's Rights Respecting Schools Initiative and Parent Community Info), "TIME SENSITIVE", "ARCHIVES" (listing months from November to August), and a "show more" link.

EXAMPLE OF A SCHOOL BOARD ANNOUNCEMENT

With your school's participation in Rights Respecting Schools your school board/district is now part of an initiative that is growing in English and French schools across Canada. It would be wonderful to share the news about this innovative and creative approach to learning. You can use any of the information in this Media Kit or anything that is on our website, at rightsrespectingschools.ca, to create an online posting or newsletter update for your school board/district. Here is a sample online posting:

(School Name) is on their way to becoming a Rights Respecting School!

It is exciting to share the news that **(School Name)** has begun their journey to becoming a Rights Respecting School!

Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) is an initiative that supports schools across Canada as they transform their school environment using an innovative, rights respecting approach. RRS uses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a basis for building an inclusive and respectful school culture.

This means that our students will be given even more meaningful opportunities to voice opinions, to participate fully in all aspects of their schooling, to be a valued and genuine participant in decision making that affects them, and to contribute to resolving obstacles to teaching, learning and well-being (including bullying and discrimination).

For more information on Rights Respecting Schools visit rightsrespectingschools.ca. Check out **(School Name)** at **(insert website)** to find out more about what they will be doing this year!

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF A SCHOOL BOARD ANNOUNCEMENT



Commission scolaire English-Montréal
English Montreal School Board

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Montreal, Quebec
H3X 1T4
www.emsb.qc.ca
www.twitter.com/emsb109

Phone: (514) 483-7200 ext.7243
Fax: (514) 483-7213
E-mail: mcohen@emsb.qc.ca



PRESS RELEASE

MONTREAL, SEPTEMBER 13, 2012 – In coordination with the UNICEF Rights Respecting School program, on Friday morning, teachers at Westmount Park Elementary School (15 Park Place) will receive the first in one of many workshops intended to promote respecting rights in school.

Under the guise of Daphna Leibovici, Violence Prevention Consultant at the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) and Helen Moise, Education Manager at UNICEF Canada, Friday's session will introduce basic concepts of restorative justice practices to Westmount Park's teaching staff. The workshop aims to provoke reflection and discussion on how schools can adopt restorative practices as an alternative to traditional means of dealing with conflicts and wrongdoings in school.

Also in attendance was Cédric Beauregard, directeur général de La Fondation Jasmin Roy (Le Jasmin Roy Foundation). Last year, Westmount Park received a \$10,000 grant from the foundation to fund ongoing work intended to foster the prevention of discrimination, bullying and violence in the school. The grant was vital in helping the school achieve their goal to become a UNICEF Rights Respecting School. The grant came as a result of former principal Nathalie Lacroix's initiatives to introduce, implement and support many violence prevention initiatives at the school.

The Rights Respecting School program is designed to be a framework for educational improvement that builds upon what schools are already doing to transform the whole school with a consistent, rights-based approach. The Rights Respecting School program reinforces provincial and territorial efforts to create a learning environment in which both children and adults feel respected and act responsibly. According to UNICEF Canada, schools which have adopted Rights Respecting School throughout the country have seen improved learning in the classroom, a decline in bullying and absenteeism, increased compassion, improved classroom and school atmosphere and increased global awareness.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a Rights Respecting School?

A Rights Respecting School uses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention) as a basis for enhancing an inclusive and respectful school culture which promotes participation and active citizenship.

Through this program, schools work with a RRS Facilitator to identify how the Convention can be used as a framework to augment existing school initiatives. The Rights Respecting Schools program directly supports many Ministry mandated initiatives such as:

- Bullying prevention measures
- Safe and Caring Schools
- Equity and Inclusive Education
- Character Development and Citizenship Education
- Student Engagement.

What are the Benefits of a Rights Respecting School?

Research conducted in schools that have incorporated a rights respecting framework (including the [Rights Respecting School Award](#)¹ program in the United Kingdom) show consistent results:

- Improved self-esteem and well-being
- Enhanced moral understanding
- Reductions in bullying and disruptive behaviours
- Increased student participation in decision-making
- Improved conflict-resolution skills
- Increased support for global justice
- Improved teacher job satisfaction.

¹ <http://www.unicef.org.uk/Education/Impact-Evidence/>

What does a Rights Respecting School look like?

The Rights Respecting Schools initiative is based upon four building blocks which inform the activities that a school undertakes in its process to becoming a Rights Respecting School.



Awareness

The school community (students, staff, teachers, parents) knows and understands the concept of children's rights, the rights children have as outlined in the Convention and how children's rights relate to school culture and to their own roles.

Example

Student-led school assembly about the Convention



Student Participation

Every student has regular opportunities to be an active participant in the school community, and his or her opinions are sought and listened to by decision makers.

Example

Engaged student government



Teaching and Learning

The Convention is a reference point for classroom rules, formal and informal curriculum implementation and other decision-making. Adults model rights respecting attitudes and behaviour, and students are given regular opportunities to learn about and exercise their rights and responsibilities.

Example

Classroom Charters instead of classroom rules



Leadership

Administrators are committed to promoting respect for children's rights. Children's rights are used as a lens for policies, program choices, program implementation, and other decision-making.

Example

School code of conduct reviewed with a rights-respecting lens

What is the process and timeframe of becoming a Rights Respecting School?

Although the process to becoming a Rights Respecting School is organic and unique to each school that undertakes it, experience has demonstrated that the following clear and easy-to-follow steps help guide schools on their journey. During the seven steps to becoming a Rights Respecting School, schools will:

- Learn about Rights Respecting Schools and make a commitment
- Establish a team of staff, students and parents to lead the initiative
- Work with a RRS Facilitator or Friends of Rights Respecting Schools (FRRS) Lead Agency to conduct an assessment of rights respecting capacities *before* the initiative begins
- Participate in five 2-hour professional development workshops for staff and parents (delivered by a RRS Facilitator or FRRS Lead Agency)
- Make and implement an action plan to achieve the RRS Building Blocks
- Assess the impact of the initiative after one full cycle of implementation.



There is no prescribed timeline to which a school must adhere, but schools should expect to commit one to two years for full implementation of the initiative. Upon successful completion of the seven steps, a school receives recognition as a UNICEF Canada Rights Respecting School. Once the initiative has been implemented the school continues on its RRS journey, taking rights respecting education to new levels year after year.

What are the costs of becoming a Rights Respecting School?

Schools that undertake the process to becoming a Rights Respecting School should expect some minimal costs associated with participation. The Rights Respecting Schools Workshop Series will require the full participation of school staff. This may result in costs associated with professional development release time.

I think this is something my school should do – what are the next steps?

Because becoming a Rights Respecting School involves a process of whole school transformation, it is important for school staff and parents to be committed to the program. The first step is to have a RRS Facilitator or FRRS Lead Agency present this program to the whole school community. The school then decides if this is a program they would like to explore further. Contact information for your regional FRRS Lead Agency can be found at rightsrespectingschools.ca.

APPENDIX: PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR ETHICAL REPORTING ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE

Children and young people have all the rights of adults. In addition, they have the right to be protected from harm. Reporting on children and young people carries this added dimension and restriction, especially in the current era when it is nearly-impossible to limit a story's reach. This document is meant to support the best intentions of ethical reporters – serving the public's interest for truth without compromising the rights of children.

In some instances the act of reporting on children places them or other children at risk of retribution or stigmatization. When in doubt, the reporter must err on the side of caution and the right of the child to be protected from harm. Because these situations are not always clear-cut, reporters are encouraged to consult with UNICEF staff or others in determining the best interests of the child.

1. Principles

1. The dignity and rights of every child are to be respected in every circumstance.
2. In interviewing and reporting on children, special attention is to be paid to each child's right to privacy and confidentiality, to have their opinions heard, to participate in decisions affecting them and to be protected from harm and retribution, including the potential of harm and retribution.
3. The best interests of each child are to be protected over any other consideration, including advocacy for children's issues and the promotion of child rights.
4. When trying to determine the best interests of a child, the child's right to have their views taken into account are to be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.
5. Those closest to the child's situation and best able to assess it are to be consulted about the political, social and cultural ramifications of any reportage.
6. Do not publish a story or an image that might put the child, siblings or peers at risk even when identities are changed, obscured or not used.

2. Guidelines for Interviewing Children

1. Do no harm to any child; avoid questions, attitudes or comments that are judgmental or insensitive to cultural values, that place a child in danger or expose a child to humiliation, or that reactivate a child's pain and grief from traumatic events.
2. Do not discriminate in choosing children to interview because of sex, race, age, religion, status, educational background or physical abilities.
3. No staging: Do not ask children to tell a story or take an action that is not part of their own history.
4. Ensure that the child and guardian know they are talking with a reporter. Explain the purpose of the interview and its intended use.
5. Obtain permission from the child and her or his guardian for all interviews, videotaping and, when possible, documentary photographs. When possible and appropriate, this permission should be in writing. Permission must be obtained in circumstances that ensure the child and guardian are not coerced in any way and understand they are part of a story that might be disseminated locally and globally. This is usually ensured only if the permission is obtained in the child's language and if the decision is made in consultation with an adult the child trusts.
6. Pay attention to where and how the child is interviewed. Limit the number of interviewers and photographers. Try to make certain that children are comfortable and able to tell their story without outside

pressure, including pressure from the interviewer. In film, video and radio interviews, consider what the choice of visual or audio background might imply about the child and her or his life and story.

7. Ensure that the child will not be endangered or adversely affected by showing their home, community or general whereabouts.

3. Guidelines for Reporting on Children

1. Do not further stigmatize any child; avoid categorizations or descriptions that expose children to negative reprisals – including additional physical or psychological harm, or to lifelong abuse, discrimination or rejection by their local communities.
2. Always provide an accurate context for the child's story or image.
3. Always change the name and obscure the visual identity of any child who is identified as:
 - A victim of sexual abuse or exploitation,
 - A perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse,
 - HIV positive, living with AIDS or has died from AIDS, unless the child, a parent or guardian gives fully informed consent,
 - Charged or convicted of a crime.
4. In certain circumstances of risk or potential risk of harm or retribution, change the name and obscure the visual identity of any child who is identified as:
 - A current or former child combatant,
 - An asylum seeker, a refugee or an internally displaced person.
5. In certain cases, using a child's identity – name and/or recognizable image – is in the child's best interests. However, when a child's identity is used, they must still be protected against harm and supported through any stigmatization or reprisals. Some examples of these special cases are:
 - When a child initiates contact with a reporter, wanting to exercise their right to freedom of expression and to have their opinion heard.
 - When a child is part of a sustained programme or activism or social mobilization and wants to be identified.
 - When a child is engaged in a psychosocial programme and is claiming their name and identity as part of their healthy development.
6. Confirm the accuracy of what the child has to say, either with other children or an adult, preferably with both.
7. When in doubt about whether a child is at risk, report on the general situation for children rather than on an individual child, no matter how newsworthy the story.

4. Use of UNICEF Materials

All UNICEF materials are protected by copyright, including text, photographs, images and videotapes.

Permission to reproduce any UNICEF material must be requested from the originating UNICEF office, and will only be granted on the condition that the principles and guidelines in this document are adhered to.

Sources: The Convention on the Rights of the Child; Child Rights and the Media: Guidelines for Journalists, International Federation of Journalists; Media and Children in Need of Special Protection (internal document), UNICEF's Division of Communication; and Second International Consultation on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights, United Nations Secretary-General.

Excerpt from: <http://www.unicef.org/media>

RECOMMENDED READING

1. Children, the UN Convention and the Media

cqcm.org/kidsfirst/html/info/childun.htm

2. Children and the Media: Briefing

unicef.org/magic/briefing/childmedia.html

3. Putting Children in the Right – Resources for Journalists

unicef.org/magic/resources/resources_for_journalists.html