

**BUILDING BLOCK 2**

# RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS

**GOOD PRACTICES  
FOR MEANINGFUL  
STUDENT  
PARTICIPATION**

*Supplement to Workshop 3*

**unicef**   
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rights respecting  
schools™



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GOOD PRACTICES  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the network of local and national organizations across Canada that participates in the **Friends of Rights Respecting Schools (FRRS)**. This collaborative forum is responsible for the leadership and implementation of the Rights Respecting Schools initiative in Canadian schools. Read more about the members of FRRS at [rightsrespectingschools.ca](http://rightsrespectingschools.ca).

The Rights Respecting Schools initiative was originally initiated and developed by UNICEF Canada for Canadian schools. Thank you to all the staff at this organization that worked tirelessly to envision, develop, implement, test and monitor, and champion this innovative educational approach.

Special recognition goes to the UK Committee for UNICEF for its support and guidance on the development of Rights Respecting Schools in Canada. A number of the good practices highlighted in these guides come from the extensive experience of the schools in the United Kingdom participating in the Rights Respecting Schools Award.

A very special thanks to the staff and students at Cape Horn Elementary School, Coquitlam British Columbia for starting on this journey back in 2008, for being Canada's first Rights Respecting School, and for providing valuable input and feedback. Special recognition goes to the Principal of Cape Horn Elementary School, Bill McGovern and the teachers there, who have poured so much passion, time and energy into this initiative. Thank you to Coquitlam District School Board staff Sharon LeClair and Maureen Dockendorff for their support of Cape Horn Elementary and the Rights Respecting Schools initiative. And lastly, thank you to Kelly Quinlan, Global Classroom Manager for British Columbia, who worked with the students and staff at Cape Horn to pilot the first Canadian Rights Respecting School.

UNICEF Canada would like to extend special gratitude to all of the schools who have participated in the pilot phase of this initiative. The contributions and feedback of many students, staff and parents have informed the development of the resources and tools for this initiative.

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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](https://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 jurisdiction (regional or provincial/territorial).

To find out more about the Friends of Rights Respecting Schools, visit [rightsrespectingschools.ca](https://rightsrespectingschools.ca).



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## INTRODUCTION TO THIS GUIDE

*Rights Respecting Schools: Good Practices for Meaningful Student Participation* was created to support Canadian schools in their process to becoming a Rights Respecting School.

This is the third in a series of four guides that provide good practice examples for schools. This third guide provides examples of good practices to incorporate rights respecting teaching practices in Canadian schools.

**The Rights Respecting Schools initiative is based upon four building blocks:**



### **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.

Under each of the four Rights Respecting Schools Building Blocks are a number of Benchmarks or objectives that each Rights Respecting School works toward achieving. Since this guide addresses how to build awareness of children's rights, the relevant Benchmarks to achieving that in Rights Respecting Schools are:

### **Building Block 2: Student Participation**

8. The school has an active student council that is democratically elected.
9. School committees and decision-making processes include student representation and the active participation of students.
10. Students are consulted and help make decisions on a regular basis in the classroom and in the wider school environment.
11. The school has an elected student council whose members act as ambassadors for the Convention and the Rights Respecting School initiative.
12. Students are provided with opportunities to support the rights of others locally, nationally and globally.

## PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

As schools undertake the process to becoming a Rights Respecting School, they benefit from learning about the good practices and ideas of schools that have undertaken the process before them. This guide compiles good practice ideas from rights respecting programs, resources and schools and organizes them in line with the benchmarks under the second RRS Building Block: Student Participation.

The goal is for this guide is to provide ideas to schools as they begin to develop their own plan for transforming their learning environment and school culture.

## USING THIS GUIDE

### When to Use This Guide

This guide is first introduced during **Workshop 3: Meaningful Student Participation** from the Rights Respecting Schools Workshop Series. During this workshop, schools examine Building Block 2: Student Participation in detail and begin to think through what they might do to achieve the Benchmarks under Building Block 2.

To determine how to prepare this guide for use during Workshop 3, read **Preparing to Use this Guide** on the following page. It will give instructions as to how many copies you will need of the materials in this guide.

Otherwise use this guide for ideas for how to create opportunities for students to meaningfully participate and share their opinions at school. This guide is of particular help when working on the **Rights Respecting Schools Action Plan**.

### Organization

In this guide the good practice ideas have been organized by the Benchmark that they address. Most good practice examples are also accompanied by other resources that schools can turn to for further support and ideas. During **Workshop 3: Meaningful Student Participation** workshop participants will examine each Benchmark and the good practice idea accompanying it. The intent is for the participants to see good practice examples before determining which activities and approaches their school will implement to achieve the benchmarks under RRS Building Block 2: Student Participation.

### Further Resources

Some activities listed will be accompanied by one of the following images, which indicate where the tools or further information is available.



Indicates the page number in the **Appendix** where tools to support the good practice activity can be located.



Indicates the URL where tools can be found on the **RRS website or on a different online source**.



Indicates the **additional resource** that supports that good practice idea. See below for a list of all the additional resources referred to in this guide.

## PREPARING TO USE THIS GUIDE WITH WORKSHOP 3

During Workshop 3 of the Rights Respecting Schools Workshop Series, participants break into five groups and each group examines one of the five benchmarks under Building Block 2: Student Participation.



**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.

### CHECKLIST TO PREPARE MATERIALS

Prepare the following materials for the five break-out groups mentioned above.

#### Group 1: Benchmark 8

- 1 copy of **Benchmark 8** – page 9
- 1 copy of the additional resource ***RRS Student Councils in Elementary Schools***

#### Group 2: Benchmark 9

- 1 copy of **Benchmark 9** – page 10
- 1 copy of **Appendix 1: Steps for Creating Meaningful Student Participation on School Committees** – pages 14-16
- 1 copy of **Appendix 2: School Mapping: School Committees** – pages 17-18
- 1 copy of **Appendix 3: Decision Making Processes** – pages 19-20

#### Group 3: Benchmark 10

- 1 copy of **Benchmark 10** – page 11
- 1 copy of **Appendix 4: Whole School Feedback** – page 21
- 1 copy of **Appendix 5: Students Involved in Meaningful Decision Making** – pages 22-23
- 1 copy of **Appendix 6: Participatory Approaches to Student Evaluation** – page 24
- 1 copy of **Appendix 7: 50 Ways Adults Can Support Student Voice** – pages 25-27
- 1 copy of **Appendix 8: Characteristics of Meaningful Child Participation** – page 28
- 1 copy of **Appendix 9: Example Teacher Report Card** – page 29

#### Group 4: Benchmark 11

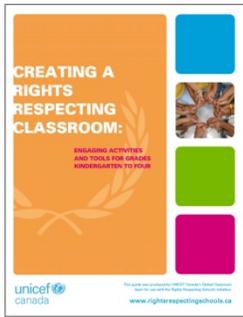
- 1 copy of **Benchmark 11** – page 12

#### Group 5: Benchmark 12

- 1 copy of **Benchmark 12** – page 13
- 1 copy of the 'Taking Sustainable Action' section from the additional resource ***Creating a Rights Respecting Classroom***

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

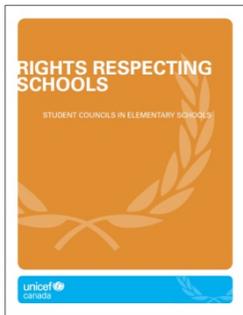
Some of the good practice ideas in this guide are supplemented by additional resources separate from this guide. See below for the additional resources that support this guide and where to find them.



### Creating a Rights Respecting Classroom

Turn to this resource for classroom and school activities that engender a democratic and participatory school environment.

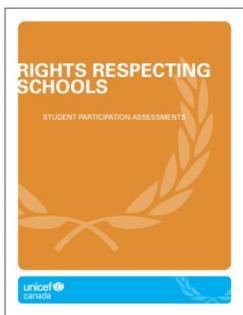
Download this resource at [rightsrespectingschools.ca](http://rightsrespectingschools.ca).



### RRS Student Councils in Elementary Schools

This guide provides schools with a process and tools to democratically set up a school Student Council.

Download this resource at [rightsrespectingschools.ca](http://rightsrespectingschools.ca).



### RRS Student Participation Assessments

This guide provides teachers with participatory assessment tools which can be used in the classroom.

Download this resource at [rightsrespectingschools.ca](http://rightsrespectingschools.ca).

## BENCHMARK 8

The school has an active student council that is democratically elected.

### Hold School-Wide Elections

Establish a democratically-elected student council with a school-wide election.

Chartwell Elementary School in British Columbia held an election for its Student Advisory Council. There were over 50 candidates who ran for positions on the Council.

Each student in the school was encouraged to vote through a ballot box system. Every ballot allowed the voters to vote for two candidates.

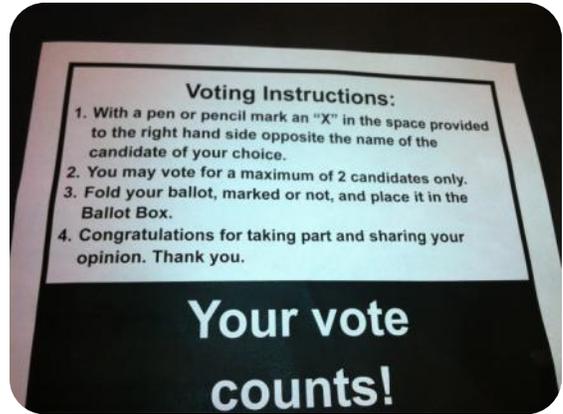
The voting process was fair, democratic and taught the children about the process of elections. It was a roaring success!

Consider holding your own election and use the tips and procedure outlined in the additional resource:



***Rights Respecting Schools: Student Councils in Elementary Schools***

Download this guide at [rightsrespectingschools.ca](http://rightsrespectingschools.ca)



Student Advisory Council Elections at Chartwell Elementary School

## **BENCHMARK 9**

School committees and decision-making processes include student representation and the active participation of students.

### **Establish a Process for Increasing Student Participation and Decision-Making**

Deciding to include students as representatives on school committees, in a meaningful way, can include the following steps:

1. Establish School Committee Leadership Team
2. Map Existing Opportunities
3. Set a Plan
4. Train Students and Adults
5. Implement

*See an elaboration of these five steps in Appendix 1: Steps for Creating Meaningful Student Participation on School Committees.*

The outcomes and timelines of these steps will be different for each school as it is a process of identifying needs, involving students in decision-making, and make decisions which fit your school. It is recommended schools include in their Action Plan how they will go through each step rather than specifics on school committees.

UNICEF Canada has provided the following checklists, suggestions and tools to guide schools through the process. Not all schools will follow each of the steps outlined. Choose the suggestions which work for your school.

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#### ***Steps for Creating Meaningful Student Participation on School Committees***

Appendix 1

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#### ***School Mapping: School Committees***

Appendix 2

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#### ***Decision Making Processes***

Appendix 3



***Dotmocracy.org***

## **BENCHMARK 10**

Students are consulted and help make decisions on a regular basis in the classroom and in the wider school environment.

### **Provide Opportunities for Student Input and Feedback**

There are various ways students can provide feedback and be consulted within schools. UNICEF Canada has provided a couple of examples below for schools to increase student participation in decision making. Schools can also refer to ***50 Ways Adults Can Support Student Voice*** to generate ideas.

Ideas provided by UNICEF Canada have been broken down into three areas:

1. **Whole School Feedback:** Examples of ways the student body can provide ongoing feedback to the adults in the school committee.
2. **Students Involved in Meaningful Decision Making:** Examples of ways students can participate in decision making previously only accessed by adults.
3. **Participatory Approaches to Student Evaluation:** Examples of ways teachers can collect student feedback to ensure their learning needs are being met in the classroom.

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***Whole School Feedback***

Appendix 4

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***Students Involved in Meaningful Decision Making***

Appendix 5

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***Participatory Approaches to Student Evaluation***

Appendix 6

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***50 Ways Adults Can Support Student Voice***

Appendix 7

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***Characteristics of Meaningful Child Participation***

Appendix 8

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***Sample Teacher Report Card***

Appendix 9

## **BENCHMARK 11**

The school has an elected student council whose members act as ambassadors for the Convention and the Rights Respecting Schools initiative.

### **Create Meaningful Opportunities for Students to Be Ambassadors**

- 1. Act as Ambassadors to Visitors:** Meet school guests and provide a tour, explaining the RRS initiative and how it works in their school, before delivering them to their appointment.
- 2. Host Open Houses:** As the school invites other schools, parents and community members to visit the RRS (suggested in Building Block 1) the School Council members can be tour guides, hold information sessions and conduct activities which explain how their school is a RRS.
- 3. New Teacher Induction:** Pair new teachers with members of the Student Council. Student Council members could lead the staff through the school Action Plan, provide a student perspective on the initiative, and deliver some of the Rights, Wants, Needs activities found in the additional resource [Creating a Rights Respecting Classroom](#). 
- 4. Public Spokesperson:** Train the Student Council to speak to journalists who attend school events. As staff, always ask the journalists to ensure a student voice is included in the story. Students can be trained to respond in a way that promotes the school and the RRS initiative.
- 5. Conference Presenters:** Student Council members can work with teachers to deliver workshops at conferences held by the school boards, teacher associations, ministries of education. Keep abreast of upcoming events where the school can present the initiative. Be sure to have students help determine the content of the workshop and prepare the students to lead sections of the workshop.
- 6. Parent Communication –** Student volunteers can write parent newsletters including interviews with their peers or with their teachers about child rights and the RRS initiative.

#### ***Example: Students Training Teachers at a Professional Development Conference***

Six students from Cape Horn Elementary School co-facilitated a conference workshop with their classroom teacher and a UNICEF Canada RRS Education Manager during British Columbia's province-wide day of professional development for educators.

During this session, students:

- Led participants through Rights, Wants, Needs activities to explain children's rights;
- Spoke to the participants about which children's rights they thought to be the most important;
- Spoke to the participants about the impacts of the RRS initiative on their experience in their school.

## **BENCHMARK 12**

Students are provided with opportunities to support the rights of others locally, nationally and globally.

### **Establish a Process for Increasing Student Participation and Decision-Making**

#### **School Wide Action Planning and Service Week:**

- UNICEF Canada’s resources for teachers ([rightsrespectingschools.ca](https://rightsrespectingschools.ca)) encourage participatory approaches for students to identify an issue they are passionate about, choose how they want to take action on that issue, plan to take action, and evaluate success of, and reflect upon, learning from taking this action.
- During an Action Planning and Service week, the whole school could go through this process at the same time, with classrooms each taking action on something they deem to be important.

#### **Student Associations:**

- Associations are often created by students to support students in the immediate or international community. An example might be a support association for newcomer students who have come to the area as asylum seekers.
- Schools need to determine the processes for students to create and manage their own associations.
- Schools could host a “sign-up” day with students applying to the school for permission – taking into consideration teacher or volunteer supervision.
- Students should be supported by training in skills for running a meeting and decision making through consensus building.

#### **Take Action Resources and Support:**

- Provide students in the school with resources to encourage and support students to take action. This could include:
  - a) A section of the library with inspirational stories and guide books to help students plan for taking action.
  - b) Create a student award to honour students who choose to take action on their own.
  - c) Book inspirational speakers of other youth (they do not need to be famous) who have taken action to support the rights of others.

#### **Looking for more ideas?**



Check out the ‘Taking Sustainable Action’ section in the additional resource ***Creating a Rights Respecting Classroom – for Grades 4-8***  
Download this guide at [rightsrespectingschools.ca](https://rightsrespectingschools.ca)

# APPENDIX 1

## STEPS FOR CREATING MEANINGFUL STUDENT PARTICIPATION ON SCHOOL COMMITTEES

### 1. Establish School Committee Leadership Team:

- This team could be the Children’s Rights Team or another designated team responsible for leading the school through the process of creating rights-respecting committees.
- Good practice would include student representation on this team to have a meaningful voice in the mapping exercise, policy development and committee creation.

### 2. Map Existing Opportunities:

- Using UNICEF Canada’s tool, [School Mapping: School Committees](#), review existing committees in the school to map the level of student participation.

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### 3. Set a Plan:

- Use the following steps to identify the school’s processes and policies around student participation in school committees:

#### A. Identify Gaps:

- The School Committee Leadership Team meets to identify current levels of student participation in, and access to, school committees by comparing the results from the **School Mapping: School Committees** exercise to the results from RRS student focus groups and student workshops, “Our Ideal School”.

#### B. Identify School Process for Student Involvement in School Committees:

- This process can be done during a school staff meeting.  
**During the staff meeting:**
  - Present the identified gaps and determine comfort level and capacity of the school to move forward in including students on school committees. Questions to consider include; what grades the school would like to begin with, if the school will establish new committees or if the school will integrate rights-respecting practices into a couple of existing school committees to identify ‘good-practices’ for the school.
  - Decide as a staff how all students will have an opportunity to contribute to decision making by discussing the decision making process. UNICEF Canada recommends the consensus-building model for decision making and has provided a guide: [Decision-Making Processes](#).
  - Identify an adult, or team of adults, in the community who will be the liaison for student committee members and help support adult committee members to be inclusive of students. Students could vote in the liaison.

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#### C. Choose Committees:

- Once the staff has determined their comfort and capacity in moving forward, involve the student body in the decision making process of identifying potential committees.

## STEPS TO CREATING MEANINGFUL STUDENT PARTICIPATION ON SCHOOL COMMITTEES (CONTINUED)

- This can be done by brainstorming with the school Student Council on possible councils or summarize feedback from student focus groups and the student workshop to generate some initial ideas. The school could then hold a *dotmocracy session* ([dotmocracy.org](http://dotmocracy.org)) with the student body.



### D. Choose Student Representatives:

- Determine how students will be selected for the student council. Remember that the goal is to have diverse representation from the student body. Often the popular or high achieving students will be the ones voted in or who will volunteer and this may not result in fair representation of all students.
- Teaching staff can work together to recommend a student composition that represents a variety of perspectives, including both genders, diverse physical and mental abilities, all grade levels, different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, varying academic levels and varying involvement in extra-curricular activities.
- Permit any student who does not wish to participate the option to decline.
- Make sure student representatives understand the role they will be undertaking by providing them with a 'job description,' including the amount of time it will likely take. Often student councils become ineffective because representatives are not doing the work required due to members not understanding what they were getting themselves in for.

### E. Revise or Create School Policy on Student Participation in School Committees:

- This document should outline the process for choosing student representatives, decision making models, and the roles and responsibilities of both student and adult committee members. This policy should be child-friendly and accessible to all students.

## 4. Train Students and Adults:

### • Training Adults:

- Host a meeting for those who will work with students on school committees. Referring to "Characteristics of Meaningful Participation" as well as the school's revised or new policy on "Student Participation on School Committees", the Adult School Committee Leader should review good practice for meaningful student involvement on school committees and clearly outline the processes to be implemented in committee meetings. Review with Adult Committee members their responsibility to listen to the voice of the students, take into account their evolving capacity, and make a decision that is in the best interest of the students. School Committee members should also consider that at some point they might need to change how committees operate as a result of students' ideas.

### • Training Students:

- Host a meeting with student school committee representatives. Students will need to clearly understand their role on the committee, what to expect during the committee meeting, the decision making process, and the role of the adults on the committee. Students need to understand that not all of their suggestions, proposals or feedback will be guaranteed as the outcome of the decision. They need to understand that the adults will need to also take into consideration the best interest of the child.

## STEPS TO CREATING MEANINGFUL STUDENT PARTICIPATION ON SCHOOL COMMITTEES (CONTINUED)

### 5. Implement Student Participation in School Committees: Preparing for Meeting:

- **Set Meeting Agenda:**
  - Based on understanding of the capacity of students, work with the school committees to identify how information will be presented to students (eg. two options, multiple decisions or open brainstorming). Over time students should be involved in setting the agenda.
- **Prepare Students for Meetings:**
  - Ensure student committee members are provided, ahead of time, child-friendly and age appropriate information on decisions to be taken during the meeting.
- **Follow-Up with Students Representatives:**
  - After the meeting the Adult School Committee Member should touch base with the students to see how they felt about the meeting and if there is anything the committee can do differently to help students in the process.
  - If the adults in the committee took feedback from the students during the meeting and then made their own decisions, students should be informed as to what the final decision was and reasoning behind the decision.

## APPENDIX 2

### SCHOOL MAPPING: SCHOOL COMMITTEES

Reflecting on the eights Levels of Student Participation (below), use the School Mapping tool (following page) to map out the current levels of student participation on school committees.

#### 8 CHILD-INITIATED, SHARED DECISIONS WITH ADULTS

- Children initiate projects themselves, while the decision-making is shared with adults. Children have the power to make positive changes based upon their own views and ideas, while drawing upon the expertise and assistance of adults. Adults do not impose their views or try to direct the project, rather they listen, observe and act as sounding boards for the ideas and plans of young people.

#### 7 CHILD-INITIATED AND DIRECTED

- Children initiate and direct the project themselves, with adults playing only a supportive role. Adults provide children with the tools, resources and information they need to bring the views and ideas into fruition, but the decision-making happens solely among the children.

#### 6 ADULT-INITIATED, SHARED DECISIONS WITH CHILDREN

- Adults initiate actions but share decision-making powers with children. While the initial idea might come from adults, children are involved with the planning, design and implementation of a particular project.

#### 5 CONSULTED AND INFORMED

- Children give advice on projects that are run by adults. Children are not involved in the decision-making, but are asked to share ideas that will inform the decisions of adults. Children need to be informed about how their advice will be used and made aware of the outcomes of decisions made by adults.

#### 4 ASSIGNED BUT INFORMED

- Children are assigned a specific role in a project by adults. Children understand the intentions of the project, and who made the decisions concerning their involvement and why. Children are given a meaningful role, for which they volunteer only after they have a clear understanding of the objectives.

#### 3 TOKENISM

(INEFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION)

- Children are asked to speak or participate in a project run by adults without fully understanding the issues, the rationale behind the project or what their contribution adds to the project. They appear to be given a voice, but in reality they have few choices for how to participate. For example, children might be asked to sit on a panel with no explanation as to how they were selected and with little time to prepare.

#### 2 DECORATION

(INEFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION)

- Children are used to bolster a cause led by adults by dressing, acting or performing in a certain way. They do not contribute to the organizing or planning of the event, rather their participation is used mainly to elicit an emotional response from specific stakeholders or audiences (for example wearing adult-designed t-shirts for a photo-shoot).

#### 1 MANIPULATION

(INEFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION)

- Adults use children to promote a cause and pretend that the cause is inspired or supported by children, while they have no understanding of the cause. If children have no understanding of the issues or how their actions can contribute, their participation can be viewed as manipulation.

## SCHOOL MAPPING: SCHOOL COMMITTEES (CONTINUED)

Working with students in the school, list all of the existing school committees and through discussion, identify what level of student participation is currently involved in each committee. For each, provide justification for the choice to aid decisions around improving student participation. Adults may know of other committees students are not aware of – these must also be included.

School Committee	Level of Student Participation (1 = low; 8 = high)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

## APPENDIX 3

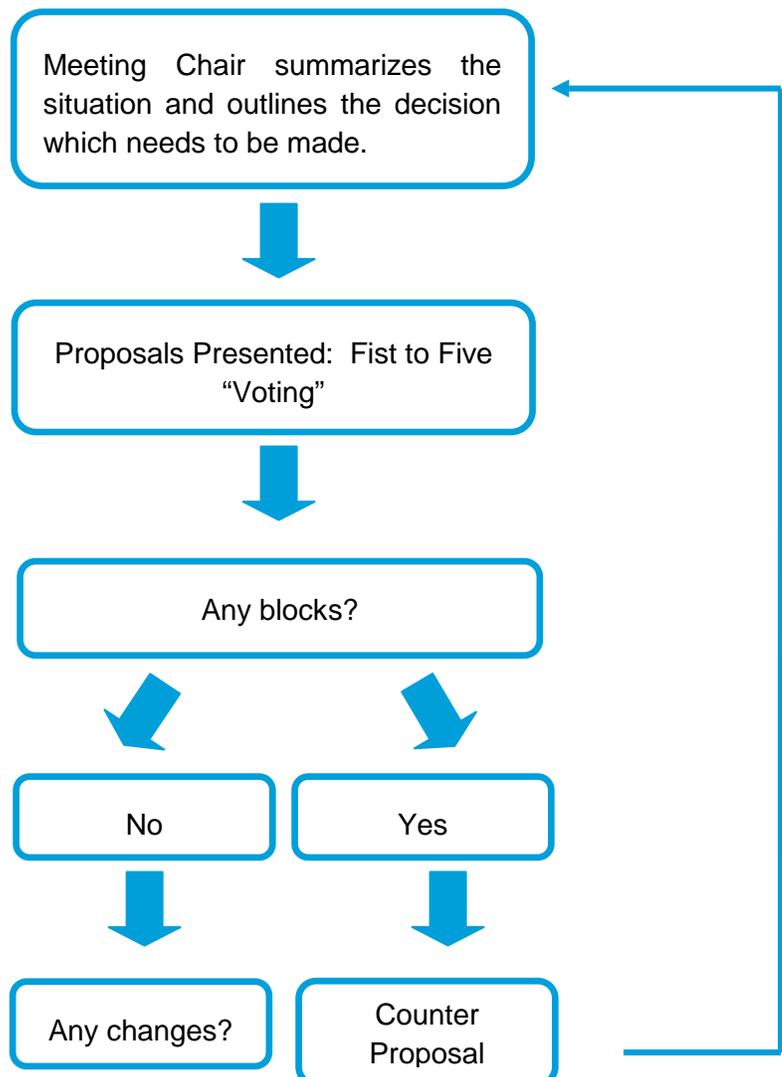
### DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Consensus decision making means that everyone may not agree 100% with the final decision but that everyone can live with the decision. Both adults and young people will need to understand the process before involving students in decision making. UNICEF Canada has provided two tools below to help schools incorporate consensus decision making into their work with students.

1. **Consensus Building Process:** The process to implement in meetings to come to a consensus
2. **Fist to Five:** Tool for students to be able to easily communicate and participate within the consensus-building process (page 20)

#### Consensus Building Process

Remember to consider the evolving capacity of the students when presenting decisions and proposals. Some students will require more structured options for a decision where other students will work well with more freedom.



## DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES (CONTINUED)

### Fist to Five<sup>1</sup>

Use this technique after the proposal has been submitted during the consensus-building process for adults and students to communicate their level of support. Each person responds by showing a fist or a number of fingers that corresponds to their opinion.

**Fist:** A no vote - a way to block consensus. I need to talk more on the proposal and require changes for it to pass.

**1 Finger:** I still need to discuss certain issues and suggest changes that should be made.

**2 Fingers:** I am more comfortable with the proposal but would like to discuss some minor issues.

**3 Fingers:** I'm not in total agreement but feel comfortable to let this decision or a proposal pass without further discussion.

**4 Fingers:** I think it's a good idea/decision and will work for it.

**5 Fingers:** It's a great idea and I will be one of the leaders in implementing it.

*If anyone holds up fewer than three fingers, they should be given the opportunity to state their objections and the team should address their concerns. Teams continue the Fist-to-Five process until they achieve consensus (a minimum of three fingers or higher) or determine they must move on to the next issue.*

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<sup>1</sup> CommonAction. The FreeChild Project. [freechild.org/Firestarter/Fist2Five.htm](http://freechild.org/Firestarter/Fist2Five.htm)

## APPENDIX 4

### WHOLE SCHOOL FEEDBACK

Consider these ideas for generating whole school feedback on a proposed idea:

- **Radio Call-In Shows:** Partner with a local radio station to host a call-in-show where students can talk about their concerns.
- **Student Press:** Begin a school newspaper with student journalists who produce stories on issues facing students in the school.
- **Online Discussion Board:** Create a blog or a social media page where students who have been involved in decision making, such as on school committees, can take information back to the student body. This can also be a space for students to express concerns and engage in peer to peer problem-solving.
- **Dotmocracy:** Use this participatory approach to collecting feedback that allows students to contribute the level to which they like or agree with the proposed idea. Use the template and process developed by Jason Diceman, available at [dotmocracy.org](https://dotmocracy.org).
- **Put It To a Vote:** Use a ballot box in the front office to allow students to participate in a secret vote on the proposed idea.



## APPENDIX 5

### STUDENTS INVOLVED IN MEANINGFUL DECISION MAKING

Before engaging in any new project to increase levels of student participation in decision-making, the school should review UNICEF Canada's Characteristics for Meaningful Student Participation and apply this checklist to the creation of new projects.

Here are a couple examples of ways students can be involved in meaningful decision making.

**1. School Design:** Involve students in a school re-design to create a rights-respecting school environment.

- There are seven strategies which are generally agreed upon to involve students in the process of school design: <sup>2</sup>
  - a) Use student artwork
  - b) Use cameras
  - c) Host student forums
  - d) Involve students in planning committees
  - e) Organize a student design competition
  - f) Provide design programs during out-of-school hours
  - g) Integrate design activities into class work.

**For further information:** Visit [ncef.org/pubs/index.cfm](http://ncef.org/pubs/index.cfm)



**2. School Timetabling:** Gather a group of students (either elected or selected purposefully for diversity) and host a mini-workshop to review the school timetable:

- Begin discussions using UNICEF's Rights, Wants, Needs cards (available in the [Creating a Rights Respecting Classroom Guide – at rightsrespectingschools.ca](http://rightsrespectingschools.ca)) to review what students need during the school day to feel happy and healthy
- Referring to the needs students have identified as being necessary to be happy and healthy in school, ask the students to think about the school day and if in the current timetable of the school, all of their needs are being met.
- Discussion questions can include: What time of the day do you like the most? How do you spend your time outside of class? Does the current timetable give you enough time to do things like travel between classes, use the washroom, and get a drink of water? Are there things in the day you would like to do that we do not schedule time for? Do you think the start and end times of the school day are ideal?
- Break the group into two. In the first group, provide students a timetable outline and manipulative cards which include things like as 45 minutes lunch, 15 minutes recess, and 45 minute class times. Provide group two with a blank piece of paper and markers. Ask both groups to, using what is provided, create their ideal timetable.



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<sup>2</sup> Borden, R. (2004, January). Taking School Design to Students. National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities.

## STUDENTS INVOLVED IN MEANINGFUL DECISION MAKING (CONTINUED)

- Remind students that not all suggestions will be implemented as the school has certain restrictions to serve the best interest of the child, and existing infrastructure which cannot be changed.
- If possible, have students present their ideas back to the staff at the school for a bigger discussion on the school timetable.
- This task could also be sent out as a competition to students.

### 3. Professional Development for Teachers:

- Examples include:
  - i. Poll students to understand some of the gaps which exist between the students needs and staff's understanding or knowledge. This could help inform the type of professional development teachers could pursue.
  - ii. Students design and lead teachers through workshops. These workshops could be on issues which effect students in the school body, local community or internationally.

### 4. Hiring Staff:

- Work with students to identify the desired qualities of a new candidate for the school staff.
- Help the students identify three questions they would like to ask the potential candidate.
- Invite students to the interview of the potential candidate and allow them to ask their questions.
- If the position is a for a new teacher, have the teacher prepare a lesson plan and deliver it to the students as a part of the interview process, asking students to assess the lesson plan based on a pre-agreed upon rubric.

#### Example: Students on Hiring Committees

At a school in the UK working with UNICEF UK on the Rights Respecting School Award, a kindergarten student participated in the interview process of hiring a new cook for the school cafeteria.

The three questions the student asked were:

- a. Are you a good cook?
- b. Do you like children?
- c. Do you yell?

Other schools involved with the RRSA program in the UK have included children in the hiring process by having candidates for potential hire give a lesson to students and then the students provide feedback to the hiring committee on which candidates they preferred and why. In most instances, the hiring committee and the children come to the same conclusion about the successful candidate.

## APPENDIX 6

### PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES TO STUDENT EVALUATION

Consider using the following participatory approaches to student evaluation:

#### 1. Student Participation Assessment:

- Using UNICEF Canada's, [Student Participation Assessments \(rightsrespectingschools.ca\)](https://rightsrespectingschools.ca), teachers can incorporate assessment tools which provide feedback on lessons.



#### 2. Teacher Report Cards:

- During report card time, students provide a report card of their teacher and school, giving feedback on meeting the learning needs of students in a rights-respecting manner.
- At the beginning of the school year, teachers can work with students to identify areas in which students will provide feedback to the teacher.
- Teachers should also work with students to identify how they learn best so students understand whether or not their needs are being met.
- Examples of the areas of feedback can include; variety in activities, types of activities, learning strategies, inclusive curriculum, levels of student participation, participation in decision making, access to resources, and pace of content.
- Take a look at the [Sample Teacher Report Card](#) for further ideas.

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## APPENDIX 7

### 50 WAYS ADULTS CAN SUPPORT STUDENT VOICE

*By Adam Fletcher for SoundOut (soundout.org)*

The following are everyday activities that adults can do to support, empower, and involve students throughout the education system.

1. **Have a real conversation** with a student. Ask a student what they want to do and find out how you can help make that happen.
2. **Actively support student-led action** however possible, including working with students out-of-school to accomplish their goals in education.
3. **Start a resource library** at your school that will inspire students to make change. Include books, websites, and organizations working on democracy, social change, school improvement, and youth power.
4. **Use active learning methods** to teach students about education, including service learning and constructivism. Build on what they already know.
5. **Develop a student-adult partnership** program in your school where students and educators can actually discuss school together.
6. **Create a student action center** in your school for students to become involved in changing their school and communities.
7. **Use participatory action research** in your classroom for students to take action in your school.
8. **Be an advocate for students** at school meetings. Make sure students are at the table whenever your school is making choices about students.
9. **Create classroom lesson plans** that actively engage students in critical thinking about education and action that changes schools.
10. **Make students concerns visible** in your school by posting them in your classroom and sharing them at meetings where adults are.
11. **Sponsor a letter with students** to the administration about student issues.
12. **Respect students** as you do adults. Don't expect more from students than you do adults and don't interpret for students what they can say for themselves.
13. **Co-design a lesson plan** with students about education reform and student involvement.
14. **Listen specifically to students** whose voices are seldom heard in schools, including students who are minority, low-income, have low grades, or don't interact with their peers.
15. **Host an activity** for students and educators to encourage student-adult partnerships.

## 50 WAYS ADULTS CAN SUPPORT STUDENT VOICE (CONTINUED)

16. **Engage students as classroom consultants**, interns, apprentices, and activities staff.
17. **Be consistent and clear** about your expectations of students in your classroom.
18. Team up with students to **have a town meeting** or school forum for everyone at your school.
19. Identify and **network with students** in your school who are concerned about their school.
20. **Connect with other adult allies** who want to involve students meaningfully, both in your school and others, and around the community.
21. **Include students in hiring** adults at your school, including staff, teachers, and administrators.
22. **Arrange resources for students** who would not otherwise be able to participate in school activities, including transportation, permission, and childcare.
23. **Support political candidates** for local, provincial, and federal office who make listening and working with young people a priority.
24. **Arrange for a radio station** to sponsor a call-in show led by students that allows them to talk about their concerns about school.
25. **Arrange a meeting with the principal** for students to highlight the concerns and recommendations they have for school.
26. **Create a school-wide vision** for student involvement and voice that includes adults and students.
27. **Serve on an advisory board** for a student-led effort.
28. **Refuse to attend meetings** where students are not invited or where you cannot bring students with you.
29. **Be a real, active, and engaged friend to students.**
30. **Discourage unfair opportunities** for students based on academic performance, attendance, race, gender, etc.
31. **Create student-led experiences** in your classroom and throughout your school.
32. **Make your classroom a comfortable, safe, and affirming place** so students can “hang-out.”
33. **Help students create a newsletter**, or work with your school newspaper, to share students' concerns about their school and education.
34. **Help students create a listing** of all opportunities for their involvement in your school and community.

## 50 WAYS ADULTS CAN SUPPORT STUDENT VOICE (CONTINUED)

35. **Call for your school** to have regular student evaluations of themselves, teachers, administrators, and classes that influence performance evaluations, contracts, and hiring.
36. **Ask a student for help.** If they know about computers, ask them to assist you. If they understand diversity, ask them to teach you.
37. **Sponsor a support group for students** who face particular difficulties such as parents' divorce, violence, etc.
38. **Raise funds for a student-led organization** focusing on school issues.
39. **Actively support youth-led organizations** in your community, and encourage them to address education reform.
40. **Join (or form) with students a community task force** to address youth issues and coordinate responses in schools.
41. **Prepare students for multiple roles in your school**, including learner, teacher, and leader.
42. **Ask students' advice** on school issues you are wrestling with.
43. **Be an advocate for student involvement** and student/adult partnerships throughout the education system.
44. **Start an adult support group** to share ideas, concerns, and ways to listen better to students.
45. **Recognize student involvement.** Don't assume that just because someone is a student that they enjoy school. Help them appreciate it by giving class credit or through other meaningful recognition.
46. **Include students on committees** in professional education organizations.
47. **Hold students accountable** for their mistakes and challenges. Be honest and forthright with young people, and support their efforts to improve.
48. **Treat students as individuals.** One student cannot represent all students, and must learn how to represent themselves. Teach them.
49. **Speak to students with respect**, and avoid interrupting students.
50. **Involve students from the beginning of class** by having them create classroom expectations through to the end by having them conduct self, class, and teacher evaluations.

Source: *50 Ways Adults Can Support Student Voice* by Adam Fletcher of *SoundOut* ([www.soundout.org](http://www.soundout.org)) was reprinted with permission.

## APPENDIX 8

### CHARACTERISTICS OF MEANINGFUL CHILD PARTICIPATION

Use the following checklist when planning and supporting meaningful opportunities for children to participate and take action.

#### The Project



- Issue is of real relevance to children \_\_\_\_\_
- Issue/focus was chosen by children or they were consulted in the process \_\_\_\_\_
- Linked to children's direct day-to-day experience \_\_\_\_\_
- Adequate time and resources made available \_\_\_\_\_
- Realistic expectations of children \_\_\_\_\_
- Clear goals and targets agreed with children \_\_\_\_\_
- Addresses the promotion or protection of children's rights \_\_\_\_\_

#### Values

- Honesty from adults about the project and the process \_\_\_\_\_
- Inclusive – equal opportunity for participation by all groups of interested children \_\_\_\_\_
- Equal respect for children of all ages, abilities, ethnicity, social backgrounds \_\_\_\_\_
- Information is shared with the children to enable them to make real choices \_\_\_\_\_
- Children's views are taken seriously \_\_\_\_\_
- Voluntary nature of children's involvement \_\_\_\_\_
- Decision-making is shared \_\_\_\_\_

#### Methodology

- Clarity of purpose \_\_\_\_\_
- Child-friendly meeting places, language and structures \_\_\_\_\_
- Involvement of children from the earliest possible stages \_\_\_\_\_
- Training provided to help children and adults acquire necessary skills \_\_\_\_\_
- Methods of involvement developed in collaboration with children \_\_\_\_\_
- Adult support provided where needed \_\_\_\_\_
- Strategies developed for sustainability \_\_\_\_\_

Source: Lansdown, G., *Characteristics of Effective and Genuine Participation*, Promoting Children's Participation in Democratic Decision-Making, UNICEF (2001). Available at: [unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf](https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf)

## APPENDIX 9

### SAMPLE TEACHER REPORT CARD

Create your own version of a report card with your students' input. Consider this example below.

Criteria	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
We do many different activities during our lessons	We usually do the same activities	Some days we do different activities	Most days we do different activities	We are given choices of activities in most of our lessons
The teacher listens to students ideas for lessons and activities	I do not feel that the teacher listens to student ideas and uses them in lessons	I feel that the teacher sometimes listens to student ideas and uses them in lessons	I feel that the teacher often listens to student ideas and uses them in lessons.	I feel that the teacher usually listens to student ideas and uses them in lessons
The teacher helps us learn about different cultures in all lessons	None of our lessons include different cultures (stories from other countries, information about different religions)	Some of our lessons include different cultures (stories from other countries, information about different religions)	Most of our lessons include different cultures (stories from other countries, information about different religions)	All of our lessons include different cultures (stories from other countries, information about different religions)
All students have equal access to items at the school.	None of the students have enough time with items at the school (eg. Computer time, space on the playground, gym equipment)	It is only a few students who always have the most time with items at the school (eg. Computer time, space on the playground, gym equipment)	Some students get more time with items at the school (eg. Computer time, space on the playground, gym equipment)	All students get the same amount of time with items at the school (eg. Computer time, space on the playground, gym equipment)
The teacher will give extra time on a lesson to ensure all students understand	When I do not understand the lesson, the teacher does not give me extra time for help	When I do not understand the lesson, the teacher sometimes gives me extra time for help	When I do not understand the lesson, the teacher usually gives me extra time for help	When I do not understand the lesson, the teacher always gives me extra time for help