

Human Rights Education

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

WHAT IS A HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOL?

A human rights friendly school is a community that practices and promotes human rights values in all aspects of school life and beyond.

Human Rights Friendly Schools make a commitment to teaching

- **ABOUT human rights** – so that the school community understands what they are and why they are important;
- **THROUGH human rights** – so that the school becomes a model of excellence in human rights practice;
- **FOR human rights** – so that all members of the school community recognize their rights and learn to protect the rights of others.

Human Rights Friendly Schools take a whole school approach. This means that human rights are applied to four aspects of school life: governance, relationships, curriculum, and environment.

When human rights come into the classroom, onto the playground and into the hearts and minds of young people, attitudes and behaviours begin to change. Children, teachers and other school community members explore, promote, and live human rights and responsibilities.

Inclusion, tolerance and respect for diversity are central principles of human rights. When these principles start to direct the thoughts and actions of the school community, little room is left for bullying and discrimination. We begin to relate to each other not as rich or poor, dark or fair, passed or failed, but as human beings made equal by the rights we share. Members of human rights friendly school communities act, speak out and stand up for their rights. Importantly, they also recognize and practice their responsibilities for respecting the rights of others.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOLS?

When a school decides to become human rights friendly, it takes an important step towards improving the lives of children and communities.

Human Rights Friendly Schools cultivate the skills needed by the leaders of today and tomorrow. By creating a culture of human rights, students, teachers, and other members of the school community grow strong practical understanding of their own responsibilities in society.

Amnesty's experience has shown that making a school more human rights friendly can lead to educational benefits, including:

- Improved student attitudes toward learning;
- Higher student achievement;
- Better relationships among students and teachers;
- Improved ability to analyze difficult problems in society.

Human Rights Friendly Schools also produce benefits for the wider community by:

- Encouraging all members of the school community to treat each other with respect;
- Empowering teachers to include important local issues in the curriculum;
- Teaching students how to participate in society as responsible citizens.

At the heart of the decision to become human rights friendly, is a school's commitment to empower all members of the community to participate in decisions that affect their own lives, and the lives of their children.

HOW CAN I SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOLS?

Families and communities are encouraged to participate in Human Rights Friendly Schools.

You can get involved by:

- Bringing important local issues to the attention of teachers, students, and school authorities;
- Attending public events held by human rights friendly schools;
- Encouraging students to talk with you about school life;
- Supporting human rights campaigns and other activities led by school community members;
- Protecting the school as a safe learning space for all students.

In addition, if you have any ideas about how Human Rights Friendly Schools can better support human rights in the wider community, you are welcome to share your ideas. One example of how Human Rights Friendly Schools have supported the wider community is described below.



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STARTING UP A VOLUNTEER SERVICE PROGRAM IN MONGOLIA

The Mongolia-India Joint Secondary School in Ulaanbaatar reached the wider community through a volunteer service program which included activities focusing on human rights issues.

During one of the coldest winters in history, the temperature in Mongolia reached minus 58 degrees in early 2010. This gravely affected the population as food was scarce and communication difficult; it was considered a natural disaster by the authorities and international organisations.

The students and the staff of Mongolia-Indian Joint Secondary School took action through volunteer initiatives. They collected warm clothes, lights and matches and teachers donated one day salary to the communities affected by the cold. Students and teachers worked together to distribute these products to the communities. This volunteering service program kept the students and staff actively engaged with the wider community. After the natural disaster, the program carried on to give assistance to marginalised groups or people living in poverty.



HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

Contact your school, or your nearest Amnesty International office.

You can find your local **Amnesty office** by searching for your country here:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/>

Regional Office contacts are here:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/about-us/contact/>

See also:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/human-rights-education/human-rights-friendly-schools/>