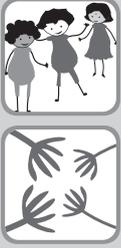


37. Where Do You Stand?

Vote with your feet!



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|---------------------|---|
| Themes | General human rights, Participation |
| Level of complexity | Level 1 |
| Age | 8-13 years |
| Duration | 30-40 minutes |
| Group size | 6-12 children |
| Type of activity | Discussion with some movement |
| Overview | Children take a physical position in the room and then explain and support their opinions |
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to deepen understanding of participation • to develop listening skills • to develop discussion and argumentation skills |
| Preparation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide the room into two parts and put up signs AGREE and DISAGREE at either end. • Write discussion statements on a flipchart, each on a separate page, and place them on the line in the middle of the room. |
| Materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flipchart and pens • String or chalk • Paper and markers |

Instructions

1. Announce to the children that you are interested in their opinion on some important questions. Explain that you will read a statement and individually they have to decide whether they agree or disagree with it and then stand in the part of the room where they see the relevant poster. The goal will be to convince other children to change their opinion and position.
 - a. No-one can speak until everyone takes a position.
 - b. The more strongly you agree or disagree with the statement, the further away from the centre you will stand.
 - c. No-one can stay on the middle line, but if you cannot decide or feel confused about a question, you can stay towards the middle on one side or the other.
2. Show the children the first statement and read it aloud. Then ask them to decide what they think and to take a position.
3. Wait until everyone has taken a position. Then ask individuals from both positions why they stood on the different sides. Let them discuss their views. Encourage many different children to express an opinion.
4. After allowing a reasonable time for discussion, invite any child who wishes to change positions. If several do, ask them what argument made them change their minds. Continue this process for all the statements.

Source: Adapted from *The European Convention on Human Rights, Standpoints for Teachers*, Mark Taylor, Council of Europe, 2002.

Debriefing and Evaluation

1. Debrief the activity by asking questions such as these:
 - a. How did you like this exercise?
 - b. Was it difficult to take a position in some cases? Which ones?



- c. Did you ever change your position? What made you do so?
 - d. Were there some statements which were more complicated than others?
 - e. Are there some statements you are still uncertain about?
 - f. Would you like to discuss some issues further?
 - g. Did you learn something new from this activity? If so, what?
2. Relate the activity to the right to participation by asking questions such as these:
- a. Did you see any connection among these questions?
 - b. Are you able to participate in decision making in your family? Your class or school? Your community? Any other situation in your life?
 - c. Point out that participation is an important right of every child, and read them Article 12 of the CRC. Can you imagine some new areas in which you could to participate?
 - d. Why do you think the right to participation is important for children?

Suggestions for follow-up

- At the end of the discussion, divide the children into group of three or four and give each group copies of the statements used in the activity. Ask each group to reformulate the statements in a way that they all can agree upon. Compare their restatements.
- The activities 'A CONSTITUTION FOR OUR GROUP', P. 56, or 'EVERY VOTE COUNTS', P. 103, emphasize active participation in democratic processes.

Ideas for action

- Encourage the children to find ways of participation, e.g. speaking up for their concerns in the school or groups, writing letters to local political figures on local issues that concern them.
- Ask the children to write articles expressing their opinion on situations in their lives (e.g. family, organization, class, school, district). Publish these as a group newspaper or bulletin board display.

Tips for the facilitator

- Make sure that all the children, even the less outspoken ones, have a chance to express their opinion. You might call on quieter children to express their opinions.
- Discussion time on each statement should be limited so that the activity does not become too long.
- To keep the children alert, encourage stretching or do a quick energizer between questions.

Adaptation for older children

- Make more gradations of opinion (e.g. Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree).

Variations

- Develop statements relevant to your local situation and familiar to the children.
- Develop statements relating to any other children's rights theme (e.g. right to association, equality, information, environment, family and alternative care).



SAMPLE STATEMENTS

- All children, even the youngest, have the right to express their opinion on matters affecting them.
- Children have no rights to participate in family decision making. Parents know best what is best for children.
- It can be dangerous for children to express their views on school issues.
- Only outspoken or older children can participate in decision making.
- Every child can participate in the school parliament / student council with equal rights.
- Children who have been in trouble with the law lose their right to participate in any decision making process.
- Not all children have the same right to participate. Poor children cannot participate as much as others.
- To participate at school means to talk a lot in class.
- If one's parents are separated or divorced, children have the right to express their views in the legal process.

