

December 3, 2006

Ms. Jen Friday:
Hartford Magnet Middle School
53 Vernon St.
Hartford, CT. 06106

Ms. Friday:

We are Trinity College juniors who have been working on a project concerning the legal status of children. More specifically, we are attempting to implement a children's rights curriculum for seventh graders at the Hartford Magnet Middle School.

Based on our research and discussions with community members involved with children's rights, we believe that a curriculum targeting students would be the most effective method to disseminate this information. We found that children can represent a fundamental and social shift in societal view points if educated properly. This is particularly important in Hartford because of the poverty and dual racism that children are exposed to everyday. If children are empowered and believe they can make a difference for social change they are more likely to do so.

We have developed a curriculum that for three consecutive hour and twenty minute social studies classes. This curriculum will help children understand the rights they may or may not know they have. It will also introduce the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. They will also learn about children's rights on a local, regional, and global scale and will be given the opportunity to be part of the solution.

We are asking that you add our curriculum to the seventh grade social studies curriculum. This curriculum would be a great introduction to the VOICES project at HMMS, that seventh graders do as part of the civics section of social studies. There is a strong push for children's rights to be recognized and significant research to support this. Despite this push we feel that children are not being educated properly about these rights. It is our hope that our curriculum will solve this problem.

We have enclosed three copies of the curriculum for you to review and/or distribute to your colleagues. If you would like any additional copies or have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: WHAT
EVERY CHILD NEEDS TO
KNOW



Procedure:

This curriculum should be taught over three consecutive social studies classes for seventh graders. It is designed for a block scheduled social studies class is in session for one hour and twenty minutes.

Goals:

Our goal in drafting this curriculum is to spread awareness of the legal status of children as well as their rights. We want to inform children of their rights so they will become active citizens and promote social change. We also want to impress upon children that they can make a difference in their schools, hometowns, and neighborhoods.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will analyze and evaluate children's rights in the United States.
- Students will investigate a current event related to children's right in Hartford through discussion.
- Students will draw conclusions through their own experiences.
- Students will become activists in children's rights.
- Students will enhance their verbal and writing skills.
- Students will enhance their critical and analytical thinking skills.
- Students will gain insight on children's rights advocacy.
- Students will enhance their computer research skills.

Materials:

- "What is a Right" Worksheet (one for each student)
- Pens and Pencils
- Chalk

- Computers with internet access and Microsoft word (one per group)
- Envelopes (4)
- Stamps (4)
- Paper
- Printer

CLASS ONE:

Goal:

The overall goal for class one is for children to conceptualize human rights in terms they can understand.

Objectives:

- Students will conceptualize the meaning of a right.
- Students will enhance their critical thinking.
- Students will facilitate meaningful discussion on children's rights.
- Students will look at children's rights in relation to Hartford.

Activities:

For the first half of class the teacher will pose the question "What is a right?" They will then facilitate a discussion using the "What is a right" Worksheet (see appendix 1). The instructor also has the option at this point to break the children up into groups to further discuss the worksheet.

The next part of class the teacher will introduce the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in plain language, taken from. After the children read this they will discuss if they believe they have these rights.

Assignment:

At the conclusion of class the teacher will pose the question “As a student in Hartford, do you think that all Hartford students have these rights? Do you have these rights? Why or why not?” this will be assigned as a one to two page paper.

Resources for Class One:

United Nations CyberSchoolBus: Declaration of the Rights of the Child (Plain Language)
<http://www0.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/plainchild.asp>

- Put together by the UN, this version of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child simplifies the dense law jargon used in the official document to a form in which children can understand.

CLASS TWO:

Goal:

The overall goal for class two is for students to become experts on one topic of children’s rights. We want children to feel compelled to learn more about children’s rights in Hartford though research they find.

Objectives:

- Students will identify and utilize relevant research material.
- Students will develop a broader technological basis.
- Students will enhance their verbal skills.
- Students will become familiar with different advocacy agents.

Activities:

For the first ten minutes of class the instructor will review what a right is and each student will briefly discuss their paper. The instructor will then break the children up into four groups. Each group will be assigned a specific right (protection from violence, health care, education, and leisure). The groups will then use the Human Rights Watch

Children's Rights website and Google to research their topic. During this time the instructor is to go around and facilitate discussion within each group and guide them to various online resources. The instructor will also note at this time how each group and individual is contributing. After thirty to forty minutes the groups will each talk for approximately five minutes on their topic.

Assignment:

The homework assignment will be to find a local newspaper article that relates to their topic and write a one to two page response.

Resources for Class Two:

Human Rights Watch: Children's Rights

<http://hrw.org/children/>

- This website gives up to date information on children's rights issues. It also has a specific subsection for children's rights in the United States where children can get resources for advocacy options.

CLASS THREE:

Goals:

The goal for class three is for children to learn to write a letter for advocacy. We want children to feel empowered and want to make a difference in children's rights by writing this letter.

Objectives:

- Students will enhance their writing skills.
- Students will learn how to write a letter of advocacy.
- Students will develop cooperative skills.
- Students will become eloquent activists for social change.

Activities:

For the first ten minutes of class the instructor will facilitate a discussion about the newspaper articles that the children found for homework and how they relate to children's rights. The children will then break into their groups and work on writing a letter to their city or state representative on the right they picked the last workshop. The instructor will use the "Power of the Pen" activity, taken from Human Rights Here and Now to aid the children in writing their letters. The children will also be given the "Right to Write" sheet, taken from the United Nations website as a guide for writing their letters. They will spend the rest of class drafting their letter. During this time the instructor will aid the students by listening in on their group discussions and giving suggestions; they will also mail the letters after class.

Resources for Class Three:

United Nations CyberSchoolBus: The Right to Write

<http://www0.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/letter.asp>

- This webpage gives suggestions and a step-by-step outline of how to write a formal letter to a state representative on a children's rights topic. It is geared to students who have never written a letter of advocacy before, therefore it gives specifics.

Human Rights Here and Now: The Power of the Pen

http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/hreduseries/hereandnow/Part-4/9_action-activity5.htm

- This webpage is a curriculum activity edited by Nancy Flowers. It guides teachers in aiding their students' letter writing skills. This activity is given in two sections with step-by-step instructions.

Additional Resources and Contacts:

Websites:

Children's Rights

<http://www.childrensrights.org>

- A national watchdog organization that has been active in protecting children's rights since 1995. This site provides up to date resources and articles, as well as suggestions on how to be an advocate for social change.

CRIN: Child Right's Information Network

<http://www.crin.org>

- A global network that advocates for children's rights. This website has a plethora of information on children's rights. It also has resources specifically geared to children.

UNICEF: Convention on the Rights of the Child

<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

- This website is part of the global peace group, UNICEF. This site gives the full Convention on the Rights of the Child and advocates for children's rights education.

Amnesty International: USA

<http://www.amnestyusa.org>

- This site is run by Amnesty International and provides news stories on children's rights issues. It also has resources and letter writing campaign options.

Contacts:

The International Center for Tolerance Education

Bao Pham

Human Rights Fellow

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- This is the name and address of the human rights fellow with ICTE. She has developed a human rights curriculum for middle school students in her fellowship.

Maryam Elahi

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- Ms. Elahi was a former advocacy director for Amnesty international and now is the director of the Human Rights Program at Trinity College. She is an excellent resource for advocacy ideas. She also leads her college students in educating younger children on human rights.

Handout for “Is it a Right” used in Class One

The United States	Yes/No/Maybe	Facts/Reasons
Protection from Violence		
Health Care		
Education		
Leisure (Play Time)		