



Commemorating Human Rights Day

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Organizing a Human Rights Day can involve a group of students/participants, a single classroom, or the entire school. Commemorating such international days is a good way of raising awareness and enriching educational content and methods. Organizing a Human Rights Day can appeal to educators of all age groups. Students/participants are confronted with human rights issues from a young age, though they might not be familiar with key human rights documents or the concept of human rights protection framework. Commemorating the International Human Rights Day (December 10) is a good way to introduce them to the topic.

This document contains several suggestions of how the International Human Rights Day (or other relevant commemorative dates of different specific human rights) can be recognized through activities with students/participants. Please note that organizing a Human Rights Day cuts across the curriculum. Therefore, it is useful to involve subject teachers/educators from different disciplines.

INVITE A GUEST SPEAKER WHO WILL ADDRESS THE CLASS/SCHOOL

Having an engaging guest speaker is a great way to complement your teaching and to get students/participants interested in human rights related topics. The options for inviting guest speakers are numerous: you can invite someone from notable human rights organizations, for e.g. Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch, to talk to students/participants about their organization's work and some of the current issues in the human rights protection domain. Other alternatives for guest speakers could be someone from your town who was involved in a human rights campaign (perhaps a parent of one of the students/participants?). Another option is to involve someone from a specialized non-governmental organization (non-profit in North America) or association that deals with refugees, human trafficking, freedom of press/speech, etc. Finally, you can also invite a speaker with a particular background (for e.g. a refugee/asylum seeker; Holocaust survivor; LGBTIQ+ activist; person with disabilities; a member of a minority, etc.) to tell the class/group about their life experiences as a form of a contemporary witness testimony.

CONNECT WITH A LOCAL/NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION

Consider connecting with a well-known international human rights organization, for e.g. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, or with a regional one (for e.g. in former Yugoslavia countries, Youth Initiative for Human Rights), and organize a school chapter of such an organization. Alternatively, they could be asked to offer a specialized human rights education programme in your school for either several classes, or for an extracurricular group of students/participants interested in the subject. Many non-governmental organizations focus on promoting active citizenship and human rights education, and they would be happy to receive an invitation to address your students/participants. Some organizations also offer traveling educational content, such as exhibitions (for e.g. Anne Frank - History for Today traveling exhibition, which is available in dozens of countries), classroom workshops based on discussions or debates (Free2choose - exploring human rights dilemmas), etc.

ORGANIZE A SCREENING OF A HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTARY/MOVIE

It is a growing trend to have human rights or social justice inspired film festivals every once in a while. Your school/group could contact the organizers of such festivals and ask them to organize a screening of an age-appropriate human rights or social justice themed documentary or film, for your entire school. Alternatively, you could yourself seek out an appropriate documentary or film that centers around a particular human rights topic, have your class watch it, and then hold a discussion/reflection about the film and its impression on the students/participants. Finally, there are many human rights raising awareness / educational short film clips on YouTube, created by the UN and its related agencies (for e.g. short film about the Human Rights Day, created in 2016, detailing the United Nations' relationship with human rights protection efforts: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYleie80B3M>).

ORGANIZE A HUMAN RIGHTS THEMED THEATRE PERFORMANCE

If there is a drama club in school, organize a performance of a human rights related play, which would be ideally followed by discussion or by homework on the related subject. You could base your school play on one or more of exercises developed by Augusto Boal in his Theater of the Oppressed methodology; you could base your (school) play on a well-known, relatable to youth human rights book or story, etc.

SET UP AN ARTISTIC EXHIBITION SURROUNDING DIFFERENT HUMAN RIGHTS THEMES

Additional artistic projects that could be done with a group of students/participants in extracurricular projects could be organizing a human rights-themed exhibition. The students/participants could be tasked with designing and developing their own posters, or human-rights info-panels on various specific topics related to human rights. For e.g., assign each group (classes or groups of participants who wish to participate in the activity) a human right they have to present in a picture (or a statue). Have an exhibition of these pictures signed with the appropriate human right. The activity requires the students/participants to think about the essence of each right (to have an idea for the picture or figure out what their peers, the authors of the picture, had in mind). Also, the students/participants become curious, what their colleagues' pictures look like. It can be very engaging. Such an exhibition can also be created online.

COMMEMORATE ANOTHER THEME FROM THE HUMAN RIGHTS CALENDAR

A Human Rights Day does not need to take place every year on December 10th - what you can consider is organizing a special human rights-inspired classroom activity or school commemoration, using any of the international days on the Human Rights Calendar - for the list of these specialized raising-awareness dates, see: http://www.eycb.coe.int/Compass/en/chapter_2/calendar.html Council of Europe's Compass Manual for Human Rights, also on this web page, provides examples of activities you can do for each of these days. Examples of these specialized raising-awareness dates on the Human Rights Calendar are the International Women's Day (March 08); World Roma Day (April 08); World Refugee Day (June 20), etc.

CONNECT WITH ANOTHER SCHOOL FROM YOUR COUNTRY/ABROAD

You can organize an awareness-raising or connection-building virtual activity between your class and students/participants in another country, where you prepare to ask each other about the state of human rights (or social justice) in your countries (each group gets the same list of questions, and they prepare the answers before the group skype call between the two countries). The project need not focus on human rights but could instead be an element of global intercultural learning experience for your students/participants. There are several

initiatives of connecting classrooms worldwide, so it is best to research each one to find the best fit for your school/students/participants (See for e.g. <https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/about-programmes/connecting-classrooms>)

CREATE A SCAVENGER HUNT

Place QR codes (generated online for free, e.g. here: <https://www.qr-code-generator.com>) in multiple places around the school grounds. Each code should link to a different task (created by the teachers/educators of the school/educators and related to human rights (or social justice) issues, preferably with a “local focus”; tasks can be interactive puzzles, riddles, newspaper article analysis, questions about movies, books etc. on human rights, something practical like taking a photo of a specific item in an exhibition in a city museum or conducting a short interview/survey - whatever comes to mind. You can also have a group of students/participants prepare those tasks for the rest of the school community - have them actively involved in the tasks that can range from very easy, like finding an answer to a specific question online, to making a short movie on a given subject - depending on the timeframe of the hunt. Each clue should contain a clue where to find the next code. The hunt can last a day or a few months - it's a really flexible type of project. Once each task has been completed by a participant, some kind of reward can be given to them (if the activity lasts longer than a day - points may be collected to determine the winner) - again, depending on the school's reality and the game organizers' creativity. The idea of a human rights scavenger hunt requires creativity, but is easily adjustable to a school's conditions and needs.

ARRANGE A MEDIA BASED HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVITY

If your school has a newspaper, encourage students/participants to write an article on a human rights (or social justice) related topic. You can also encourage your students/participants to get in contact with a local broadcaster or newspaper and have them advocate for prevention of a specific current human rights violation or include a broader focus in their program on human rights topics. Another way of involving students/participants in a media-based human rights activity is to have students/participants organize their own social media campaign about different human rights topics. For the younger generations this is also an effective way for raising awareness about actual human rights issues through the application of new media (Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, etc.).

RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS IN YOUR COMMUNITIES

Organize research-based activities with students/participants by having them interview people in the community about a specific human rights topic and prepare a presentation for their classmates based on the results of this research in the community. Research-based activities can be an indirect way of raising awareness about a certain topic, through interaction with a larger number of individuals one would not necessarily interact with otherwise.

ONLINE IMPLEMENTATION

If you are commemorating Human Rights Day in an online environment, you can implement the above-mentioned suggestions using Zoom, Microsoft Teams platform or Google Classroom. These allow you to hold video meetings in which invited guest speakers can participate. These platforms offer the option of sharing video content (documentaries or feature films on human rights) with students/participants. Furthermore, these platforms offer the possibility of virtual connection to different schools.

ORGANIZE AN ONLINE INTERVIEW WITH A GUEST SPEAKER

Online teaching makes it easy to organize online interviews with human rights organizations. Multiple platforms support video calling, so that students/participants can interview invited guest activists, who can give a lecture to students/participants or present their human rights activities. Encourage students/participants to compose questions for the invited guest before the online interview, and additional questions that students/participants want answered can be asked to the guest via chat. If you are comfortable with this, have the students/participants take full responsibility for the process, with you in a support role.

ORGANIZE ONLINE CAMPAIGN

Consider joining the Write for Rights online campaign run by Amnesty International (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/>). Encourage students/participants to choose and research one topic on human rights protection or one person whose human rights have been violated. Motivate students/participants to study the personal story of activists whose human rights have been violated and to send them an e-mail of support or a letter to contact the activist. Students'/participants' e-mails that promote or advocate human rights can also be sent to local and national government bodies (for example, committees or human rights administrations).

Social networks provide students/participants with the opportunity to engage in online campaigns that raise awareness of human rights. For example, students/participants can join the United Nations Stand Up for Human Rights online campaign (<https://www.standup4humanrights.org/en/social-media.html>) to promote human rights on social media. Furthermore, students/participants can organize their own online campaigns to raise awareness and promote specific human rights.

ORGANIZE A VIRTUAL EXHIBITION OF STUDENT CREATIVE WORKS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Encourage students/participants to use digital tools in order to create a virtual exhibition and present their research on a particular human rights topic (for example, human rights history, human rights activists in history and present, human rights protection, etc.). One of the free digital tools that students/participants can use to create a virtual exhibition on human rights is Artsteps (<https://www.artsteps.com/>). This tool simulates a walk through the gallery, so a visitor can view exhibits such as images, videos, three-dimensional objects or texts. Visitors to the virtual exhibition can comment and rate viewed exhibits. Student/participant virtual galleries can be shared or posted via social media, as well.

CREATE A FAKEBOOK PROFILE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

The Fakebook website (<https://www.classtools.net/FB/home-page>) allows students/participants to create profiles that resemble the profiles of the social network Facebook. With the help of this website, students/participants can create Fakebook profiles of human rights activists from history, as well as a chronological sequence of historical events and processes in the development of human rights. Students/participants can also create Wikipedia pages on human rights activists that did not yet exist.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE OR SURVEY

Digital tools for creating questionnaires or surveys allow students/participants to conduct individual or group research on attitudes or knowledge of human rights. For example, students/participants can ask their peers or adults in the local community questions in order to assess the level of knowledge about human rights, or to research strategies for implementing human rights protection or personal experiences of respondents with human rights violations. Some of the free online tools for creating an online human rights questionnaire are:

- Google Forms (<https://www.google.com/forms/about/>),
- Kahoot (<https://kahoot.it/>) or
- kwiksurveys (<https://kwiksurveys.com/>).



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