

The Children's Rights Checklist in the class

To: the teacher, the class assistant, the school social worker, the trainee, the parent.

KinderrechtenNU has developed – with the advice of children in the age Group 8 – 13 years and assistance from endowed professor Jan Willems and clinical psychologist Martine Delfos, the Children's Rights Checklist. This checklist enables the wellbeing and development of each individual children to be (preventively) assessed. The checklist provides, as does also the UN Treaty with regard to the Rights of the Child, for all aspects essential for each child's development to adulthood in a balanced, safe and healthy manner. The Children's Rights Checklist provides (indirectly) answers to the questions:

- *What is required in order to be able to grow up as successfully as possible?*
- *How should we treat one another?*
- *How should we care for one another?*
- *How can we help each other?*
- *What can I do myself?*
- *Where can I find assistance?*

Introducing the Children's Rights Checklist to the class

1. Have the children sit in a circle.
2. Ask the children: 'What do children need in order to be able to grow up?' Keep the Children's Rights Checklist nearby when doing so and use it to note what has been said, ensuring that the children have said it themselves. An occasional prompt or some encouragement will be required. This should take about half an hour.
3. Then tell them that they've done really well with their ideas and that representatives of 194 countries of the United Nations in New York have the same ideas. They've written them down in the Treaty with regard to the Rights of the Child (1989). Every country – the Netherlands in 1995 – has signed the treaty and promised to do everything to ensure that children have the opportunity to grow up successfully. They have promised to abide by the treaty.
4. The next question for the pupils is: Who is responsible for compliance with the Children's Rights Treaty? Who has to fulfil it? In most cases children will reply in the following order: the queen, the prime minister, parliament, the government, ministry ...
5. Then the question: 'Will they be able to do that alone?' (Is the prime minister going to bring you a sandwich?) Who are those people in the city council? The mayor – the city councillor – civil servants – the neighbourhood policeman – the teacher – the parents – the babysitter - ...?
6. And then: 'Who can you possibly have forgotten? 'You've forgotten young people!?' The children themselves! They're responsible too'. The most obvious examples are bullying and too many snacks with too little exercise.
7. Then it's the turn of the pupils with the **Children's Rights Checklist**. The list is checked off one more time and their answers once more confirmed.

Children's Rights Checklist, points for improvement and protocol Alarm Code for children

1. Tell the children that when they answer a question with "no" it becomes a point for improvement. When you have a point for improvement you have to do something. It is a point for improvement and requires an improvement plan. That may be something that the children themselves can do, but there again they may need help. This is the point at which you can cautiously raise the issues of child abuse or domestic violence. More often than not the children will raise those issues themselves. What if there's really something amiss? What should you do?
2. A protocol has been developed with children and for children addressing what to do in cases of domestic violence or child abuse. Teach the children:

the protocol for the child itself is:

LOOK FOR AS LONG AS IT TAKES TO FIND AN ADULT WHOM YOU TRUST AND WHO WILL LISTEN TO YOU AND HELP YOU.

the protocol for children that want to help another child is:

LOOK FOR AS LONG AS IT TAKES TO FIND AN ADULT WHOM YOU TRUST AND WHO WILL LISTEN TO YOU AND HELP YOU.

3. End the conversation with the children by agreeing with them that the Children's Rights Checklist will be hung on the classroom wall and that **any of the children may come to you with a point for improvement!**
4. Go round the class again in order to allow every child to say what he/she made of the discussion and to provide them with the opportunity to compliment anybody who had a good explanation of children's rights or any single children's right.
5. Children may at all times – every day – present subjects that they want to discuss (for example something seen on children's television news or something that happened). Try to establish with the children the connection with children's rights. If you need more information in order to do so, you are always free to contact KinderrechtenNU.

Important

Think of the Children's Rights Checklist as an umbrella under which all subjects coalesce. All those (painful) subjects that we cannot avoid discussing with children. And certainly when the children themselves raise a question like that, ample opportunity will have to be given to addressing it. Children's rights apply every single day:

- during the group discussion
- in the playground
- during the parents' evening
- while having an argument
- in the pupils' council
- during the project week
- during the reading lesson
- or...

and don't forget your commitment to the youth ambassadors of your school, the Council of Youth Ambassadors and the Children's Rights Coach of your municipality.¹

KRNU has learned that this approach stimulates the level of commitment of pupils when discussing the children's rights treaty. The discussion is successful. Children's participation is very much a matter of coming up together with an idea and then realizing it. So be careful not to dictate content, leaving the thinking and inquiry to the pupils and then listening enthusiastically to what they think about it... and what they would do...

Result

Children will learn from you what every child needs in order to be able to grow up safely and develop as successfully as possible. They learn to distinguish between what is good and what is not. They learn that there may be points for improvement in their lives that they have to address themselves. They learn to recognize the people who are there to help them. They learn to help others. They are challenged to develop a vision of how we can best relate to one another.

They are being prepared for their future role as educator!

For more information: www.kinderrechten.nu, info@kinderrechten.nu

¹ You can see on the site of KinderrechtenNU in which municipalities a Children's Rights Coach has been appointed and the Council of Youth Ambassadors installed. For the Children's Rights Coach the Children's Rights Checklist is the guideline for examining the world of children.

The Children's Rights Coach has a duty to ensure that the Children's Rights Checklist is firmly on the agenda so that children's rights are implemented in the community and the ideas of children included in the decisions taken.