

3) Why are children learning about their rights at school?

At our school we teach children about their rights because it helps them succeed in school and in life. When children learn about their rights research* finds:

- There is a decline in bullying and less classroom disruption
- Children demonstrate more positive conflict resolution skills with their peers and with adults
- Children show greater concern for themselves, each other and children in other parts of the world
- Children are more likely to use higher order thinking**
- Children are less likely to be excluded
- Children are more likely to attend school
- Children learn the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, both as a Canadian and as a global citizen who contributes positively to the world

(adapted from [UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Brochure](#))

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that children, as well as adults, know about the rights described within it. Schools are the logical place to reach the vast majority of children.

Does teaching children's rights take time away from other classes?

No. Children's rights are not taught as a separate course. The children's rights curriculum blends with existing classes in social studies, health, and personal development. Some teachers have also adapted the activities for use in math and other classes.

What are children learning about their rights?

Children learn what the rights are, the difference between rights and wants, and how to uphold (respect) the rights of others. This can be taught in different ways depending on the child's grade. The goal of the children's rights curriculum is to assist children in achieving their potential and being responsible citizens.

**According to the research of Katherine Covell and Brian Howe, researchers at the Children's Rights Centre at Cape Breton University*

***Higher order thinking means thinking outside of the box. It means connecting ideas, making predictions, and evaluations. One way you can help encourage higher order thinking is to ask your child questions while you read or watch TV together. Instead of asking "what colour was Billy's hair" you can ask, "why do you think Billy behaved that way?" or "what would you do in that situation" or "do you think that commercial we just watched is making true claims?"*

We gratefully acknowledge Drs. Covell and Howe for their research and contributions to this article. Dr. Covell is currently the Child Rights Expert in Residence at the Society for Children and Youth of BC.