

Social Justice for Youth in School

English

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SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR YOUTH IN SCHOOLS

Adapting to the school environment in Canada can be tough for newcomer youth. Children and teenagers typically go through challenging experiences in school, including bullying and conflicts. For immigrants and refugees, those challenges can be more overwhelming than they are for Canadian-born students, because of past experiences and background. Getting used to North American society takes time, and it won't happen overnight. It is ideal that schools have interpreters and counsellors to help newcomer students adapt and achieve academic success, but that is not always the case. In addition to that, there may be issues with inequality and injustice in schools. Concepts of justice may vary depending on the country. In Canada, social justice involves equality and the promotion of human rights for all individuals.



EQUALITY OF RACE

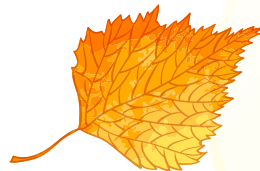
People from different cultures, ethnicities, races and ancestries make Canada their home. Canada is a multicultural country that has pride in its diversity, and Canadian schools are no exception. Discrimination based on race is illegal and violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Historically, visible minorities, such as indigenous people and immigrants have been victims of racism in Canada. However, it is necessary to discontinue that pattern of discrimination, through integration with the community. It is important to celebrate multiculturalism and understand that diversity is part of Canadian culture.





GENDER EQUALITY

Canadian schools are the same for boys and girls. There is no need to separate the children, because both genders have equal value and can get along with each other. Inclusive education ensures that all youth will have the same opportunities in the future, regardless of their gender. This is not only part of Canadian society, but the basis of several modern societies in the world. Gender equality means equal rights for men and women, boys and girls. That is, both genders have the same rights and the same responsibilities in society. Pursuing gender equality does not necessarily mean that all traditional cultural values must be left behind. Practices that are not harmful to individuals may continue, but discrimination and oppression should not be the norm.



CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The rights of children and youth in Canada are protected by law. Children rights include:

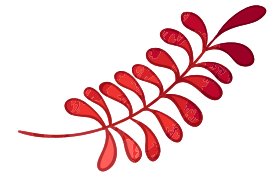
- Freedom from all forms of violence
- Freedom from poverty
- Freedom from exploitation in the workplace and sexual exploitation
- Right to healthy living conditions and healthcare
- Right to an education
- Right to access information
- Right to distinct criminal justice approaches
- Right to childhood care and development
- Right to play
- Right to a family, identity and culture

Refugee and immigrant children and youth also have the right to have their best interests taken into account by immigration officers, in humanitarian and compassionate ways (Convention on the Rights of the Child). This means that the immigration process will consider what is best for each child before making a decision. In addition to those, youth in Canada also have the same rights as all other individuals, such as the right to be considered innocent until proven guilty in court, the right to a fair trial and the right to not suffer cruel punishment.





BULLYING



Bullying is part of the everyday lives of many children. It involves any behaviour that is used to harm or scare another student at school, and it is not always physical. Bullying can also be verbal, such as threats and derogative comments about someone's physical characteristics, ethnicity, place of origin, or sexual orientation. Segregating other children, humiliation, spreading rumors and physically hurting them are also examples of bullying.

The consequences of bullying are always negative, and include low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, mental health issues and isolation for the bullied person. Practicing bullying is never acceptable.



YOUTH RESPONSIBILITIES AS GOOD CITIZENS

Every person in Canada must follow the law, even if they don't agree with it. It is assumed that everyone knows the law. That includes people in authority positions (such as the government, the military and the police), and common citizens. While all individuals are granted rights and freedoms in Canada, they must also respect the rights of other people. Failing to do so may result in charges and the person may have to face trial.

All youth between 12 and 17 years old are subject to the Youth Criminal Justice Act. That means that if a youth commits a crime, he or she may have to go to Youth Criminal Court to be tried by a judge. Everyone has the right to be represented by a lawyer in court and to have their human rights respected.

