

**Shaking the Movers 2019  
Rights Respecting Schools  
Ottawa**



**LAWSON**  
FOUNDATION



Landon Pearson Resource Centre  
for the Study of Childhood  
and Children's Rights



## **Shaking the Movers 2019 Rights Respecting Schools Ottawa**

The purpose of this report is to highlight the voices of young people who participated in a workshop on rights respecting schools on November 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> 2019 in Ottawa. It records the experience of a group of young people who were supported in the exercise of Article 12 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child: the right to take part in important civil and political processes with the assurance that their voices will be heard and valued.



## **Voices of Young People**

*We are stuck in the same place for six hours, people are starting to call school '6 cruel hours of my life' because a lot of people free trapped.*

*Nous devons être considéré.*

*Children are 100% of the future.*

*Il est très difficile à trouver les gens qui veut parler des droits d'enfants.*

*I feel like a lot of world problems stem from people being ignorant and illiterate. If a person sat down with people you are opposed to and you connect with them then you develop empathy for them. A lot of problems stem from the fact that people haven't been able to learn from each other. In school we have a chance to break those barriers.*

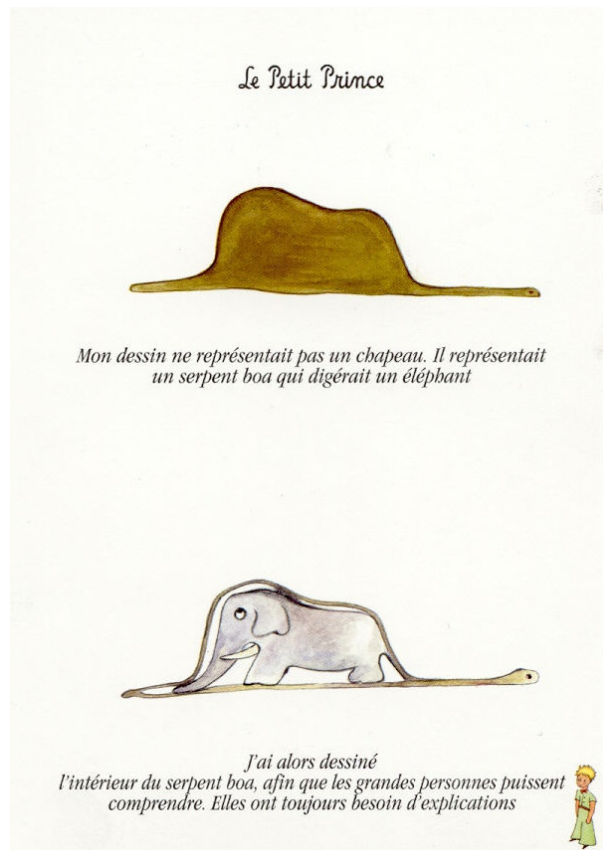


## What do you see?

The header of this report is an image from the well-known novel *Le Petit Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. In the story, the little prince asks an adult pilot what he thinks the little prince has drawn. The pilot replied, “a hat.” The little prince, however, was quick to correct the pilot, saying it is a snake that has eaten an elephant.

This report is about seeing the world through children’s eyes. The header should serve as a constant reminder to think about how you are listening to the voices of children, to think about how you are making space for their perspectives, and to think about how you are ensuring that what they say is heard, valued, and not dismissed as nonsense.

There are many ways to see the world.





## The Shaking the Movers Model

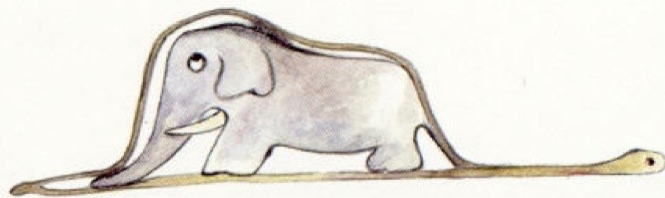
Shaking the Movers (STM) is a model for collaborative consultation with children and youth on public policy produced by the Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights housed at Carleton University. This model is premised on the position that the authentic participation of young people in decisions affecting their lives is necessary for the best possible policy outcome. Consequently, at Shaking the Movers events, the voices of young people are the centre of all discussions with youth facilitators assisting in the creation of safe, collaborative spaces. Furthermore, young people's experience with meaningful dialogue with the "movers" of society not only improves outcomes but enhances the self-confidence and the capability of young people to contribute to the world around them. At these workshops we enable children and young people to "have the floor," to present their unique perspectives and experiences, and to provide specific recommendations and input related to a children's rights theme.

### Core Values of the Model

- Well-prepared
- Focused on the youth
- Rights-based
- representation to the extent possible
- commitment to young people, to the process, and to communication is obligatory

[http://www.landonpearson.ca/uploads/6/0/1/4/6014680/shaking\\_the\\_movers\\_model.pdf](http://www.landonpearson.ca/uploads/6/0/1/4/6014680/shaking_the_movers_model.pdf)

For more information about Shaking the Movers and to view past reports, visit [www.carleton.ca/landonpearsoncentre](http://www.carleton.ca/landonpearsoncentre)



## **This Year's Theme**

Education, Diversity, and the Rights of Children

As little children move out from their families into the wider world the socializing institution with which most of them will first interact on a regular basis will be an educational one. For the youngest this may be an early childhood care and education centre from which they will then graduate, usually around the age of four or five years, to school-based kindergarten. None of these educational opportunities, however welcome, will be compulsory and for many children, especially the littlest ones, they may be neither available nor affordable. However, by the time a child turns six education throughout Canada becomes mandatory. Whether parents choose to send their children to a public or a private school, a religious or a secular one or even decide to school their children at home the provinces will impose certain standards and expectations that are common to all within an overarching state-supported educational system. This means that education in whatever form it is offered will inevitably be a significant force for the shaping of children's identity.

The 40 states that were involved in the drafting of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) were well aware of this reality and articles 28 and 29, which are the articles most directly related to education, embody their vision, a vision that has been elaborated over the past 30 years by the Committee on the Rights of the Children starting with its General Comment number 1 and expanded through concluding observations to the 196 state parties to the CRC that now appear regularly before it.

Article 28 firmly establishes the right of every child to education; no state has ever disagreed. It reads "and with a view to achieving this right progressively on the basis of equal opportunity [State Parties] shall, in particular; a) make primary education compulsory and free to all and b) work toward developing and making different forms of secondary education available and accessible to every child." Making education compulsory is the only way to ensure that no child, however marginalized, will be deprived an education as she or he has been in the past. Since the CRC was adopted in 1989 progress on the implementation of Article 28 has been impressive. However, given the current state of the world, with so many children out of school and on the move as a result of armed conflict and climate change, there is still a long way to go.

Having guaranteed the right to education in Article 28, Article 29 establishes its aims. It is worth quoting this article in full because if every school within which children (and adolescents) find themselves was truly able to structure itself according to these aims, then many of the difficult issues associated with student diversity would resolve themselves.

State Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

- 1 The development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- 2 The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the charter of the United Nations;
- 3 The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for civilizations different from his or her own;



- 4 The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
- 5 The development of respect for the natural environment.

It is notable that the key messages of Article 29 focus on the nurturing of a student's capacity for respectful relationships; with himself or herself, with significant others, with the natural environment and with something beyond themselves that gives meaning to their lives, all factors that are now understood to be crucial to sustainable mental health in children as well as adults. In these conditions not being the same as everyone else should not be a problem but some of the identity issues with which young people grapple today such as gender fluidity and the opportunities the internet provides to create a false identity were barely emerging when the CRC was being drafted; others, such as racism, sexism, and bigotry have existed forever. With some exceptions the youthful participants in our Shaking the Movers (STM) gatherings have found the educational systems with which they engage fall short of fulfilling the aims set out in Article 29. Indeed, in a constant refrain over the past decade, they have told us they often feel discriminated against simply because they are children. The evidence they offer is that they are rarely taught about children's rights and that this demonstrates a lack of respect for them as persons, as holders of the "equal and inalienable rights belonging to all members of the human family" alluded to in the preamble to the CRC along with their rights "to special care and assistance" owing to their age and vulnerability.

Over the years our young STM participants have made many recommendations related to the educational system and how it should change to be more child rights respecting. They have rarely complained in our sessions about individual teachers but have focused instead on problems within the school culture and the school curriculum. They feel their schools are increasingly out of synch with what has been shaping the lives of children and young people in Canada over the last decade or so. Demographics are changing along with the weakening of long-standing social structures, the digital world with all its pitfalls (and opportunities) is expanding rapidly, we may be on the verge of a climate catastrophe. At the same time, they feel that they have a great deal to offer and would very much like the school to help.

Our "Shakers" are honest enough to admit that they should do more to educate themselves and their friends about their rights and they would also like their parents and caregivers and others with whom they come in contact in the systems they sporadically encounter such as health care, child welfare and youth justice to be more rights sensitive. However, these are broader issues about education in general with respect to the issues of diversity and identity formation they have repeatedly brought to our attention and because going to school in Canada is not a choice, the focus of STM 2019 should, we believe, remain on the education system itself and how it could change.

Landon Pearson, August 21, 2019



## Ottawa Workshop on Rights Respecting Schools

The Ottawa 2019 STM on Rights Respecting Schools consisted of two one-day workshops in English and French. The workshops brought together 38 young people from across Ottawa to the Vanier Community Centre. Like all Shaking the Movers conferences, this event created a space for young people to express their views without anyone over the age of 30 present. Youth facilitators from the University of Ottawa guided discussions among the participants and had great success in making the conference a welcoming and safe environment. In just a few short hours, young people connected and revealed personal insights from their own experiences at school. This report highlights some of those revelations as well as brings to light the recommendations that sprang from the voices of the young people present.

The following report is divided into 4 sections that capture the content and focus of the Ottawa workshops.

1. Knowing Ourselves
2. Knowing Our Rights
3. Experiencing Our Rights
4. Demanding Our Rights





## Knowing Ourselves

Each of the workshop days began with a territorial land acknowledge to help situate participants on the land of the event. What followed was a series of activities to help facilitators and participants introduce themselves to each other. These introductory activities proved to be a crucial part of developing a safe, open, and welcoming environment for the remainder of the day.





## Knowing Our Rights

This section focuses on the ways that facilitators sought to develop knowledge among participants about their rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### 1) Skits/Vrai ou Faux

At the French language STM facilitators began the day with skits, which demonstrated different rights abuses. Facilitators asked participants discuss why what they saw was wrong. Next, participants engaged in a game of “vrai ou faux” about the different rights of children. Finally, participants discussed the differences between their wants and their rights.

**SKITS**



**VRAI OU FAUX**



**« Je ne savais pas que la convention existe »**

**« La discrimination existes dans les années 2000 »**

**« Je suis surpris que j’aie le droit d’expression »**



## 2) Discussing Articles 28 and 29

At the English-language STM, participants were asked to review articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As experts in their own lives, participants were asked to reflect on the words and ideas that most spoke to them.

**Article 28: You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can.**



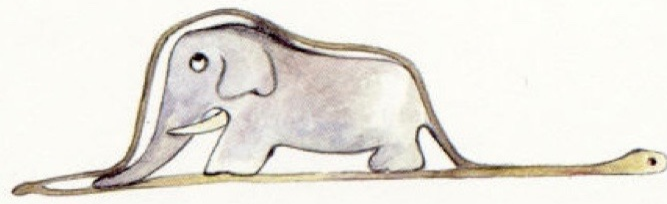
**Article 29: Your education should help you use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and**

### Equality

- *It's not just about being in school but also being treated equally.*
- *Education is important because it leads to your future. If you get bad education because you are not wealthy or rich you will not be able to have a good future.*
- *Equal opportunity means every child having chances to grow and every child having the same opportunity to succeed. In my school everyone gets to try out for a team (the coach doesn't just pick specific students).*
- *The girls and boys in my school get the same opportunities; we're not treated differently based on gender. In some places, girls get no opportunities or only some opportunities. I'm happy in Canada that everyone has a right to have a voice.*
- *All children should be able to have a chance to learn in many ways. So, if you want to go to school or learn something it's available for you.*

### Encourage

- *You have to try and encourage other students who don't believe in themselves to keep trying. Practice makes perfect.*
- *Even when schools are accessible to all kids, schools have to make sure students integrate into school so that they can have a chance and encourage others.*



- *My problem is not with the teachers but with the principals—checking in on student's backgrounds to see if a student is from a good or a bad family.*
- *Some teachers are a little hard on people who have moved here from another country because they are not used to the way school functions in this country.*
- *I wish teachers would make everyone comfortable and teach in a way that can reach everyone. I think teachers need to make themselves more accessible. Just because a student doesn't raise their hand in class discussion doesn't mean they're not here to learn. They might just not be comfortable. I have a teacher who makes herself available Monday's at lunch.*
- *Every teacher should make their students feel that they are super smart and that they can change the world. School shouldn't be about competition it should be self-directed and tailored to the needs of each students.*
- *People should learn to keep their language. Kids shouldn't be ashamed of their language even if you are the only kid in your class that speaks that language.*
- *Every kid has a different personality and we should respect that.*
- *School should teach you to respect your parents. Think about what your parents are for you.*
- *Schools shouldn't be a toxic place; you should be in an environment where people appreciate what you do and what you like to do.*

### **Good Quality**

- *Students should be able to do evaluations so things can improve and change positively.*
- *Schools should be getting students ready for the real world. It should be about how to work with people.*

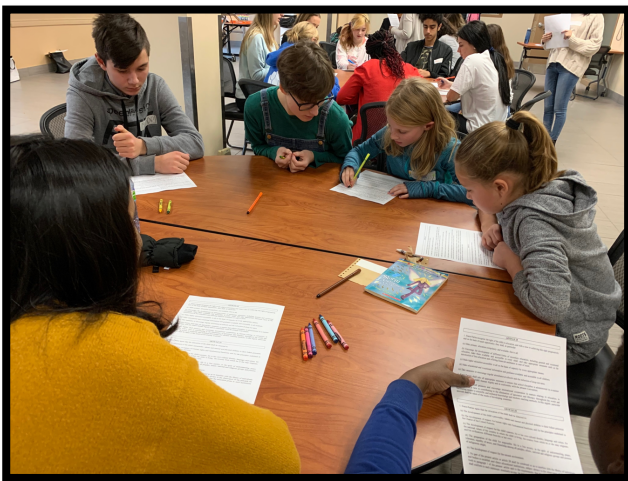
### **Live Peacefully**

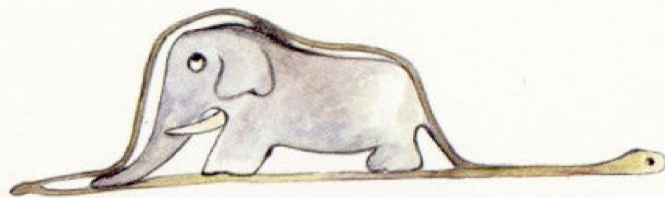
- *I feel like a lot of world problems stem from people being ignorant and illiterate. If a person sat down with people you are opposed to and you connect with them then you develop empathy for them. A lot of problems stem from the fact that people haven't been able to learn from each other. In school we have a chance to break those barriers.*
- *I think it's important to have more speakers at school from people who have experiences different than ours. For example, an Indigenous speaker or someone from the LGBTQ+ community.*



## Develop Talents and Abilities

- *Some kids in some schools, they find school boring because they don't get some stuff because teachers make it hard for them to understand. They should open up and think of how I could teach, "how would it be easier for kids to understand?" For example, some people all they talk about in schools in video games—put that into math while at the same time learning it. They'd understand it in their own way.*
- *If most students don't get disciplined, they always get away with what they want but it's not going to help them in life. Everyone has to be disciplined so that they are taught well within their family. They have to be taught was discipline is.*
- *School isn't just math and learning gym and everything. It's also cultural stuff. I wasn't born in the country my parents were form. They should teach you whatever language you like. You can't forget the language that you were born with.*
- *'Make higher education accessible to all' stood out to me because we should get more education for the future. It's about equal opportunity for everyone.*
- *Teachers should know what they can do to help students grow. If someone's talent is gym then they should have more gym so they can get better at it and achieve what they always wanted to be.*
- *You need to be responsible for what you do and take it seriously*





## Experiencing Our Rights

This section focuses on opportunities that participants had to express their opinion on different matters affecting them and their peers. In so doing, facilitators sought to strengthen participants experience with article 12 of the Convention: You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.

### 1) Rights-Based Bingo

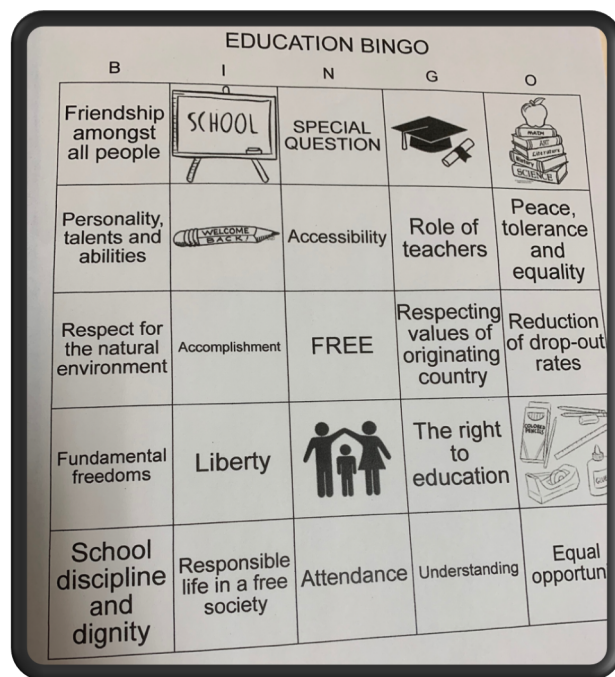
At the English-language workshop participants played a game called Rights-based Bingo. A letter from B.I.N.G.O. was called and then a phrase, which each participant hoped to find on their card. Participants tried to match the letter with a phrase on their bingo card but before they could cross off the square, they had to answer the question tied with the phrase. The phrases prompted questions relating to different rights of the CRC and asked for participant feedback on those topics.

**Do you feel free at school? Do you feel like you have liberty? Or do you feel trapped?**

- *I feel good about having recess and gym so that I can do what I want.*
- *We are stuck in the same place for six hours. People are starting to call school '6 cruel hours of my life' because a lot of people free trapped. One way to help this, is if there are more things that show creativity and art. School curriculum should be diversified.*

**Do you feel understood at school?**

- *Sometimes the way I talk people think I mean it in a rude way—but it was just how I was raised; when people don't know me, they think I'm trying to be rude.*
- *I was mad about something at recess and there was a kid who sat beside me and talked a lot in class. The teacher asked if I wanted to move because he had ADHD, but I said no because he was my friend. I was really patient with him and it got to the point where I was really mad so I said "STOP" loudly and the then the teacher sent me out of class. That didn't feel fair to me.*





- *It's a challenge to be new and to learn how to understand a new language. Schools should be more prepared for this.*
- *School should start later and then kids could learn more efficiently.*
- *Sometimes I wish there wasn't so much pressure.*

### **What do you think about your school's discipline methods?**

- *Someone I knew was wearing hood at school and the Vice Principle said, "that's the third time I've seen you in a hood." The student was taken to the principal's office. The principal told him "wear a hood again and I'll suspend you." It felt like excessive punishment.*
- *A sister of someone I know was getting hit in the head and the school didn't do much about it.*
- *It's the worst thing in the world when teachers says the whole class has to suffer because of one person.*
- *There's a specific teacher that is always pointing me out for specific unreasonable things. I accidentally hit the heater in the classroom with my chair when I was a little mad and she sent me to the hall with no reason.*
- *Sometimes at school the teachers really choose favourites. If a "good" student takes 10 minutes to go to the bathroom then it's fine. For others, if they're gone for more than six minutes it's a big problem. It should be the same expectation for everyone.*

### **What do you think would be a good school subject that doesn't exist?**

- *Lifestyles (having to use forks properly etc. Like respect school but not wearing dresses and heels; respect for other people)*
- *Humanitarian crises class; development issues around the world*
- *Self-help class*
- *Justice class*
- *Self-defense class*
- *Private lessons for where you want to go when you're older*
- *More art-based work and learning*





- *I wish kids weren't so mean. So bullying prevention.*
- *Students should receive more support for mental health issues.*

### **How do you think your school is teaching you about peace and gender equality?**

- *We don't learn much about it.*
- *We learn about how in other countries like in the Middle East and African countries women don't get the same kind of education or opportunities.*
- *Sometimes at my school we get a bad teacher, and if you're a guy he'll blame you for not doing well whereas if there's a girl who hasn't actually been paying attention, he'll bend over backwards to help them.*
- *People say girls are smarter than boys; boys are told they are stronger or better at sport.*
- *They don't, the closest thing we have is the anatomy of the human body.*
- *There are speakers who come into assemblies and talk about gender equality, but I don't think it's enough.*

### **How does your school promote respect for the environment?**

- *There's a club that's all about cleaning up parks (sometimes they give you volunteer hours and other times it's for free). Other schools should do that—give incentives to care about and learn about the environment.*
- *In our washrooms we have a compost bin.*
- *We have an eco-club at our school—we go around seeing how much energy we're using and how much compost. We also help with improving the yard.*
- *We made signs and walked around the school when Greta Thunberg was in Ottawa. I wish my school would do more of this—they should be spreading awareness of it.*





## 2) Partager des Opinions

At the French-language STM participants were asked to share their opinions on different topics through a sharing circle or using emojis to express their feelings. With the emojis participants could reveal whether they felt their rights were very respected, respected a little, they were unsure, or that they felt their rights were not respected.

*« Selon moi, oui, toutes les enfants ont le droit d'exprimer leur opinion, et les adultes doivent les écouter et prendre au sérieux ce qu'ils disent. »*



*« C'est bien de partager nos opinions. »*

*« J'ai le droit de connaître mes droits! C'est essentiel pour le jeune. »*

*« Si j'étais premier ministre, je voudrais cesser de vapoter »*

*« Chaque jour il y a quel qu'un qui m'a dit que mon opinion n'est pas importante. »*

*« Je sais maintenant que personne n'est supérieur que moi. Je veux donner mon opinion »*

*« Il faut que nous acceptions le diversité.»*

*« Je dois cacher ma religion mais j'ai le droit de la pratiquer! »*

*« Les enseignants ne permettent pas les langues maternelles. Oui, dans la classe c'est important que nous apprenions l'anglais mais pendant les corridors pourquoi on ne peut pas parler notre langue? »*

*« Les valeurs le plus importants pour moi soient ma religion, ma famille et le respect. »*

*« Les adultes disent que tu es encore petite ou ce que tu dits c'est trop enfantin. »*

*« Avec mes parents je ne peux pas dire ce que je veux »*

*« Je sens comme censuré à l'école. »*

*« À l'école j'ai la sécurité physique mais pas mentale. »*



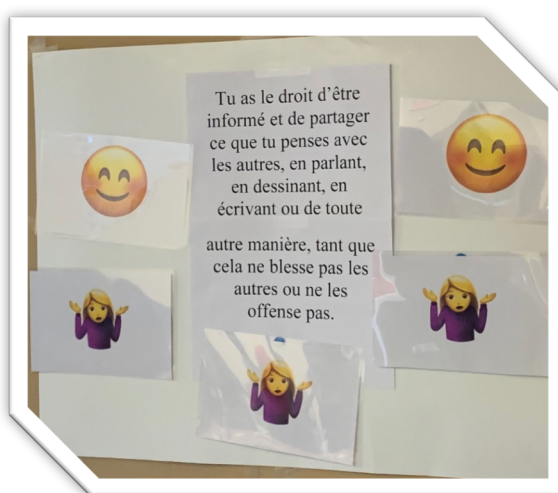
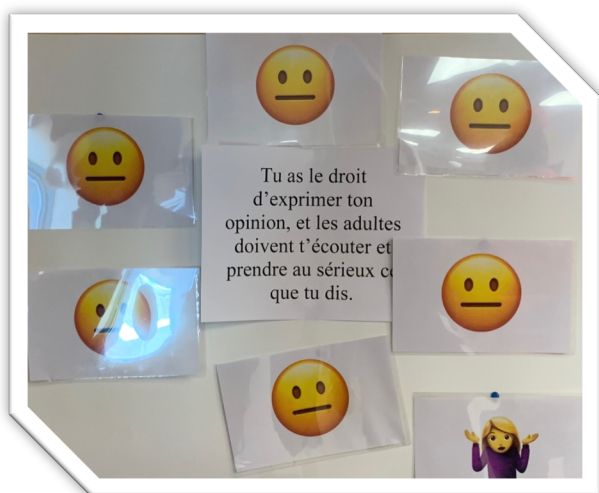
« Les enseignants disent que ‘vous êtes les immigrants, vous ne savez rien.’ »

« Quand j’étais un nouvel étudiant au Canada, je devais faire une présentation devant la classe. J’ai dit au professeur que j’avais peur mais il a dit que si je voulais réussir en class je devais présenter. Il n’a pas écouté mes préoccupations. »

« Toute le monde peut travailler ensemble. Les jeunes ont plus d’imagination et les adultes sont les guides. »

« Il est importante que nous célébrions la diversité de notre école. Les ‘jours culturelles’ n’est pas suffisante. »

« Il faut que les écoles protègent les étudiants contre discrimination. »







## What would you like to see in your school to help with mental health?

- *Someone to understand!*
- *Mental health classes*
- *Help students have goals bigger than themselves. For example. having them work with UNICEF*
- *I would like respect, love, and happiness shown to all.*
- *Adults being open and understanding to talk to kids. This generation needs that.*
- *Recognize the importance of self-care. Putting yourself as a priority.*
- *Change the stigma. Lots of people still think that mental health is a bad thing.*
- *Have resource rooms to reset.*
- *Have a mental health expert accessible in the school.*



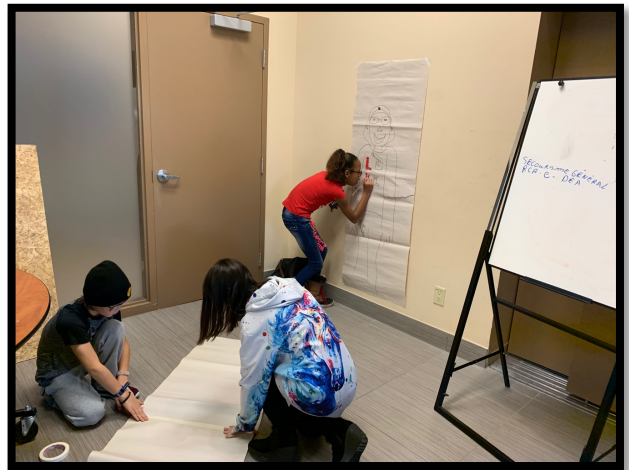


## Demanding Our Rights

In this final section, participants were asked more directly to think about how they envisioned a school environment where their rights were respected. It also aimed to address a repeated call to have more creative forms of expression.

### 1) Dessiner l'idéal

Participants of the French-language STM were asked to draw an outline of themselves and articulate the rights they felt were the most important to them.

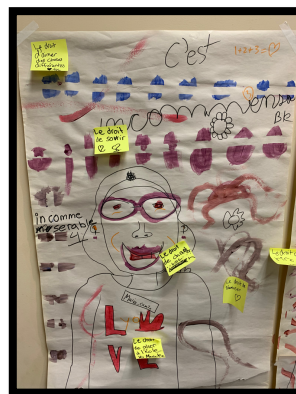
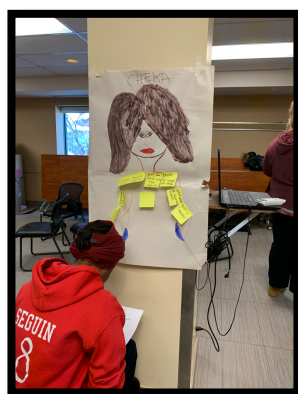


### Le droit...

De s'habiller	De rire	De voir
De manger	De parler	D'exister
D'aimer des choses différentes	De sourire	De chanter
De s'amuser	D'aller à l'école	D'aller à la toilette
De me reposer	D'aimer les autres	De dessiner



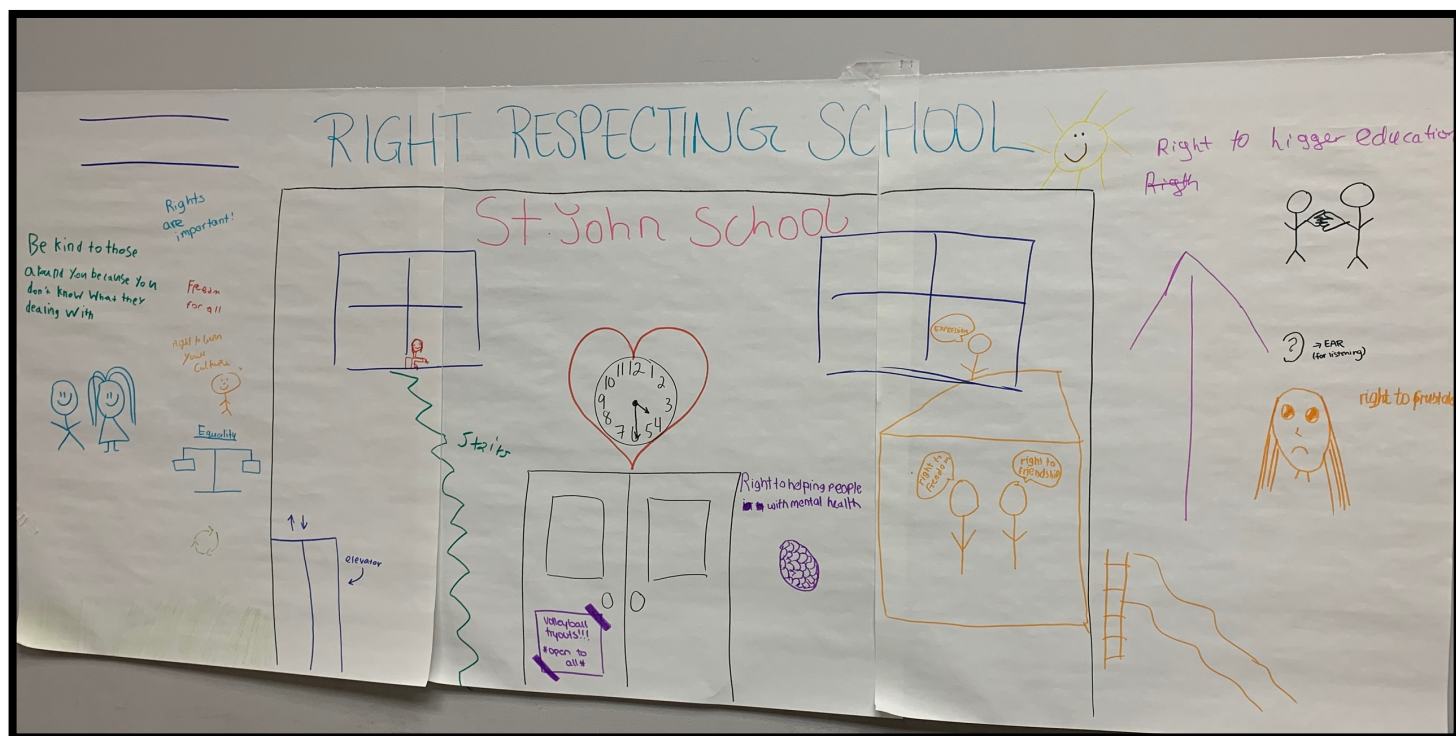
De crier	Au respect	De dire lorsqu'un adulte a fait une erreur
À la sécurité	À la parole	D'identité
De choisir	À la protection	De s'exprimer
À la liberté	Au soin médicale	De décider
De jouer	De penser	D'être confiant
D'être soi-même	À l'opinion	De l'égalité
De boire	Au loisir	À la famille
À son orientation	À l'amour	À la vie privée
À sa dignité	D'utilisation de cellulaire	De pratiquer notre religion





## 2) Imagining a Rights Respecting School

Participants of the English-language STM were asked to draw their vision of a rights respecting school.



- Be kind to those around you because you don't know what they are dealing with
- Rights are important
- Open to all
- Right to learn your culture
- Equality
- Accessibility-- stairs and elevator
- Incorporate mental health into health class. We learn the same thing every year about physical health, it would be easy to incorporate mental health into the discussion.
- Putting sexual health education into all the schools. It's not just about you and how you are but it's also about protecting yourself and thinking about how you treat other people.
- Don't end sports just because there is a tournament. Keep them going all year.
- Schools need to listen to the opinion of every child.





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In this report, young people have described school as a prison and a place where their voices are only occasionally heard. They have also offered compelling suggestions of how to make the school system what they need it to be. Such examples include more mental health support, the celebration of cultural diversity, and the development of learning programs tailored to the needs of the students and of their times. To embrace the learning in this document is to move closer to hearing the voices of young people. Listening is powerful. It is not, however, enough. The young participants of STM Ottawa demand and deserve action to have their rights respected.





« Je me rappellerai toujours que j'ai le droit de faire ce que je veux et de m'exprimer en tant que qui je suis. »



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