

What a Wonderful World

How do you want to live?



Complexity



7-13 years



50 minutes



4-30



Environment



Discrimination



Poverty

Type of activity

Drawing, discussion

Overview

Children draw contrasting pictures of environments where they would and would not like to live. They discuss which factors make a difference and how they can influence their own environment.

Objectives

- To discuss the concept and different components of 'environment'
- To assess the good and bad in different environments
- To discuss ways to protect and/or change our own environment and that of others

Materials

- Paper
- Colouring materials, e.g. paints, markers, crayons, pencils
- Drawing pins or sticky tape to hang up the drawings

Instructions

1. Ask children what they understand by 'the environment'. Make sure that everyone is clear about the meaning.
2. Lay out the paper and colouring materials. Invite the children to imagine an environment in which they would like to live. This can be a fictional or invented environment, or a real one. Ask them to draw their ideal environment.
3. Now ask the children to imagine an environment in which they would not like to live. Ask them to draw this environment.
4. When the drawings are finished, hang them up and invite the children to view the mini-exhibition.

Debriefing and Evaluation

1. Discuss the activity using questions such as these:
 - Was it easy to imagine the two different environments?
 - Which of the drawings and environments do you like the most? Why?
 - Which of the environments do you like the least? Why?
 - If people were living in one of the environments that have been drawn, how do you think they would feel?
 - What about the environment where you are living now: is it similar to any of the drawings? What do you like or not like about it?

2. Relate the activity to human rights by asking questions such as these:

- The environment is more than just the physical space around you: which other things make our environment positive or negative? If necessary, prompt the children to think about things like opportunities, non-violence, non-discrimination, freedom and human rights.
- How would you describe the human rights environment where you live?
- What could you do to make your environment more like the ideal one you drew?
- Do all the children in the world live in an environment that respects their rights?
- What do you know about climate change? Are you worried about it? How is it likely to affect children's rights?
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises that children have the right to health. This includes clean water and a clean environment. What can we do to promote a healthy environment for all the children in the world?

Suggestions for follow-up

The activities 'Compasito Reporter', 'Waterdrops', and 'Putting Rights on the Map' also engage children in evaluating their local environment. In the activity 'Dear Diary' children see the same experience from different perspectives.

Ideas for action

Take a walk through your community and discuss the physical environment with the children, asking them what they like and don't like about it. Help them to develop some concrete proposals for changes. Then invite local officials to discuss the proposals with the children.

Make an exhibition of the children's drawings and ideas about the environment and invite others in the community. Upload their drawings to social media or a website for your group. Make sure you have parent or guardian permission before putting children's work on the Internet.

Build on the children's ideas for changing their environment. Which of these ideas can they put into practice?

Try to find ongoing projects in which the children can participate in to support other children in more disadvantaged areas than their own. Older children might initiate their own projects.

Tips for the facilitator

Help children understand that our 'environment' is a product of concrete, physical factors as well as social or sociological factors, such as rights and freedoms. Emphasise that we need to address all of these factors for a healthy environment. Younger children may have difficulty grasping the abstract concept of environment.

If this is the first time the children have been introduced to human rights, you may want to include a short introduction of what they are before the debriefing. Alternatively, you can do an activity such as 'Rabbit Rights' or 'Sailing to a New Land' first, which deal with the relationship between human needs and human rights, before starting the activity.

Variations

Use several different colouring techniques for the same drawing, for example, wax crayons, paint, paper mosaic.

You may prefer to focus only on certain aspects of the environment – for example, trees and green spaces – rather than approaching the entire concept.