

PART 4 OF 4

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Your Voice makes a Difference

Have you ever been afraid to speak up? Maybe there were times where you thought your voice was too small, or that you did not have as much power as adults. Most of us have felt this way.

Under Articles 12 and 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), children have the right to express opinions and participate in matters that affect them. Your views matter, and no voice is too small to be heard. Let's read about some of the ways your ideas and opinions can make a difference.

In the classroom

Sweeping the floor, cleaning the whiteboard, emptying the rubbish bin. These are some of the tasks that you may do to keep your classroom clean.

Imagine this scenario - your teacher or class committee may set up a roster to divide the cleaning duties among your classmates. However, some of your friends may prefer to clean the whiteboard instead of sweeping the floor.

You can suggest changes to the cleaning duties to your class. For example, if too many people want to do the same task, everybody can respectfully discuss what to do, together with your teacher. This way, the class can devise a cleaning schedule that takes in everyone's views.

At school

Take a look at your school uniform. What colour is it? Is it checkered or plain? The design of the school uniform you wear is often a decision made by adults, but thanks to recent changes, students can have a say in it too!

One example is when Bendemeer Primary School and Balestier Hill Primary School merged to become one school in 2019. Students not only got to choose the main colours of the new uniform, but they also had a say in the design of it.

To ensure that different voices were heard, a survey on the school uniform was conducted for parents, school staff and students. After listening to feedback, the school decided on a 2-in-1 uniform design for Primary 1 and 2 students, and two sets of uniforms - one to be worn during PE lessons and the other during normal lessons - for Primary 3 to 6 students. The new uniforms are being rolled out this year, to the students' excitement.

Although you are young, your feelings matter. At the same time, it is important to respect the opinion of adults who care for you.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) came into force in 1990, and Singapore joined in 1995. It is an international agreement that guides the protection and development of children.

Geeky



When you grow up

As you grow older, there will be more ways for you to express your thoughts. For example, you can join in discussions that are specially organised for youth, or pen a letter to the forum pages of The Straits Times. Article 12 of the UNCRC is linked to Article 13, which states that you have a right to look for and receive information and express your views, but in a respectful way.

As you grow older, you will also gain more experience and knowledge about the world. You will learn to make well-reasoned and wise decisions that affect you and the people around you. As you do so, you should remember not to express yourself in a way that would hurt other people around you, or say things that are not true.

It's important to be kind and respectful when we express our opinions. When we speak politely, it encourages the people around us to learn from us. And by sharing our thoughts, we can help others make decisions that are better and fairer.



Scan this QR code to share your thoughts about these UNCRC inserts!

Fill in the blanks here!

What are some changes you would like to make in your school, and why do you think they will make things better? How would it improve the school environment for your peers and teachers?

