

Good School Toolkit: Frequently asked Questions.



The Good School Toolkit (Toolkit) was developed over a period of 6 years in consultation with teachers and students at Ugandan schools. The central part of the Toolkit (violence-free discipline approach) has already been adopted by the Ministry of Education and Sports and the ideas from the Toolkit are currently being used in more than 600 schools in Uganda. The Toolkit has been demonstrated to reduce violence against children in just 18 months. The following are frequently asked questions from people who are interested in creating Good Schools.



1. What is a Good School Toolkit?

The Toolkit helps teachers, students and parents create a *Good School*. It describes a process, suggests activities and provides tools for ordinary teachers and students to create a more transparent and accountable *operational culture*. It is a six step process that creates opportunities for everyone (including students) to participate, show leadership and determine how everyone experiences the learning environment.

2. What is the connection between a Good School and violence against children at schools?

We believe that violence against children at schools is a symptom of a malfunctioning system. The aim of a *Good School* should be to produce curious, thoughtful and engaged students who possess positive discipline. We believe that the current approach in many schools relies on using fear and violence to enforce compliance from students. The violence closes their mind, dulls their curiosity and lowers their confidence. Thus by preventing violence against children at schools, we create a more just environment and an opportunity for students to flourish and achieve their full potential.

3. What is the objective of the Toolkit?

The Toolkit's ultimate aim is to prevent violence against children at school, in all forms, and from all actors.

4. How does it work?

The Toolkit achieves its objectives by encouraging a small group of teachers, students and parents, with the support of the administration, to influence three things at their school:

- **The kind of relationships teachers create with students.** The Toolkit promotes the idea that a good teacher has a longer term objective for their student's development and sees their role as a mentor and role model as well as a teacher.
- **The kind of opportunities the school creates for students to participate meaningfully.** The Toolkit promotes ideas that allow students to learn about participation, explore what they think, contribute to the decision-making processes and exercise leadership at their school.
- **The kind of accountability and transparency the administration maintains towards the entire school community.** The Toolkit promotes the idea that the tone and the standards that the administration sets, guides teachers, students and parents on how to behave and what to expect from that school.

5. What does it look like in action?

The Toolkit provides ideas and tools for the school to learn about what makes a *Good School*. It is a school-wide process that unfolds with the involvement of everyone at school. Each school begins with taking stock (what they believe, what their vision is) followed by collective thinking about how they would like to realize their vision. Armed with this reflection, the school explores key questions like what makes a good teacher, what makes a good learning environment and how to create positive (violence-free) discipline at their school. After learning about these ideas and putting them into practice, the final part involves thinking about how to sustain the new ways of doing things at their school.

6. Does it work?

Yes. There is convincing evidence that suggests that the Toolkit works. London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (www.thelancet.com/lancetgh) just completed a rigorous study (cluster randomized trial) that asked the question, "Is the Toolkit effective in preventing physical violence against students from teachers?" They found that in a period of 18 months,

- In intervention schools, the Toolkit reduced the risk of **physical violence** by teachers and school staff against children by **42%**.
- In intervention schools, **50% fewer teachers (compared to control) report using physical violence** against students.
- The Toolkit promoted students' identification with their school, as well as their sense of safety and belonging at school.

Since the intervention works by influencing the entire environment of the school, we believe that the Toolkit will also be effective in preventing other forms of violence against students too. We are currently analyzing the data to look into that possibility.

7. Will children become better learners? Will their mental health improve?

That outcome depends on multiple things including what and how the teachers teach, rate of absenteeism, the mental health of teachers and students, nutritional status of the child and the child's experience of violence. While we did not see any changes in learning outcome or mental health in this study, we do believe that a safer learning environment will create more opportunities to

participate and learn. We believe 18 months may be too short a time to see an effect on learning outcomes or mental health and hope to do a follow up survey in a year's time.

8. Do I have to be an expert to use it?

You do not have to be an expert nor do you have to have special skills. The Toolkit is aimed at teachers and students who want to create a different kind of school. It requires a little bit of time to learn about the ideas but there are 600 schools that you can learn from. All you need is motivation and a willingness to make a difference at your school.

9. What role do students play?

Students play a central role in creating a *Good School*. One of the main ideas of the Toolkit is to create as many opportunities as possible for all stakeholders to exercise leadership. This means students will participate in all major decisions the school takes, they will create student's courts that supplement the schools disciplinary response (and in the process learn about principles of justice) and participate in holding the school accountable to the collective decisions.

10. How much does it cost?

Schools in Uganda will have access to the Toolkit free of charge. You may incur a small cost if you decide to implement some of the proposed activities but none of them are required. The key activities such as setting up committees, learning groups and student's court do not cost anything except time and effort.

11. How long will it take?

Most schools take about 18 months to complete the six steps of the Toolkit. Your progress may depend on how much support you get from the head-teacher, other teachers, students and parents. Remember, the process of the Toolkit is just the beginning. Sustaining achievements is on-going work that will continue for the life of the school.

12. Do I need to use the whole package?

Although we recommend the usage of the full six step process for sustained and full effect, some schools choose to use selected parts of the Toolkit. It is up to each school to decide what they find useful and practical.

13. Where can I get one?

You can get a physical copy by contacting Raising Voices at the address below or you can download a digital copy from our website.

For more information, contact:
Raising Voices
16 Tufnell Drive, Kamwokya, Kampala, Uganda
Email:
goodschools@raisingvoices.org
www.raisingvoices.org

 Raising Voices