



**International Network for School Social Work**

**<http://internationalnetwork-schoolsocialwork.htmlplanet.com>**

**Contact [mhuxtable@olympus.net](mailto:mhuxtable@olympus.net)**

**Electronic Newsletter January 2022**

Editor: Marion Huxtable

**It's Friday**

**<https://fridaysforfuture.org>**

What is special about Friday is the School Strike. If you are a school social worker in Sweden or in many other countries you have come across students striking on Friday. Skipping school in many places is often considered to be delinquency, breaking laws that require juveniles to attend school. You can get in trouble for skipping school. School social workers do a lot to keep students attending school every day. It is part of the job in many places. So when students strike it gets our attention.

In the last 2 years, in every country school children of all ages have joined in the Fridays for Future movement by skipping school on Friday and demonstrating in key places. They are following in the footsteps of non-violent civil disobedience pioneers such as Gandhi whose resistance to the law helped to establish independence for India. In the 1960's civil rights leaders in the US were arrested and jailed for civil disobedience. Now children and teens across the world are defying school attendance laws in an even bigger cause than independence for India or civil rights in the US. They are joining together in a global movement to shock their elders into taking immediate and drastic action to prevent global heating that will make the planet unlivable in their lifetimes, cause mass suffering and extinction of many species.

**What they are doing and why**

Young people have become angry at society's lack of action to curb global warming. Starting in 2018 in Sweden they decided to strike to demand that society's leaders enact policies to keep warming in this century to 1.5°C below pre-industrial levels. The Friday school strike has spread from Sweden, becoming a powerful movement that gets the attention of world leaders.

**Who they are**

**Fridays for Future** is a collaboration of youth movements around the world that uses social media to organize school strikes and helps youth communicate about the climate crisis with national and international leaders of business, governments and other influential entities.

**Civil Disobedience**

**Fridays for Future** uses the methods of non-violent civil disobedience with commitments to use no violence, cause no property damage and avoid hate. It promotes the scientific data about climate

change to communicate the need for urgent action to protect the climate and avert the crisis. In keeping with its mission it minimizes its own carbon footprint, unlike many world leaders who do not attempt to do so, even while promising to take action.

### **How Fridays for Future works**

Fridays for Future has a website <https://fridaysforfuture.org> that provides a clear guide for organizing a school strike. The website suggests how to start, how to get permission from the school, options for where and when to strike, alternatives to an actual strike, ways to stay safe and ways to communicate with parents and teachers. If a strike is used it is suggested that the students talk it over with their school principal and teachers. The website includes ways teachers can help. It also has a sample letter to the school's head teacher from a parent that shows that the parent is in support of their child's strike. The letter also refers to the anxiety and stress that the climate crisis provokes in their child and that taking action by striking has been therapeutic by empowering the child in a constructive way. The letter requests that the school support the child's decision to strike.

For a child who cannot skip school there are alternatives, such as conducting a strike before school, engaging in a silent strike by not speaking but carrying a white board with a climate message, a ribbon strike conducted by wearing colored ribbons or by conducting a pledge campaign. All strikers are encouraged to register their strike with **Fridays for Future** to be included in statistics.

### **Where strikes are happening**

School strikes have been carried out in 177 countries. The number of strikes in each country, the towns where they are conducted and the number of participants are recorded each day and can be viewed with maps and graphs. You can also find out where there are strikes planned. For example if you are in Salzburg, Austria you can find a strike from 11.55 am to 2.00 pm on Fridays at the Altermarkt. In Adelaide, Australia it is in front of the South Australia Parliament House from 8.00 am to 3.00 pm. every Friday.

### **What school social workers can do**

Children experience worry, stress, anxiety and anger over climate change. While it is common for school social workers to deal with students' anxieties, this one is different, and requires careful thought. It is also new for children to skip school as a form of civil disobedience. So it is timely to prepare a response for this unprecedented situation.

The striking school children are paying more attention to the crisis and what needs to be done than some adults. The striking children know this. It is a fact that adults have, after several decades of evidence, failed to take action to avert a crisis that is rapidly harming the planet, including humans, animals and all organisms. Children are reacting to this neglect. So before considering how to help students, it is best if school social workers examine their own attitude towards the crisis and how they are dealing with it, so that they can respond to the students honestly. The **Fridays for Future** website can help school social workers and school staff understand the crisis themselves and find ways to help the students cope with the crisis.

After examining one's own attitude and actions, there is much that school social workers can do, including counseling students regarding their worry about the climate. This unique worry needs an authentic approach. School social workers can also reach out to the strikers, providing support and letting them know that they are available to those needing help, either for strike-related problems or unrelated issues.