

## A Culture of Teaching Peace

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Peace is a dynamic process of nonviolent social interaction that results in security for all members of a society. Peace is not a subject matter taught in many schools. Teaching peace focuses on the content of classroom instruction, i.e. the lesson plans, reading material and discussions which relay valuable information about great peacemakers, various nonviolent tactics and strategies for creating positive change and the various resources - the organizations and individuals - who currently employ the methodology of peacemaking. Teaching peace also places importance on the process of education, i.e. the structure of the classroom, shared power between teacher and student, and a cooperative, co-creative learning process where factors like race, religion, background and learning ability are honoured as swaths of fabric in a colourful cultural quilt. I have often heard it said that the curriculum is too full to add more, but what could be more important than learning about making peace? I think the "full curriculum" is a justification for not wanting to challenge the status quo and teachers are not rewarded for bringing new material into the classroom.

Our schools teach nationalism and they do so at a historical junction when the world needs global citizens. How many students understand, for example, that there is no global problem that can be solved by any one country, no matter how powerful that country is? How many teachers understand this? Think about it, every global problem – ranging

from global w Peace is a very wide concept indeed. It has to do with the deepest roots of our being-human and with the world at large. It can mean not only the absence of war, terror, violence but also the absence of oppression, discrimination by political or economical powers. This is all expressed in a passive way. More actively formulated I would sense peace as respect for the right of every human being. This is possible in a (protected) democracy, the fulfilling of basic needs, the ability (possibility) to develop your-self, your own culture, political independency etc. Peace is possible when people try to communicate, mutual understanding, beyond barriers.. There once was a king who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of peace. Many artists tried. The king looked at all the pictures. But there were only two he really liked, and he had to choose between them. culture of teaching peace recognizes that peace is not simply the absence of violence, but rather a dynamic state of self-inquiry, relationship-building and mindfulness. Peace does not mean running from conflicts, but rather bringing consciousness to the moment when conflict takes place and participating in a process of conflict transformation which has been taught and reinforced through the educational system. It encompasses relevant curriculum designed to cultivate an environment where questioning, critical thinking and compassion are encouraged in and out of the school setting.

If our schools today are to produce truly global

citizens, then that puts a heavy burden on educators to stimulate critical thinking about the critical issues of the day – war and peace, global conflict and inequality, issues of gender, race, class, and so on. It's a long list. Schools are our main social avenue of learning. While the primary focus of teaching in schools is predominantly on academic skills, we feel that life skills are equally important. We face conflict and sometimes violence at almost every stage and in every area of our lives. In fact, conflict that is not dealt with effectively can be one of the biggest detriments to success both in school as well as in life. Youth are the foundation of our future and often can serve as transformed mentors to their friends and family, passing on good practical behaviors and communication technologies.

We would like to see basic social and emotional learning, or conflict resolution education, woven into our basic school curriculum. While proven and effective programs and curriculum are happening in pockets all over our nation, we want to see them more systemically embedded. Our policies at the local, state and federal levels have the potential to better reflect and empower these options.

There is no universally accepted definition as such. Here are a few pertinent definitions from the peace literature.

Peace education is an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence on scales ranging from the global and national to the local and personal. It is about exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable futures — R.D. Laing (1978)

Peace education is holistic. It embraces the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social growth of children within a framework deeply rooted in traditional human values. It is based on a philosophy that teaches love, compassion, trust, fairness, co-operation and reverence for the human family and all life on our beautiful planet — Fran Schmidt and Alice Friedman (1988)

Peace education is skill building. It empowers children to find creative and non-destructive ways to settle conflict and to live in harmony with themselves, others, and their world..... Peace building is the task of every human being and the

challenge of the human family — Fran Schmidt and Alice Friedman (1988)

The basic concepts embedded in the above definitions are that peace education is a remedial measure to protect children from falling into the ways of violence in society. It aims at the total development of the child

**Hicks** peace education as activities that develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to explore concepts of peace, enquire into the obstacle to peace to resolve conflicts in a just and non violent way and to study ways of constructing just a sustainable alternative future

**Galtung** peace studies as evolving from a focus on research and building knowledge to an emphasis on skills building insight into the roots of violence must be balanced with work on devising ways to overcome, reduce and prevent violence

**Gandhiji** There is no way to peace, peace is the way peace education is define as the pedagogical efforts to create a better world it teaches love non violence compassions and reverence for all life

**Dale Hudson;** peace education can be define as education that actualizes children's potentialities in helping them learn how to make peace with themselves and with others to live in harmony and unity with self humankind and with nature arming to terrorism to the nuclear arms race – requires international cooperation. Let me suggest ten ways of teaching peace that hopefully will make the lessons more compelling and real to the students.

**Tell stories.** One of the stories, a true one, that you like best.

**Use Peace heroes as role models.** There are many amazing peace heroes, living and dead, who have made significant contributions to peace during their lives. You can read sketches of some of these heroes You can also study such leaders as Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Caesar Chavez, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Mother Teresa and others in greater depth. When examining problems of peace, it is always helpful to ask the question: What would Gandhi do? Or, fill in the name of your favorite peace hero.

**Infuse drama, art and poetry.** *Through literature, art and poetry there is much to be learned about peace and war. Lists of books, movies and poems. Some of the classic books are also contains peace concptes.*

**Teach critical thinking.** Young people have to learn how to ask questions and probe deeply, rather than just accepting the word of authority figures. They also have to learn how to gather evidence, how to evaluate the source of information, how to apply logic, and so on.

**Global perspective.** *Young people need to break the bonds of nationalism and think globally. Applying a global perspective allows one to see the world as a whole, rather than from the narrow vantage point of a single country. We badly need education for global citizenship. Just as many symbols are used that connote nationalism (the flag, monuments, historical perspectives, etc.), we need to also use symbols that connote global citizenship, such as the flag with the beautiful representation of the Earth from outer space.*

**Prepare for peace.** We prepare for peace by building a culture of peace, within our nations and in the world. Peace is not only the absence of war, but also positive actions to improve health, education and human rights.

**Reexamine historical myths.** Most countries have developed myths about their own goodness which are not historically accurate. History is told through stories of battles, but there is far more to history than this. These myths need to be exposed to the fresh air of investigation. We will likely find that wars are not glorious and victories are often built on unacceptable atrocities.

**Teach peace as proactive.** Many people confuse peace with solitude, meditation and contemplation, but peace is not passive. It is a dynamic set of forces kept in balance by individuals and institutions committed to solving conflicts without violence. Peace requires action. You cannot sit back and wait for peace to arrive. Individuals must proactively work for peace. It is not a spectator sport. Anything

that one does to build community and cooperation is a contribution to peace.

**Engender the ability to empathize.** Young people must learn to empathize with others, to feel their pain and sorrow. One way of killing empathy is to brand members of a group, including whole countries, as enemies, and dehumanize the members of that group. Empathy begins with the realization that each of us is a miracle, unique in all the world. How can one miracle kill another or wage war, committing indiscriminate mass murder?

**Teach by example.** To the extent that a teacher can model peace in their own life, their lessons will be more authentic. As well as teaching peace, we should try to live peace, making empathy, cooperation and nonviolent conflict resolution part of our daily lives.

### *Suggested Reading*

- Hamill, Sam (ed.) 2003. Poets Against the War, New York: Nation Books.
- Ikeda, Daisaku and David Krieger 2002. Choose Peace, Your Role in Waging Peace in the Nuclear Age, Santa Monica, Middleway Press.
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- Mishra, L., 2012. Teacher preparation for peace education, APH publisher New Delhi
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