

WITH EYES TO SEE



INFUSING JUSTICE AND PEACE: CONFLICT RESOLUTION

ideas for
teachers

who want
to
integrate
social
justice
concepts

into what
and how
they teach

January
2011

Each school year, we at Concern America choose a theme for the three editions of *With Eyes to See* that we make available to teachers. Over the years, we have focused on such topics as Global Warming, Health Care, Immigration, Basic Necessities, Community, the Earth Charter, and more. This school year, we are focusing on current events and how one can include/infuse them across the curriculum. What current event/topic to choose at this time?

Back in 2001 and 2002, the *With Eyes to See* newsletters focused on Peace and Nonviolence: the September 11 attacks had just happened, and our nation was marching into two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Fast forward to 2011: we are still at war in Afghanistan and Iraq, and next to the state of our economy, these conflicts continue to be one of the most "current" events in our country. We still have much fear here in the U.S. of further terrorist attacks, the peoples of Afghanistan and Iraq are still confronted daily with war, The U.S. is still leading these two wars, and our social programs (like schools) here at home remain woefully underfunded while our war economy pumps billions into violence.

In our fall, 2001 edition of *With Eyes to See*, which came out shortly after 9/11, we wrote the following:

"In many ways we as a human, global community are being offered a unique opportunity at this critical moment in history: the opportunity to recognize that we have the responsibility to take this precious time to create new, appropriate, just, and peaceful ways of being present to and interacting with each other. We are, however, at the writing of this newsletter, at war once again. Current polls state that at least 90% of respondents in this country are in favor of our actions [in Afghanistan], indicating that most of us believe that violence will create more security in this country. While it is likely that more violence will be unleashed, many in our world will choose ways to move our world in the direction of real and lasting peace. That task will be as difficult as it is necessary."

We at Concern America are taking this opportunity to explore, once again, ways that our students (our children) can "take this precious time to create new, appropriate, just, and peaceful ways of being present to and interacting with each other," in hopes that this next generation will help us to create a more peaceful world.

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3-12

How Was the Fight?

Conflict is inevitable, but how each of us handles conflict is a choice. In order to learn from how they have handled conflict in the past and, therefore, hopefully continue to develop strategies to deal with conflict that lead to win-win solutions that help create lasting peace, students are asked to think back to a recent conflict in which they were involved, and answer the following questions on their own:

- Describe the conflict in 2-3 sentences.
- What did you want to achieve/win from the conflict? The other person/group?
- Describe the outcome and the methods used to solve the conflict.
- How did you feel afterwards?
- Were you satisfied with the outcome?

Then in small groups, have the students share their conflicts and as a group consider the following questions, bringing their answers to the larger group:

- Was it difficult to think of the needs of the other person/group?
- Were you happy/unhappy with the outcome? Why?
- What methods were used to solve the conflict, and were there other ways it could have been resolved?

This activity can go in a number of directions for further study and experiences, depending on the grade level. Try the following:

1. Brainstorm and research of a list of peacemakers like Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, etc. (a good site for information on a number of peacemakers is www.salsa.net/peace/faces/index.html). Choose a conflict, maybe one discussed in the class, and explore how various peacemakers in history might have tried to solve the conflict.
2. Take the various methods for solving conflicts that were generated by the class and apply these to current conflicts in our communities, state, the U.S., and the world. Do/can the same methods apply? Are they being used? Why or why not?

(Adapted from the *Partners Companion to Training for Transformation*, by Maureen Sheehy. Available for loan from Concern America)

"In the face of conflict, the peaceable person may find several solutions, the violent person only one."

-Wendell Berry

"If we are to reach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children."

-Mahatma Gandhi

4-12

Imagining the Other

Though the phrase "walk a mile in their shoes" is used frequently in our daily speech, there are many examples in which we demonize a group of people, say we hate someone, etc.; i.e. we lack empathy. This lack of empathy can lead to stereotypes and misconceptions which, in turn, can lead to conflicts, hate, violence, etc. One way to build empathy with the "other" is an exercise called "Interior Monologues" in which students write the imagined thoughts of people/groups with whom they may appear to have little in common.

This exercise can be used any time the students watch a film, read a story, see a play, etc. as a way to understand the lives of those portrayed. After brainstorming the key moments, passages, or experiences of the people profiled, students then write monologues of these people about what they might be thinking at a given time. The act of considering how others might be thinking/experiencing the world goes a long way to drawing us closer together, which builds empathy. On a personal level, for example, would a school bully be better understood if we imagine that s/he is bullied at home (which is quite often the case)? Similarly, would we feel differently about the Afghani waving a banner professing hate for the U.S. if we imagine that his family was accidentally killed by a U.S. army drone bomber?

(Adapted from Bill Bigelow and Linda Christensen's *Promoting Social Imagination Through Interior Monologues*, available at www.zinnedproject.org)

Further is Closer

Common sense tells us to move closer to that which we want to better understand, but often that doesn't work. At times, we need to step back from something, be it our family, our town, or our country, in order to see it from other perspectives. One of the most common (and life changing) experiences shared by the field personnel of Concern America's projects around the world, for example, is that they learn just as much about their home country while living abroad as they do about their host country. Stepping back, what can the rest of the world teach us about ourselves at this time?

Without having to leave the classroom,

students can read English versions of foreign newspapers online. Try choosing a current event about the U.S., and compare/contrast the coverage by various news sources from around the world. Each group of students can pick a different newspaper and present their findings. One group could use your local or national newspaper for comparison. These sources can be used in a variety of ways, and the list is in no way exhaustive.

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- www.allafrica.com
 - many African stories, organized by topic
 - www.qpmforum.com/news.htm
 - links to a number of Asian newspapers
 - www.theworldpress.com/index.htm
 - access to papers from 192 countries

6-12

"If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility."
-Longfellow

The Peace Table

The Peace Table is meant to help young children deal with conflicts nonviolently. To begin, using puppets, the teacher does role plays with the students to model the use of the table, explaining that when students are having problems with each other ("she took my pencil," "he hit me," etc.), they can go to the Peace Table to work it out. Once there, each child takes a puppet and the puppets: 1) identify the problem, and 2) find ways for each child to be happy (solutions). Very soon, the children go to the Peace Table on their own without going to "tell the teacher," and not long after that, conflicts are often peacefully solved without even needing the Table. (Adapted from *Starting Small: Teaching Tolerance in Preschool and Early Grades*. For information, visit www.tolerance.org)

K-3

"Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the presence of creative alternatives for responding to conflict.-- Alternatives to passive or aggressive responses, alternatives to violence."
-Jeanne Larson

Conflict, Comics, and TV Shows

Have students collect comics from the newspaper and/or keep logs on the TV shows they watch. The focus is on the conflicts that are represented and how they get resolved. *How do the characters relate to each other during the conflict? What tools do they use to solve problems? Are the solutions win-lose, a compromise, or win-win? What part did violence/non-violence play in the solutions?* This exercise attempts to have students learn more about how conflicts are solved in the media they consume, and to look at alternatives. The students can then take the understandings they generate with this exercise and apply them to their own lives, similar to the "How Was the Fight" exercise on page 2.

A related activity for younger grades takes advantage of the same stories they already know. After reading a story, ask questions about the conflict, how each character acted, and what might each do differently next time (if the resolution of the conflict was based on violence, anger, hate, etc.). In the "Three Billygoats Gruff," for example, the students might suggest that the goats invite the troll to their house for dinner, or help him find some food, or plant a garden with him, rather than having to trick him to save their own lives. Depending on the grade level, students can use puppets to reenact the stories, rewrite the stories in small groups, or stage plays with the same idea.

(Adapted from *So Everybody Fights* by Ita Sheehy, Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, Blackrock, Ireland. Available for loan from Concern America.)

K-12

"Racism isn't born folks, it's taught. I have a two-year-old son. You know what he hates? Naps! End of list."
-Dennis Leary

"The longer we listen to one another - with real attention - the more commonality we will find in all our lives. That is, if we are careful to exchange with one another life stories and not simply opinions."
-Barbara Deming

RESOURCES

Thankfully, there are many wonderful resources for teachers on peace and nonviolence-related education. Here are just a few samples:

- The Zinn Education Project, created in honor of the recently deceased historian and educator Howard Zinn (www.zinnedproject.org) has a number of teaching materials that can be searched by time period or theme.
- Closely related to the above site is Rethinking Schools, an organization that publishes a journal and various books geared for teachers on a variety of issues related to peace, justice, and education reform (www.rethinkingschools.org).
- For many years, the Teaching Tolerance organization has published and made available (most for free) a number of resources for teachers on a range of anti-bias, multicultural, peace-based education themes (www.tolerance.org). A current item being offered for free is the DVD *Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case That Made History*.
- A good list of peace-related organizations that provide resources for teachers can be found at www.yesmagazine.org/for-teachers/curriculum/resources-for-teaching-peace. Though the list is a few years old, it includes a number of very good resources that are still very relevant and active today.

CONCERN AMERICA

is an international development and refugee aid organization that sends doctors, nurses, engineers, educators, and nutritionists as volunteers to train and empower the materially poor in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, Mozambique, and West Africa.

In support of these projects, Concern America offers educational services in California which include:

- * Walk Out of Poverty
- * Infusion Methodology Workshops for teachers
- * "Training for Transformation" Workshops for adults
- * School and parish consulting for the implementation of the Bishops' Pastoral: "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions" (June, 1998)
- * Lending library for resources of peace and social justice

Feel free to contact the Education Coordinator at Concern America for more information on any of these projects.

Join Us! Concern America's 14th Annual Walk Out of Poverty on April 16, 2011 and 4th Annual Dance Out of Poverty on February 26, 2011

For more than a decade Concern America has held the increasingly successful Walk Out of Poverty in southern California, an event that provides education for the participants and a sense of solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the world, while raising money for Concern America's development work in Latin America and Africa. In 2008, Concern America held its first annual Dance Out of Poverty in Chicago with the same goals. If you live in the Orange County, California or Chicago, Illinois regions, join us!



Call Concern America to get information, walk/dance packets, flyers, and/or to schedule a presentation for your group.