

WITH EYES TO SEE



INFUSING JUSTICE AND PEACE: COOPERATION

ideas for
teachers

who want
to
integrate
social
justice
concepts

into what
and how
they teach

November
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The phrase "all I really need to know I learned in kindergarten" was popularized by Robert Fulghum, a Unitarian Universalist minister who wrote a book of the same name in 1986. Many editions of the book and email chain letters of the same name later, the notion is widely held that the rules we were taught as young children actually have a lot to say about how we should act as adults, and if we actually followed those simple rules as "grown-ups" our world would be a better place. Consider a few of these "kindergarten" rules (from Fulghum's book):

- Share everything
- Play fair
- Don't hit people
- When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together

At a young age, most of us are taught to work together, to make sure everyone gets the same number of cookies, to split the profits of the lemonade stand, to include the child who is feeling left out, etc. A good word for this is "Cooperation," and it would probably be difficult to find someone who wouldn't agree that this is a good way to live. However, often in our world, *cooperation* is supplanted by *competition* in business/the economy, in sports, and in schools, among others. The common narrative is that competition leads to innovation and increased profits; individuals and teams that constantly push themselves get the edge to overcome their rivals; students who study harder and take all honors classes are the valedictorians and go on to great success.

It is hard to argue that being a profitable business, or successful athlete, or top student are negative achievements, but what might we be missing, from the personal level to society at large, when we focus on *competition over cooperation*? Conversely, how do we as humans, and the earth that sustains us, benefit when we are attentive to shared values and the common good over personal/institutional gain?

This edition of *With Eyes to See* will explore the concept of **Cooperation** in our lives, from how we approach classroom activities to how we look at structures in our community and greater society.

CONCERN AMERICA

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K-12

Cooperation and the Classroom

A great place to begin talking and thinking about *Cooperation* is to work cooperatively in the classroom itself. Working in teams is often quite common in classrooms, but why is working together a positive educational methodology? It is shown that academically, more students do better through cooperation; it decreases feelings of failure ("low-performing" students) or the need to hide what they know ("high-performing" students); the relationships between diverse students (ethnic, gender, academic, physical ability, etc.) are enhanced; and, if we are teaching our youth to be part of a democratic society, cooperation is a better tool than competition.

Try these four cooperative learning strategies:

Jigsaw

Groups of five to six form home teams. Each home team member learns a different aspect of a lesson in separate "expert groups;" then each returns to the home team to teach the other members. Everyone in the group is an expert, and all learn the same information in the end. Individuals are tested for mastery, and scores can be combined for a team score. To show growth, use a team improvement score based on previous performances.

Pyramid Brainstorming

Works well for review (e.g. a chapter of a text book). Students begin by brainstorming on a recent topic (3-5 minutes). They form pairs sharing what each wrote; then each student writes down new information learned beneath the original information. The students then form groups of four, sharing their lists and again writing down any new information. Finally, each group shares its lists with the class, again with each individual writing down new information. The students' pages now look like inverted pyramids; great study guides have been generated; all in the class have the same information and have heard it often.

Talking Chips

Each group member receives five tokens, and must use one each time s/he wants to speak. When one's tokens are used, s/he must wait until all others in the group have used their "chips" before everyone begins again with five tokens. This activity is a great way to ensure that participation in a group is equal.

Jigsaw: For younger children, read any number of the storybooks from the Resources section on page 4, and talk about the benefits of working together. Use these as a way to come up with ideas of how best to work together in the classroom.

"No employer today is independent of those about him. He cannot succeed alone, no matter how great his ability or capital. Business today is more than ever a question of cooperation."

-Orison Swett Marden (1850-1924)



Twin Pines and Cooperative Logos

A fun way to get students to think about what it means to work together is to have them design their own cooperative logo. Before a group or team of students begins working on a project together (or in conjunction with the Cooperative in Guatemala exercise on pg. 3), ask them to design a logo to represent their group, based on the how they plan to work together cooperatively. This will help them talk about their "cooperation" ground rules, as well as to creatively represent their team.

This activity is based on the classic cooperative logo of two green pine trees in a circle that is used throughout the world to symbolize cooperatives. The designer of the logo, Dr. James Peter Wabasse, was the founder of the National Cooperative Business Association in 1914. Dr. Wabasse describes the "Twin Pine" logo in the following way: "The pine tree is the ancient symbol of endurance and fecundity. More than one pine is used to signify cooperation. The trunks of the trees are continued into roots which form the circle, the ancient symbol of eternal life, typifying that which has no end. The circle represents the all-embracing cosmos which depends upon cooperation for its existence. The two pines and the circle are dark green, the chlorophyll color of man's life principle in nature."

4-12

4-12

Fun Cooperative Games

School is not all fun and games, but having fun with games can be very educational. Try any number of the following games that engage participants cooperatively and as groups. Key to the learning in each game is to discuss what happened after each is complete. Discussions can include talking about what happened, group dynamics, how each person saw her/his own participation, what each learned, etc. Here are just a few games:

To the Other Side: Two participants stand on opposite sides of a line, and the object is for each to get the other person to his/her side, e.g. you "win" if you can get the other person to your side. The solution is for each to step across at the same time so both win.

Monster Knots: In groups of at least 6 to no more than 12, everyone gets in a tight circle facing each other, closes their eyes and sticks their hands in the middle. Every hand must grab another hand, and then the participants can open their eyes. Without letting go, the group must untangle themselves into a circle again. To make it harder, eliminate speaking, or allow only one person to speak.

Birthday Line: The group members will arrange themselves in a line based on their birthdays (January 1 - December 31), but without speaking.

Three Objects: Place 3 groups of 3 inside an enclosed rope to form a triangle, one group in each corner, with the rope at their waists. Place an object in front of each group, outside of the triangle, and instruct the groups to obtain their objects. Discuss what happens next (either each group will pull at same time resulting in a mess, or they will move together to help each other).

"If you can laugh together, you can work together."
-Robert Orben

6-12

Learning About a Cooperative in Guatemala

One aspect of Concern America's work is the creation of income-generation, "fair-trade" cooperatives that enable impoverished peoples in countries like Guatemala and Mexico to support each other to earn income while honoring traditional crafts and protecting the environment. As part of Concern America's "Integrated Community Health Program" in Guatemala, the organization organized *Los Cuchareros de Guatemala* (The Spoonmakers of Guatemala), a cooperative of families who carve a variety of beautiful spoons. Working collectively, *Los Cuchareros* share the workload and profits of their cooperative, and now generate \$20,000 in yearly sales of more than 3,000 spoons.

To learn more about their amazing story and how they work together, have the students go on a scavenger hunt of information by exploring the *Cucharero's* (www.cuchareros.com) website and finding answers to the following questions. After presenting their findings, the students can do a number of activities to further the learning. One idea is to develop their own cooperative, deciding on what they would produce/sell, how they would work together, and what might be the benefits and challenges of working collectively. The questions to answer from the *Cuchareros* website:

1. What is their method of quality control?
2. What is meant by "certified wood source?"
3. In addition to the money earned by the member families, how do the health programs of the region benefit from the work of the *Cuchareros*?
4. How do they facilitate shipping times/costs from Guatemala?
5. On the Fair Trade page, which principle most speaks to you?
6. For fun, what is your favorite product/wood?

"In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed."
-Charles Darwin

IDEAS and WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

"The fabric of the new society will be made of nothing more or less than the threads woven in today's interactions."
-Pam McAllister

"We are not put on this earth to see through one another, but to see one another through."
-Unknown Source

RESOURCES

Younger Children

• There are a number of children's stories that highlight the value of cooperation. Here are just a few: *Zinnia and Dot*, by Lisa Campbell Ernst (two hens who don't like each other have to learn to cooperate to save an egg); *A Little Story About a Big Turnip*, by Tatiana Zunshine (even the mouse is needed to help the farmers harvest a big turnip, a Russian folktale; there are many similar books featuring potatoes and cabbages); *The Little Red Hen* (various versions, about the hen that doesn't get any help making a cake, but everyone wants to enjoy the final product).

Youth and Teacher Resources

• A great book about what happens to an abandoned city lot, when diverse neighbors see past their prejudices and plant a shared garden, is *Seed Folks* by Paul Fleischman.

• There are good resources relating to the challenges of current economic models and how they are hurting, not supporting, most people in our world or the common good: *Teaching Economics As If People Mattered*, by Tamara Sober Giecek, also has a website with classroom resources/activities; *Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, by Naomi Klein, including her documentary *The Take*; *Capitalism*; the documentary *A Love Story* by Michael Moore; and, *The Post Corporate World: Life After Capitalism* by David Korten,

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 for Concern America's 30th Walka-a-thon (a Concern America 40th Anniversary event) on March 31, 2012

For three decades Concern America has held walks to raise awareness and funding to support our sisters and brothers living in material poverty around the world. The increasingly successful Walk Out of Poverty (now in its 15th year) in southern California will take place this year on March 31, 2012. Join more than 500 walkers to help make this year the best Walk ever. And if you don't live in southern California, we invite you to do your own parallel Walk to make the impact of the Walk even greater!



Call Concern America to get information, Walk packets, flyers, and/or to schedule an engaging Walk presentation for your group.

"It's a long walk out of poverty; its further without you!"