

WITH EYES TO SEE



INFUSING JUSTICE AND PEACE

ideas for
teachers

who want
to
integrate
social
justice
concepts

into what
and how
they teach

October
2010

The term "Social Justice Education" has become a familiar term in mainstream education in recent years. Though the concept can encompass a wide variety of interpretations and applications, a basic tenant is that social justice education (for children) focuses on teaching students to help build a society of the "common good" in which there is equal "justice for all." Such an education includes teaching about the many injustices in our society and world (racism, sexism, war, material poverty, etc.), combined (hopefully) with actions to help make the world a better place for everyone, focusing on the personal, interpersonal, and structural factors that lead to injustice and overcoming the same. In recent history, educator-activists like W.E.B. Du Bois and John Dewey (early 1900s), Paulo Freire and Myles Horton (mid-1900's until recently), and Jonathan Kozol, Bell Hooks, Lisa Delpit, and Henry Giroux (still active today), and so many others, have been at the forefront of creating and advocating for social justice education programs and practices from preschool through college and beyond.

"Considering the overwhelming presence of hate, violence, individuality, and the growing disparities between the materially rich and poor that permeate society today, there is a great need for transformation at all levels and in all places and the building up of a more just and peaceful society."* We at Concern America believe that social justice education is integral to the education of all children, and despite the serious nature of many justice issues, there are many wonderful and hopeful examples of such transformation that social justice education can be both uplifting and energizing.

When is it best to include social justice education units or lessons? Always! As educators, we shouldn't turn social justice education "on and off" like a light switch, but rather we should infuse* peace and justice into all of our lessons and actions. For this school year, *With Eyes to See* will explore various ways to have social justice themes permeate one's classroom without adding to the curriculum or ignoring state or federal learning standards. This first edition of the year will focus on concrete ideas for infusing peace and justice themes into a variety of subject areas and common school activities; subsequent editions will tackle issues of the day and how to include/infuse them across the curriculum.

** The "Infusion Methodology" of social justice education was created by the Justice/Peace Education Council, with minor adaptations by the Education Committee of Concern America.*

CONCERN AMERICA

HOME OFFICE: P.O. BOX 1790, SANTA ANA, CA 92702

(714) 953-8575 ~ ~ CONCAMERINC@EARTHLINK.NET ~ ~ WWW.CONCERNAMERICA.ORG

K-12

Literature

Reading is a central part of school, from learning to read words to decoding what is being read. Try the following exercise to get kids reading familiar stories through a social justice lens. This exercise is based on the handbook *Once Upon a Conflict: A Fairy Tale Manual of Conflict Resolution for All Ages* (available for loan from Concern America).

1. Choose a fairy tale familiar to the students, rewriting it as told by the main characters/groups involved in the story. For example, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* can be retold from the viewpoint of Goldilocks, a hungry girl who had run away from an abusive home and is wandering and looking for food, and the Bears, a hardworking family who finds there has been an intruder in their house; *Little Red Riding Hood* is still about a young girl delivering food to her grandmother's house, but the wolf is hungry because its habitat has been decimated by housing developments. Be creative!

2. Divide students into equal groups, each reading a side of the story. The groups can then come together to do role plays, have a mediated discussion on resolving the conflict, and/or learn about parallels to current events. A simplified problem-solving technique uses four questions to reach resolution: a) What is the problem? What has happened?; b) How do you feel about it?; c) What would you like to happen?; and, d) What could actually be done? (this process can be adapted for younger grades).

A clever children's story that mirrors this retelling of fairy tales is the *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, by Jon Scieszka, told by the wolf who only went to the pigs' houses to get a cup of sugar for baking, and they misunderstood his intentions.

"Education for justice and peace is a process based on the values of human dignity, global community, and a presumption against violence, whereby one grows in social responsibility and learns how to effect structural change and so participate in the transformation of the world." The Infusion Methodology

Geography

2-12

World maps are an important resource, and it is a familiar sight to see them hung on classroom walls. In one particular classroom, however, the map has been turned upside down. The teacher says nothing about it and waits until a student points it out, usually within the first couple weeks of school. The simple question by a student of "why is that map upside down?" is a great teachable moment about why most maps position North "up" and South "down" (there is no geographical-based reason). This discussion also leads easily to the history of world maps and why maps look the way they do.

Most world maps of today are based on the 400 year old Mercator Projection. On this map, for example, Africa and Greenland look the same size, despite the fact that Africa is fourteen times larger! Many newer maps exist which try to correct these distortions: the "What's Up? South!" map reverses the poles, challenging the viewer to re-examine the notion that North is "up" and why; the revolutionary Peters Projection maps the world by actual land area, creating many visual surprises; there are many more! Visit www.odt.org for a wide array of choices, and for a good lesson comparing the Mercator and Peters maps, visit www.rethinkingschools.org, and search for the lesson plan "Math, Maps, and Misconceptions," created by Eric Gutstein.

An innovative tool that can help students put global statistics into perspective, using maps, is Worldmapper.org. With more than 700 different world maps, the Earth's territories are re-sized on each according to the subject of interest. For example, on map #174, Human Poverty, North America is little more than a sliver of land, while India, China, and the countries of central Africa are larger than on a standard land area map; on map #295, Carbon Emissions, the U.S. and Europe look bloated while Africa and South America can barely be seen. The maps speak for themselves, and powerful lessons can be carried out simply by presenting various maps and discussing what is seen. With so many maps at Worldmapper.org, this resource can be used on any number of global issues.

Math and Science

6-12

With *Eyes to See* often draws ideas from the progressive education magazine *Rethinking Schools*. In recent editions of the magazine there have been two excellent articles looking at the vehicles we drive and their impact on global warming. It is worth checking out the following articles by educator Jana Dean for classroom ideas that center around math, science, and challenging students to critically look at their lives and act to reduce global warming. Both are available online at www.rethinkingschools.org:

1. *Teaching About Global Warming in Truck Country: A middle school teacher helps the heirs of truck culture examine climate change*
2. *The Future of Driving: 8th-grade algebra meets rising gas prices and peak oil.*

"The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life."
-Jane Addams

Social Studies and History

4-12

Students often learn about displaced peoples throughout history. Except for those students and/or their recent relatives who themselves are/were displaced, most of us in this country probably haven't grasped what must it be like to have to flee from one's home at a moment's notice. Hopefully, most of our students have not had to live this experience, but taking some time to think about it can go a long way to building an understanding of the plight of refugees and internally displaced peoples, especially when learning about such groups. Ask the students to take out a piece of paper and a pencil. Tell them they have two minutes to flee their homes with their families, and to write down on their papers what they would grab and stuff in a small backpack before leaving. At two minutes, ask them to stop writing. Share together what each student wrote, and discuss how this exercise felt.

School Fundraisers

2-12

Most schools rely on fundraisers to help make up for the lack of state and federal funding for education. A favorite sale item for most schools is chocolate, yet a sadly ironic twist to this fact is that all too often, the workers of cocoa farms, a large number of which can be found in West Africa, are children who are paid miserable wages or are forced to work as slaves. Such jobs do little to respect the lives of children, or to address the extreme poverty of many families and communities. Companies like M&Ms/Mars, Hershey's, and Worlds Finest Chocolates have been heavily targeted in recent years because of the working conditions of those who produce their cocoa. Try the following "chocolate" activities to raise awareness and encourage action around this bitter-sweet issue:

- Pass out M&Ms (or Hershey's) to each student, and ask them to describe the taste after they have eaten them. Then ask the students where the chocolate comes from. They may need to do some research (on the web, a good site for information on chocolate is www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/fairtrade/cocoa). After compiling information on the origin of the cocoa and the farms where it is produced, ask the students once again to describe the flavor (is it more bitter knowing that children their age might have had to harvest it as near-slaves?). What can be done?
- There are now various companies who provide Fair Trade Certified chocolate (certified as such based on the healthy working conditions and fair prices paid for the cocoa). In the process of raising money for school, students will learn more about the Fair Trade movement (which includes coffee and other products), organic agriculture, global trade, and more. Try the following contacts for more information, teaching tools, games, and Fair Trade chocolate fundraising opportunities: www.divinechocolate.com and www.equalexchange.coop.

"Who struggles can fail. Who doesn't struggle has already failed!"
-Bertolt Brecht

"Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth."

-Muhammad Ali

"Do not believe what your teacher tells you merely out of respect for the teacher. But whatsoever, after due examination and analysis, you find to be conducive to the good, the benefit, the welfare of all beings-- that doctrine believe and cling to, and take it as your guide."

-Buddha

K-12

Lunch

For most schools, lunch is just a time for students to eat and get a bit of social time to be with their classmates. More and more schools are using lunch as a time to focus on healthy eating and nutrition (an important justice issue in many communities who lack access to fresh fruits and vegetables). Another social justice component of lunch is the waste that we produce from it.

To look at this issue, hold a lunch party. Have the class dine together for lunch, and when finished, pile all of the waste together (it would help to separate pieces by putting food waste in one pile, paper in another, plastics in a third, etc.). Quantify the waste as possible (pounds, number of pieces, etc.). One activity can then be to brainstorm ways to reduce the waste (lunch boxes versus paper bags; home-made food versus pre-packaged "lunchable" type meals; composting at the school/in the classroom, recycling, etc.). Another activity is to estimate the lunchtime waste produced at school over the entire year: multiply the waste amounts by the number of school days; multiply this by the number of students/teachers in the school. Come up with school-wide activities to reduce waste around lunch. For more information:

- www.wastefreelunches.org
- www.epa.gov/osw/education/lunch.htm
- www.globalstewards.org/lunch.htm
- many others...

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, posters, flyers, and/or to schedule a presentation for your group.