

Introduction

Month:

Week #: 0

Day: Time:

Impetus for Peace

Life Tree Learning Systems ©

Objectives/Aims

The students will: create a classroom community where they care for, and respect themselves, others and the environment.

Materials

The Pax Curriculum

Photograph

The impetus for The Pax Curriculum is, quite simply put, for the sake of our children. They're our most precious gift and our most awesome responsibility.



Impetus for Peace

A young Vietnamese child running frantically down a road with her arms outstretched, a look of complete horror on her face, her clothes burned off and her skin singed by napalm... This is a photograph that appeared in a Life magazine in the 60's during the Vietnam War. In the black and white movie, Schindler's List, a young Jewish girl in a red dress is first seen happily playing and later shown discarded in a pile of bodies, one of millions that died in the Holocaust. That humankind could do such horrible things, especially to its own children is... beyond words.

These horrifying images have remained indelibly etched in my mind and my heart. The idea of any child suffering due to either the negligence or the intentional cruelty of adults is one of the motivators for the writing of this curriculum. If one child can escape such cruelty, or better yet, experience a whole community where the child is valued, loved and nurtured so that they might know authentic joy, then the writing of this curriculum will be worth it.

However, it is not cruelty and hate that are the primary motivators for this curriculum; it is instead, love. Only love can address such suffering, heal such heinous wounds or engender a peace filled community. I experienced this love first and foremost through my nurturing parents, whose marriage of 50 plus years stands as a living testament to faith, hope and, ultimately, love. Later, my experiences with my church's youth group in high school, various summer camps and the United Campus Ministry in college, all taught me through direct experience, that a community can be intentionally created that honors and nurtures each individual and prepares them for a life of service .

to others. I was also influenced by ‘random acts of kindness’, whether it was a Mormon family that helped me pack a U-haul late one night or an elderly Quaker couple that pulled over their Winnebago to give me a ride in New Mexico when I was hitchhiking in college. Finally, the lives and teachings of my heroes such as Dr. R.J. Bareis, Mother Teresa, Dr. Maria Montessori, Mahatma Gandhi, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., also inspired me. All of these people were motivated by something beyond their own self-interest and lived lives of loving service. However, my ultimate hero, and the primary motivator for the writing of this peace curriculum is Jesus Christ whose words and actions epitomized love.

Therefore, the kind of peace that I am advocating is not just the absence of violence, but a community where individuals care for, and respect themselves, others and the natural environment. This state of peace is best embodied in the statement released by the American Montessori Society shortly after September 11, 2001:

Peace, according to Montessori philosophy, does not mean weakness, and it does not mean the simple absence of war. It means inner harmony and strong individuality, a full participation in community life, responsiveness to the world, and stewardship of its resources. It means respect for human dignity and diversity, and due diligence in protecting and supporting the rights of all. It is to this definition of peace that we dedicate our most passionate efforts.

Written much more simply, but no less eloquently, is a seven-year-old girl’s letter to her school’s newspaper:

Dear Editor,

I want peace on Earth. No more wars. No more anything (violence), just friends. I want animals to be safe. I want peace for all people and freedom for all people. I don’t want anymore terrorist attacks.

Sincerely,
Lynsey Lytle

"Peace on earth, good will towards men" is more than a worthy goal; it defines who we are as people. We can ultimately choose to be self-centered beings or people that compassionately and constructively meet the needs of ourselves, our neighbors and this beautiful world that surrounds us.

By the author,

Paul Bareis-Golumb