

## Why We MUST Teach Peacemaking

At an American Montessori Society conference I asked a director of a major Montessori teacher training center if peacemaking was part of the curriculum. When he replied that it was not, I then inquired why and he responded saying that there wasn't enough time and that he was doubtful as to the importance of the subject matter.

Peacemaking. Not enough time. Not important enough.

Vividly etched into my mind as a young child growing up during the Vietnam War era is



the picture of nine-year-old Kim Phuc, who had been hiding from the North Vietnamese with her family in the temple. Two of her brothers, aged one and three, were killed instantly by the jellied gasoline (napalm). Kim tore off her flaming clothes and ran down the rural road arms out-stretched, screaming, "Nong qua! Nong qua!" (Too hot! Too hot!). Such an instance is extremely disturbing, but what is even more distressing is the fact that some 45 years later we continue to crucify our innocent children because we adults have shirked our responsibility of making peace in this world.

Peacemaking. Not enough time. Not important enough.

### 2010 CRIME CLOCK STATISTICS

<b>A Violent Crime occurred every</b>	<b>25.3 seconds</b>
One Murder every	35.6 minutes
One Forcible Rape every	6.2 minutes
One Robbery every	1.4 minutes
One Aggravated Assault every	40.5 seconds
<b>A Property Crime occurred every</b>	<b>3.5 seconds</b>
One Burglary every	14.6 seconds
One Larceny-theft every	5.1 seconds
One Motor Vehicle Theft every	42.8 seconds



Closer to home, in the United States:

Take Denver for example, where last year (2011) there were:

- \* 6,754 violent crimes against persons (murder, assault, rape, etc.)
- \* 31,076 crimes against property (arson, theft, physical damage, etc.)
- \* 2,412 crimes against society (drugs, child pornography, etc.)

Lots of abstract, statistical numbers, but each number involves at least one man, woman or child which could be a neighbor, a family member, a friend or even you or me.

Peacemaking. Not enough time. Not important enough.

Since my days in elementary school back in the '60s, where kids would gather around after school for a fight and corporal punishment was still a common occurrence, things have at least seemingly improved. Now-a-days there are 'No Bullying' signs in hallways, character education is sometimes being taught and corporal punishment is illegal in most states, and yet, do a Google search on 'bullied to death' or 'school violence' and select 'Images' and the pictures can be both sobering and a reality check.

In conclusion, there is enough violence on an international, national, local and personal level to justify the need for teaching peacemaking skills to each and every child in America.

Peacemaking. We need to make time for it, as it is vitally important in stopping violence.

And yet, peacemaking is not just about ending violence, it also speaks to a quality of life. Soon after 9/11, where 2,996 people died, the American Montessori Society released a statement that included this paragraph:

“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.”

Said another way, but getting to the 'heart' of the matter, is this photo from a primary teacher's outdoor environment. Such unbridled joy! It also speaks to one's needs being met such as: security, contentment, nurturance, relational, health, nature, learning, self-confidence, exploration and ultimately, self realization & fulfillment. What Montessori referred to as the the unfolding of the “spiritual embryo”.



Peacemaking. We need to make time for it, as it affects our quality of life.

Peacemaking. We need to make time for it, as it is vitally important in stopping violence and it affects the overall quality of our lives.

Pragmatically, what might be the goals be of making 'Peacemaking' part of our school's curriculum and community life?

For the students:

Students will learn, and practice each day, how to intentionally make good choices in how they care for (love) and respect themselves, others and the natural world so that they might proactively create a more peaceful community and world.

For the parents:

Parents will not only be kept informed of what peacemaking skills and concepts are being taught in the classroom, but will be actively taught this same material and encouraged to make it part of their family's daily home life.

For the staff:

Staff will critically evaluate how conflicts are both avoided and resolved, how decisions are made in a just and dignified manner and how respecting individual integrity can be maintained while serving the needs of the greater community, with the ultimate goal of maintaining/forming a close and cohesive school community.

For the community:

Our school will stand before the greater community and enlighten it as to the need for peacemaking in education and provide actual peacemaking curriculums and resources.

“Establishing lasting peace is the work of education; all politics can do is keep us out of war.” Maria Montessori

