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Trends in Peace Education. ERIC Digest.

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WHAT IS PEACE EDUCATION?

Peace education curricula generally include instruction in conflict resolution; cooperation and interdependence; global awareness; and social and ecological responsibility. Peace education in the United States has evolved since its early nineteenth century beginnings. In the early years, peace education was promoted by a small group of New England educators, writers, and thinkers who shared a vision of the world without war or violence. Horace Mann, founder of the American common schools, considered violence in American society a flaw that required deliberate improvement and asserted that

education should be the primary agent of change.

In the early twentieth century, with America steeped in the militarism surrounding the first and second World Wars, peace education was vilified as being subversive. Peace educators who dreamed of a unified, peaceful world were considered un-American. In fact, these dark years for peace education continued through the following decades, fueled by the excesses of McCarthyism. This stigma greatly hampered the efforts of peace educators who overcame this setback by shifting their focus from negative peace, expressed as anti-militarism, to positive peace, with an emphasis on society-building through diminishing violence within and between nation-states. Still, whatever the generational focus, peace education has consistently reflected the desire to improve the condition of human society.

PEACE EDUCATION IN THE 1980s.

Peace education in the '80s took the form of "conflict resolution." In an effort to address issues surrounding youth, such as school violence and high drop out rates, young people were taught communication and negotiation strategies as part of student mediation initiatives. These programs included such elements as training in cross-cultural issues, interpersonal communication, and bias awareness with the belief that individuals must understand the nature of conflict and develop negotiating skills before the process of mediation can be effective.

Under the threat of nuclear war and planetary annihilation, peace education in the '80s saw a proliferation of curriculum guides and teaching materials targeted at children from preschool through high school in an effort to avoid earth's destruction. Curricular guides for younger children included nature study and care for the environment, teaching children that they can be responsible for the world they live in. Materials for older children included activity cards and videos presenting conflict scenarios aimed at teaching students to identify possible problems, to play roles, and to propose solutions. Educators began to see peace education not only as content, but also as a process--a way of life that promotes personal and societal well being.

In this decade, religious leaders across the denominational spectrum, making great efforts to unify common beliefs and decrease doctrinal differences, wrote and spoke extensively concerning the immorality of nuclear war, imploring congregations throughout America to consider alternatives to violence and war and to embrace peaceful coexistence. This leadership from the religious sector contributed hugely to a wider acceptance of peace education as a legitimate discipline for study in the schools.

Advances in technology and telecommunications made it possible to reach out internationally with gestures of goodwill and world friendship. Global awareness became an integral part of mainstream education. Educators believed that the study of cultures, customs, and beliefs of people around the world would enable students to appreciate

differences, to discover similarities, and to develop empathy for others--all necessary skills for creating a harmonious society. Global awareness became peace education in action.

PEACE EDUCATION IN THE 1990s.

Within the current trend of curriculum integration, peace education has spread across the curriculum, providing opportunities for students to tackle vital issues from numerous perspectives. Educators in the '90s continue to use technology to engage students in a variety of activities to foster international/intercultural understanding. Telecommunications have become a common tool to link students from different ethnic or cultural groups for work on academic projects and cultural exchange. Increasingly, students and educators are accessing the World Wide Web for content information, classroom use, and preparation of lessons and materials. Through the Internet, school children around the globe are learning from and about each other while educators are planning lessons and developing professional relationships with their international counterparts.

Many organizations offer opportunities for developing cultural awareness firsthand through e-mail communication. Friendship exchanges between countries, especially former enemies, have been coined as Transitional Citizen Peacemaking (TCP), communication between private citizens of different countries with the intention of increasing mutual understanding and world peace. These TCP efforts constitute an alternative to nation-state diplomacy, providing a means of nonviolent social intervention based on the belief that goals can be achieved through social power.

The '90s also have seen a proliferation of educational games to enhance student awareness. "The Conflict Resolution Game" allows participants to assume the roles of conflicting nations, to devise ways to co-exist, and to develop mutually strong economies while maintaining national security. "Balance of Power" is a simulation game where participants respond to world crisis without provoking nuclear war.

In the '90s, teaching respect and tolerance for those who are different has become a primary educational focus. Peace education has moved well beyond the utopian dreams of its nineteenth century founders to realize very practical applications for the coming century.

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR PEACE EDUCATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION.

ATRIUM SOCIETY. Peace education resources, newsletter, bookstore. Site feature: Bullying.

http://www.atriumsoc.org/

BUCKS COUNTY PEACE CENTERS. Library of peace education/conflict resolution materials, annotated list of peace education programs, plus a checklist for stereotyping awareness.

http://www.comcat.com/~peace/PeaceCenter.html

CENTER FOR THE STUDY AND PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE. Blueprints for Prevention, database, facts, and statistics.

http://www.colorado.edu/csvp

EDUCATORS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY. Resolving Conflict Creatively Program. Strategies and guidelines to create peace and confront prejudice; instructional books, videos, and activities.

http://www.benjerry.com/esr/index.html

INDIAN HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL KIDS PEACE MUSEUM. Child-created exhibit galleries with art and writings with peace themes.

http://www.ih.k12.oh.us/ps/peace

PEACEJAM. Introduction to the lives of the heroes of peace.

http://theodore-sturgeon.MIT.EDU:8001/peacejam/index.html

PEOPLE FOR PEACE. Activities for peace education, conflict resolution, online KidsCare!, Story Center, and Penpals for Peace.

http://www.kids4peace.com

UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE. Articles on global peace issues, directory of funded projects, links to other peace organizations, publication reviews.

http://www.usip.org/

WORLD WISE SCHOOLS. Integrates global education into daily activities, including lesson plans for grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12.

http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/dp/wws1.html REFERENCES and ERIC RESOURCES

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