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Foundations of Social Education for Peace

Abstract: Notions of peace and how people accomplish it have existed worldwide, for millennia. The precursor to the accomplishments was envisioning peace. While principles of spiritual and indigenous traditions provided signposts for paths to peace, harmful responses to conflict also stimulated peace efforts. Eastern philosophies and Western ideologies offer the connected world a solid foundation for building peace in all regions. Students can learn global peace concepts and develop visioning skills in each of the subject areas. This chapter identifies other capability goals in peace education as well as domains of conflict transformation and provides a case example of students’ peace dramas.

Theoretical foundations

Forming the foundation of social education for peace are notions that spanned millennia as well as recent ones in the past two centuries. There are multiple ideas about how people might live together in a condition of peace. Modern peace education was constructed with such conceptions and research that analyzed their implementation. Teachers have incorporated as curriculum the conflicts in their society and world. Their motivation for active response to societal and students’ needs is a crucial component of visionary education as well as peace-oriented citizenship. Proactive people who address conflict apply theories that are foundations of social education and peace development (Carter & Kumar, 2010; Diamond, 2000; Nagler, 2004). The prosocial stance of peace educators and peacemakers has foundational ideas about how a society could improve its situation, especially through the avoidance of violence. The term prosocial refers to an orientation that may be evident in dispositions or skills known for supporting improvement of society. The motivation for prosocial modeling comes from a desire for improvement of circumstances where harmful responses to conflict exist. Envisioning other types of responses is the crucial work of educators and their students on the ideological paths that peacemakers have made.

Throughout the world, people have envisioned peace and then taken action with the use and augmentation of existing ideas. People who pursued peace have also advanced new ideas. Many of their accomplishments, which peace history documents, occurred after they pictured better situations than the ones they observed or knew about (Curti, 1985). Ian Harris (2008) explains how wars in Europe and then a world war stimulated the formation of peace societies whose members called for education to prevent war. Organizations that held visions of life without violence, like the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, are peace societies. While a disposition toward social responsibility or stewardship was evident in the minds of many proactive people during the past century, professors, teachers, and mentors motivated others. Informing about notions of and goals for societal and personal improvement have been important lessons that teachers, as well as community and family elders, sages, and spiritual leaders, provided. Conceptions of a good society have been germane while ideas about how to bring about “the good” have varied. These variations exist as diverse ideas and means for maintaining a good society (Bellah et al., 1991; Dajani, 2006). They