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CEASE Seminar at NAEYC 2010

“Action for Citizenship: Nurturing Children’s Instincts for Caring and Empathy” was the topic for the CEASE seminar at the NAEYC conference in Anaheim in November, 2010. The presenters, Joyce Daniels, Craig Simpson, Susan Hopkins and Amber Wallick shared stories that illustrated and supported the importance of providing experiences for children to develop the disposition for social consciousness. Each story was followed by a small group discussion facilitated by CEASE members.

Craig’s story, about how he provided the opportunity for a toddler to develop caring behaviors in his classroom (see Fall 2010 Packet at www.peaceeducators.org – ‘From Chaos to Compassion’) was followed by small group sharing about how those attending create both opportunities and environments for infants and toddlers to develop caring and empathy. Craig additionally shared that he posts photos of children caring for others in his classroom and provided some examples. Another response from the small groups focused on how the child who hurts in her classroom helps fix the hurt. For instance, the child who physically hurts another child helps to get the ice for the child he/she hurts and stays until the child who is hurt says it is OK.

Susan Hopkins shared a story about some four year olds who took action to save a liquid amber tree at their campus center that was due to be cut down. The tree was home to a chicken at the site. The children wrote a letter to the head of maintenance and the president of the university explaining the importance of the tree with the result that the tree and the chicken’s home were saved. Susan emphasized that if we want children to develop the skills of caring and empathy we need to build on the caring and empathetic instincts of children by providing opportunities in many ways. She used a drawing of a tree (see www.peaceeducators.org – “Building Community for Justice”) to illustrate the values and dispositions that are the roots which help build the skills for activism. The query that small groups focused on after Susan’s story was about how teachers put into action the perspective taking for kindness which we encourage in young children.

There were many responses to this query. One of the most interesting came from someone who said that she didn’t realize until this seminar that peace and justice values should underlie the entire curriculum – that empathy, caring, compassion have to be integrated into everything we do with children. Another attendee told how she focuses on a value each month with photos and examples to not only develop the value but to build the children’s caring vocabulary. Another response was how a teacher modeled and practiced the values with her three year olds and acknowledged when she saw them happen in her class-

News from TRUCE, Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children’s Entertainment

Newly revised and designed versions of the **TRUCE Media and Young Children Action Guide** and **TRUCE Toys, Play, and Young Children Action Guide**, went on-line in time for the December holiday Season. The two guides help parents and teachers deal with the impact of the media and commercial culture on children’s play, learning, behavior and family life. Both guides have just been translated into Spanish and are now also available on the TRUCE website. In addition to the guides, the website has many other helpful resources for taking action to deal with media and commercial culture, including the **Infant and Toddler Play, Toys and Media Action Guide**. Please visit www.truceteachers.org

room. Another teacher told about how she uses everything that happens – a broken toy, a hurt child to ask, “What can we do?” in a caring, problem solving atmosphere. And finally several agreed that all the words we use with children need thought and practice because they all teach.

Amber teaches those who are learning to work with young children at the community college level. So her story was about modeling the skills she wants the students to take back to their classroom – building caring and community in the college classroom. One of her assignments asks students to find an activist to research, and tell the story to the class. Then they can see how these stories influence their own classrooms. She also asks students to talk about the people who influence them in positive ways to take caring and compassionate actions.

The query that followed Amber’s story asked participants to share ways to use the stories they heard at the seminar in their work with young children. One response was to figure out how to have children’s responses be meaningful. After the tsunami over a year ago children at one school were asked to bring canned goods to send to Indonesia. The children brought them but didn’t seem really engaged in the project. When children were asked to bring a stuffed animal or a toy from their room, the activity seemed to have more meaning.

There was time at the end of the seminar to share ideas with the whole group. This seemed to make the experience even richer as each person had the opportunity to take home additional ways to nurture caring and empathy among children.

Joyce Daniels, Fair Oaks CA

Editorial by Craig Simpson

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”

President Eisenhower, 1953

Long after Eisenhower spoke these words, in my first years in Boston during the early 90s, I attended a forum on children with well-known, child development experts, T. Berry Brazelton, Penelope Leach and Benjamin Spock. It was an incredible forum in many ways, seeing the interactions between these three experts, but the thing I remember the most is Dr. Spock. He was talking about children and development and problems related to children. Then he smoothly and confidently told the participants that the best way to resolve childhood problems and difficulty and stress is to slash the military budget. He talked about how much a certain newly proposed weapon would cost and how children’s health would improve without that weapon. Spock devoted his life to educating parents about children, and realized the economics of the military budget and how it affects children.

In 2011 we still have the same problems with the military budget. A recent report on the internet showed that the flyover of Four Navy F-18s Fighter Jets at the Super Bowl XLV costs taxpayers \$450,000. What would you do in your child care center or school with that money? How many families could you serve? How many salaries would that pay? In my toddler program care for one child costs \$13,750 per year and the average salary for a preschool teacher is \$23,000 per year. And now imagine the possibilities if we ended the Afghan War. Each soldier deployed there costs \$1 million dollars per year.

It is outrageous the way children’s needs are left unmet in this country while our military continues to waste money on highly technical weapons systems, continuous wars around the globe, and publicity seeking stunts and flyovers which divert money from much needed social programs. Thank goodness there is a nationwide coalition of groups working to change these priorities and move dollars from the military budget to human needs. Go to www.newprioritiesnetwork.org to learn about the many groups involved and the 25% Solution which proposes such a cut in the military budget. We can improve our nation’s budget gap if military dollars are on the table. Details are available on www.justicewithpeace.org/25percent. Security will come from healthy, educated citizens, not from the power to make continual war.

Please note the flyer enclosed “Where Your Income Tax Money Really Goes” for 2012 from the War Resisters League. This annual analysis of the national budget gives details of our military spending and other commitments. Take a look!



Introduction to a Dialogue

We hear many stories about bullying in the news, and from school boards and State Houses. It seems that most of our lives it has been accepted as just life as usual in America. Most boys have the experience of being a bully or being bullied. I was beaten up regularly by two boys in gym class in ninth grade. Were they bullies? As we grew up we saw adults as bullies and then began to see our country as an international bully. Boone Schirmer (husband of CEASE founder, Peggy Schirmer) used to say, “the US is the world’s bully”. Recently bullying is understood as often involving the acting out of bias, and exists as a terror in the lives of lesbians, gays, bisexual, and transgender youth (LGBT). We know bullies are acting out their racism and other prejudices as well. The question for early educators is where does bullying come from? At what point in child development do we see early signs of bullying behavior and of bias? Remember the bully is a child.

Here we present two articles on bullying- one from Steve Shuman, a teacher, administrator, leader and advocate for early childhood, on the impact of bullying on LGBT children and families. The other is from Sharon Davisson, longtime teacher and peace and CEASE activist, on what we can do and whether bullying is an appropriate name for preschool behaviors. The articles appear on pages 4 and 5. We offer their perspectives and hope you will contribute yours. Please join the discussion on our Facebook page “Peace Educators”.

Craig Simpson, Somerville MA

Preventing Challenging Behaviors Targeting LGBT Children and their Families

Recently members of CEASE and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Interest Forum of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) began developing a “bullying prevention” workshop together. The collaborative process was both rewarding and revealing. The rewards of having two vibrant and committed groups of early childhood professionals work together to create more peaceful and nurturing classrooms seemed long over-due. However the process revealed that professionals do not always agree that bullying exists among preschoolers and that the impact sexual orientation and gender identity have is not fully understood across our field. We did find agreement in not wanting to label behaviors or specific children and that we all must work to address prejudice at any age.

Challenging behaviors among preschoolers: A 5-year old girl is not allowed to attend a classmate’s birthday party because her parents are lesbians. A 3-year old boy is told he cannot pretend to marry his best male friend in the dress-up area because “Boys can’t marry boys!” A girl is pushed off the climbing structure with accusations: “Climbing is boy stuff!” One boy venomously whispers to another during nap time; “Sissy faggot.”

Pushing, Teasing, Excluding, Name-calling; are all behaviors we may expect to see in a preschool classroom. Most teachers try to change this negative conduct by establishing and enforcing rules, redirecting activity, building empathy skills, or using a group time to discuss appropriate classroom expectations. What if these behaviors are the foundation of what will later be termed “bullying” and what if the victims are targeted because of their emerging sexual orientations, gender identities or their family make-up? Do early childhood professionals have the responsibility to address lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues in their classrooms? If they are committed to creating safe and nurturing environments for all children, I suggest that the answer is “yes.”

Books, posters, puzzles, dramatic play props, and manipulatives are staples of every classroom. Astute staff will assess these materials to see that they accurately reflect ethnic and cultural diversity even when their classrooms appear to be homogenous on the surface. However, many staff unthinkingly omit stories about two men raising a child or puzzles that show a family with two women as the caregivers. In the block area the assorted human figures force “families” to one father and one mother. Some staff may even consider trying to address same-gender headed households as inappropriate or wrong.

If educators are unsure of what language to use, or the facts themselves, or if they are unclear of what is developmentally-appropriate, they might consult the ground-breaking professional-development curriculum: *Making Room in the Circle*. (see below). This curriculum has been developed to help create welcoming, high-quality environments that actively include LGBT families, and diminish the silence, taboo and bias that target LGBT families and harm all children. *Making Room in the Circle* is an interactive curriculum based on solid diversity learning and family support principles designed for training early childhood practitioners to recognize and include LGBT families.

If bullying prevention seems over reacting to a problem identified with older children I suggest checking out the *Eyes on Bullying Toolkit*. According to the authors; “A culture of silence often surrounds bullying, many children who are bullied never tell anyone.” One reason bullying does not get reported is because children don’t have a trusted adult, who they think will understand, in whom to confide. Can we call ourselves early childhood professionals and still engender that kind of unsafe atmosphere?

A personal story: When our son was 17 years old, his parents (all three of them: two fathers, one mother) took him to several private schools for admittance interviews. A standard question was “What is your proudest accomplishment in your life”? His response surprised us, not because it wasn’t worthy of his pride, but because we had been clueless of his efforts. He told his personal story of managing the bullying of classmates since kindergarten because his fathers are gay. He talked about feeling sad and confused. He also spoke eloquently about challenging assumptions (“just because my parents are gay, that doesn’t mean I am”), managing physical confrontations (fighting and vandalism), and educating his peers (“if our state allows for same-sex marriages, it doesn’t mean everyone will turn gay”). We had given him many opportunities to share his thoughts and feelings over the years, but he had never revealed these personal challenges. We had also given him experiences with other children his own age with gay or lesbian parents. He had the vocabulary. He had the facts. He had the confidence. He also had the permission to handle things on his own.

Words, Knowledge, Self-Esteem. These sound like objectives for a positive early childhood program to me. It seems that what could happen within early childhood programs has two integral components; anti-bias education woven throughout a curriculum at the same time as the promotion of social skills about getting along and not excluding or being mean to others.

I challenge all of us to look at our programs and decide if they truly reflect the environment we want children to live in: safe places that celebrate differences. If not, let’s move out of our comfort zones and find the resources to give all children what we know they need and deserve.

See Resources; pg. 7 Steve Shuman, Palm Springs, CA

The Peaceable Classroom: A “Support the Child” rather than an “Anti-Bulling” Perspective.

During the 30+ years that I taught preschool-aged children, I did not observe what we usually think of as bullying. According to the American Psychological Association, “bullying is a form of aggressive behavior in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort.” What I did observe is aggressive behaviors such as name calling, exclusion, and physical aggressive acts such as hitting, pinching, biting, grabbing or shoving. What I observed was that the *intention* behind the behavior was to get a need met rather than to harm a peer. As a typical example, a child’s intention is to swing with a pal, not to pummel the child who happens to be in the swing next to the pal. If that swing were empty, there would be no pummeling!

The role of the teacher in a peaceable classroom is to teach children skillful, pro-social behaviors – ways to get their needs met peacefully. The peaceful conflict resolution process teaches children a multitude of skills such as impulse control, awareness of and ability to express feelings, listening to and considering another’s perspective, expressing one’s own perspective and finding peaceful ways of managing or resolving conflicts. And of course, a peaceable classroom will have a safe anti-bias environment rich in books, toys and learning materials honoring diversity in racial and ethnic identity, family structures, economic situations, and individual abilities and learning styles. A peaceable classroom will nurture the building of a genuine community through class meetings and the collaborative process of creating class agreements. Given these tools, young children typically cease aggressive or unkind behaviors. I’ve witnessed this transformation over and over again.

I do acknowledge, however, that out of the hundreds of children I have taught, I have encountered five or six whose behavior just might qualify as “bullying” despite being immersed in the culture of a peaceable classroom. Upon reflection, I realize that each of these children had needs that were more complex and more difficult to uncover than most. Each required intensive observation and reflection before a key to his or her exceptional need was discovered. For example we once enrolled a child who was expelled from two other preschools because of aggressive behaviors. And, sure enough, during the first week enrolled, that child managed to hurt every single other child in the program. A full-day of close observation revealed that the child spoke very infrequently. Also observed was that the child’s eyes widened when another ran close by and the “aggressive” child immediately shoved or hit the runner. We surmised that the child was startled by fast movement and being unable to access



words speedily, responded physically. A surprisingly simple solution of teaching the child the sign for “stop” ended the shoving and hitting. Other situations of “repeated” and “intentional” aggressive behaviors actually took quite a bit more investigation and experimentation. Once the root cause was identified and addressed, however, we were able to support the child and consequently his or her behavior changed for the positive.

I never encountered what one would term “bullying” related to LGBT issues specifically. Like any peaceable classroom, our school had all kinds of books and photos supporting diverse family formations. We made a point of addressing diverse biases if they emerged. I remember two incidents that may apply to the issue of LGBT bias. One time, a group of children were playing house and one girl wanted to be married to another. One of the children said “girls can’t marry girls.” Later in the day, I made sure to read the book “Heather has Two Mommies,” and during the discussion time, one of the children said, “oh, girls *can* marry girls.” Another time a boy was dancing around in a silky dress and another child said, “You can’t wear that, you’re not a *gurl*.” It was late afternoon and there were only 4 children left at school, so I invited the children around the circle and we talked about what we could “be.” The children named dragons, sea captains, birds (a favorite) and ended up deciding they could be “anything”- even dancers in fancy dresses.

Sharon Davisson, Nevada City CA

(Editor’s note: A book Sharon would have had in her library, except that it was published in 2010, *My Princess Boy, a mom’s story about a young boy who loves to dress up*, by Cheryl Kilodavis, illustrated by Suzanne DeSimone, Simon and Schuster.)

A Dialogue about Children of Incarcerated Parents

Since 1.7 million children have parents in prisons nation-wide, there is a need for ongoing education on the topic. I had the opportunity to present “Children of Incarcerated Parents: Creating Literacy Bags to Support Preschoolers, Their Families and Teachers” at the 2010 NAEYC Conference. Among the participants were early childhood teachers and administrators, college instructors and mentors. Many voiced the lack of resources and materials in their communities for children affected by the incarceration of family members.

First we reviewed the ways children learn that a family member is in prison. *Children* are born into families knowing that a relative is in prison. *Children* may be born to women in custody. Nine states have programs for women to keep their newborns with them from thirty days up to three years. There are several states that have community-based programs for children to live with their incarcerated mothers. *Children* may be present during the arrest of their parent(s). A preschool teacher from Arizona shared that several children from her program were in cars with their parents when the police arrested the parents for their undocumented status. Immigrant parents in her area now secure powers of attorney for relatives or friends so that the children can be released from the police to a familiar caregiver rather than going to foster care. *Children* may learn directly from adults about a parent’s imprisonment. *Children* may not be told the truth. Several participants were familiar with this common situation. One person mentioned that a child who visited her mother in jail weekly was told that her mom was in college. The child told her teacher that she never wanted to go to college.

There was discussion about typical childhood symptoms associated with having a parent in prison such as anxiety, aggression, withdrawn behavior, loss of interest in toys and favorite activities, and sleep disorders. However, for some children, there is a sense of relief, more trusting relationships and an increased sense of playfulness when they find out their parents are in prison.

Multiple factors contribute to how children are affected by a parent’s imprisonment. Among them are: the age at which the separation occurs, the child-parent relationship prior to the arrest; the child’s presence at the arrest; the number and result of previous separations; the stability of the child’s family; the disruptiveness of the incarceration on the family; and the availability of supports to the family. A preschool teacher clarified this topic when she asked for advice: should a child in her classroom visit her father who was convicted of murdering the child’s mother? I suggested that she consider the child’s relationship with the father. If the child desired to see him, was there a family member who could accompany her to the prison



visit and be supportive of the child prior to, during and after the visit? If the child didn't want to visit with the father, adults must respect her wishes. If the child witnessed the murder, therapy may be necessary in response to this traumatic experience.

The participants reviewed the contents of the 'Parents, Family Members and Friends in Prison Resource Bag' created by a committee of preschool teachers, directors and myself through the Cambridge Community Partnerships for Children in Massachusetts. The children's books addressed several of the issues raised during the session.

We ended the training with the reading of a letter from a Head Start parent who borrowed the resource bag. Her husband was in prison and she was raising their two sons aged 4 and 7. She wrote, "The books were so interesting, they helped me and eased my children's minds to know that Daddy wasn't being hurt. He can eat like we do, sleep in a bed like we do." "My son is in the process of making his own book about him and Daddy which I think is great, just like the little girl in one of the books who made her own book and drew pictures."

Several participants expressed an ongoing commitment to the issue by signing up for the NAEYC Children of Incarcerated Parents Interest Forum. New members offer insight and activism to our ongoing commitment to address the needs of children with family members in prison.

Fran Roznowski, Chelsea MA

Please contact me at froznowski@cpsd.us for copies of the handouts from this session or for information about NAEYC's children if Incarcerated Parents Interest Forum.

Selected Resources for “Preventing Challenging Behaviors,” page 4:



Making Room in the Circle: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Families in Early Childhood Settings. Lee Lesser, Tracy Burt, and Aimee Gelnaw. Parents Services Project, San Rafael, CA (<http://www.parentservices.org/lgbt.php>)

Stop Bullying Now! Video Toolkit U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov>

Eyes on Bullying Toolkit. Kim Storey, Ron Slaby, Melanie Adler, Jennifer Minotti, and Rachel Katz, Education Development Center, Newton, MA. <http://www.eyesonbullying.org/pdfs/toolkit.pdf>

Bullied, A Documentary. Teaching Tolerance, Southern Poverty Law Center, Montgomery, AL. <http://www.tolerance.org>

Statement of purpose

This revised Statement of Purpose was adopted at the CEASE Annual Meeting November 21, 1996.

CEASE is a network of parents, teachers and other concerned individuals who are dedicated to creating a safe world for our children. We seek to end the violence that permeates our society to an ever increasing degree and to remove the root causes of this violence by advocating for peace, justice and economic opportunity.

We are committed to:

- Raising public awareness about both the origins of violence and the disastrous effects violence and injustice have upon children, families and communities.
- Eliminating the acceptance of violence which is created by mass media conditioning.
- Ensuring the abolition of nuclear weaponry, and other weapons of mass destruction, and an end to the proliferation of conventional weapons.
- Putting a stop to the dangerous degradation of our natural environment by supporting the development and use of reusable, non-polluting resources that protect the health and safety of future generations.

Central to the solution of these problems is the redirection of national priorities and funding from the military and corporate interests to human services and environmental preservation.

We work towards these goals through the following activities:

- Providing a supportive network for teachers and parents who share our concerns.
- Educating the early childhood community through the publication of **CEASE NEWS**, creating periodical informational fliers, giving workshops and developing peace education materials.
- Advocating for a government that is committed to improving and expanding quality child care and child development programs.
- **Fostering a society that focuses on the well being of young children and their families through all our work.**

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Book Reviews



Of Thee I Sing: A letter to My Daughters

by Barack Obama, Loren Long, illustrator
Alfred Knopf 2010

I am a fan of “beautiful books” for children. This book is one. I watched a six year old reader find it, open it and turn the pages slowly, carefully to the end. Then, obviously entranced, this young reader returned to the beginning to read it again. I bought one for myself, and 10 more copies to send to the children in my life.

Obama writes to his daughters, Sasha and Malia, beginning the book by asking his daughters, “Have I told you lately how wonderful you are?” Yet the beautiful illustrations show that the book is intended for all children.

Obama, celebrating diversity, chooses 13 famous Americans from all walks of life to illustrate creativity, character traits and accomplishments. Helen Keller is here, “she taught us to listen to each other.” When it comes to the concepts of unity and family, he speaks of Abraham Lincoln by saying, “This man of the people, simple and plain, asked more of our country – that we behave as kin.”

YES! By all means, we must come to behave ‘as kin’

Grumpy Bird

by Jeremy Tankard, Scholastic Press, 2007
Ages: Preschool to First grade.

The bird awakes and is too grumpy to fly so sets off on a walk where he's joined by 5 friends. [Fox, Rabbit, Beaver, Raccoon, Sheep]. Soon he has companionship, a little exercise, a game of follow the leader and a smile. He ends up having so much fun he forgets he's grumpy and all is well in the end. This book is perfect to discuss emotions and especially how to get rid of a bad mood. Dramatic illustrations have thick black outlines for the characters, drawn over photographs and whimsical sketches. This book is a great addition to your collection.

Karen Kosko, Cambridge MA

–recognizing empathy as a much needed character trait.

Written before Obama became president, all proceeds from the book go to a scholarship fund for children of veterans.

Sunny Wallick, Redlands CA

Spread the Word

Thanks to Cheryl Horney and Patrick Romero CEASE has joined the social networking phenomena. We have a **Facebook** page. You can find us online by searching for an individual named peace educators. Make sure to add us as a friend. We hope to help CEASE become more active in our advocacy digitally through Facebook. We've been having many Facebook “revolutions” around the world and CEASE wants you to be a part of it. Please post any advocacy or important news you

want our educators around the country to act on, and know about, on our Wall and be sure to come back to the page often to keep updated.

Don't forget to go to www.peaceeducators.org Our website has new resources, past newsletters, lots of actions and links.

Please feel free to **copy** all materials from CEASE and distribute them to colleagues, parents, students and friends.

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