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War is Not Healthy for Children

Updates from the Network



Once again CEASE was a visual and interactive presence in the Center for Social Change (the former Advocacy Center) at CAEYC's Annual Conference in San Jose, Mar. 9-10. The CEASE display inspired a lot of conversations around issues of peace. Petitions asked for support of the proposed Department of Peace and Nonviolence Bill, HR808, recently introduced in the Congress. It creates a Cabinet level office with a Secretary of Peace and Nonviolence, appointed by the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate. It would increase our problem solving options by offering practical, nonviolent solutions to domestic and international conflicts. Find the bill on the web at thomas.loc.gov/. It is exciting for peacemakers to read. CEASE calls for its support. Step by step we must move as a nation toward seeing peace as a priority! See www.thepeacealliance.org to learn more about the campaign.

CEASE also disseminated information on how to document opposition to war in a child's early years. It is important for families to prepare an ongoing record for a child who may quest for conscientious objector status in the future. (For a helpful article about this issue by Helen James, contact Sunny Wallick, 1324 Monterey St. Redlands, CA 92373 .)



A group of CEASE West folks and friends are singing in front of the CEASE panel at the Center for Social Change.

NAEYC Board Addresses CEASE Concerns

By John Surr, May 9, 2007

Since September, CEASE has been pushing the NAEYC Governing Board to adopt policies on three issues:

1 NAEYC's absence of a position on the war in Iraq, or even on whether war harms young children;

2 NAEYC's lack of an updated position on the effects of electronic entertainment media on young children;

3 NAEYC's policy that allows it to accept advertising and exhibits that probably harm young children and their development, such as the *Baby TV™* ad in the July 2006 *Young Children*.

NAEYC Board Meetings:

At its November meeting in Atlanta, the NAEYC Governing Board decided to review NAEYC's public policy position statements generally, and put the issues we raised on the back burner until it had done that review. Immediately after that meeting, CEASE offered to help the NAEYC Staff in developing new policies in the areas described above. I produced a research-based paper (with help from others in CEASE), citing and summarizing much of the research now available on the issues above, and sent it to them in January (copies available from surr@his.com).

We asked to have our earlier requests placed on the agenda for the NAEYC Governing Board's March 5 and 6 meeting, and the first and second ones were. The Board's Public Policy Committee heard out my comments about NAEYC's advertising policy, but the Board did not discuss it. A member of the Committee and the Board said that she had told her daughter to use the TV to pacify her infant granddaughter as a matter of preserving the daughter's sanity, but there was no other substantive comment about advertising or exhibit policy. After that meeting, a member of the Board mentioned to me her concern about companies like Wal-Mart and Target using suppliers abroad that exploit child labor, and I agreed that it was worth adding to our list of concerns.

Results:

a. War: On war, the Public Policy Committee and Board clearly did not want to put NAEYC on record as opposing the war in Iraq. They felt that it was not a matter within NAEYC's special competence, and that many members of NAEYC actively supported the war. On the other hand, they were quite sympathetic to CEASE's request that NAEYC's public pronouncements about violence should include mention of war as a form of violence that is very harmful to children. But then the NAEYC Staff was authorized to "archive" outdated public policy statements on its website, as long as they could be accessed by a link from that page. The policy statements on violence and media violence were included in those to be archived.

b. Media: The NAEYC Staff anticipates beginning in the summer of 2008 its work on a new generation of public policy statements, including a restatement on

continued on page 8

Editorial

Living in Vermont, I naively feel protected from many of the violent incidents that have made national headlines in recent years. I always feel that those things happen at larger schools or in other people's backyards; they certainly can't happen here.

Sadly, last fall the safe bubble I live in was shattered by a couple of unexpected and unfortunate events in my community. These events made me realize that my family and I are vulnerable to the effects of violence just like everyone else.

The first incident occurred in a neighboring local school mere days before the first day of classes. All the teachers were busy organizing their rooms and getting prepared for that first day. Tragically, a gunman swept through the school leaving one teacher dead and several wounded. Our entire community was devastated.

The second incident happened a few weeks into the school year. I was home in the middle of a weekday when my neighbor called. To suggest a play date for our sons, I thought. The first thing she said, however, was, "everybody is okay." Apparently, the elementary school our sons attend had to be evacuated because of a bank robbery two doors down; the robber was still at large. Even though no one was hurt and everything turned out fine, I will never forget the heart-wrenching fear of that call. The only thing

I wanted to do was to scoop my son up in my arms and carry him home. I cannot even imagine how devastating it is for parents who have lost children due to an act of violence, especially in a place that is supposed to be a safe haven.

I am much wiser now to the fact that violence happens everywhere – even in my small community. We have a choice about how we respond to it. We can become fearful and lock ourselves away in the name of safety; or we can learn from these incidents and take action to prevent them from happening again. Prevention can be simple. The following are a few ideas:

- sharing quality books with young children;
- eliminating violent entertainment for young children;
- modeling peaceful conflict resolution skills;
- implementing a unit on peace makers in schools; and
- creating caring communities for all children.

More than ever, we need to reach out to one another with comfort, compassion, and understanding. Each of us can and needs to participate in the process of creating and nurturing a safe environment for our children, our community, and ourselves. A world without horrific violence can only exist if we make it so.

Heidi Smith, South Burlington, VT



CEASE members demonstrating at the NAEYC conference in Atlanta, GA

Who Needs Conflict Resolution Skills?

I wonder if I, or most adults, know how to use effectively the conflict resolution skills we hope to teach to children. As a grandmother, I am disconcerted to find how often I want to quell the squabbling of siblings or the stubbornness of a toddler with a simple order from on high. It doesn't work. Surprise!

The parents of these little ones are struggling too. We confer on strategies old and new. There are no shortcuts. Whatever we try, it comes back to patience and forethought, which are difficult to achieve in the rush of life. We must take a breath, count to ten, and try again.

Recommendations for teaching young children to get along peacefully describe sensible steps for conflict resolution. First pause, then find out what has happened, try to take into account the other point of view, work together to find a solution which is mutually acceptable. Test it out and reflect on whether it has worked. Sounds good! As a preschool teacher, I have tried to follow this path with my students. I respect and value the process.

As a grandparent, I have come to recognize the weakness of my own skills. Reading *The Explosive Child*, by Ross W. Greene, I was startled to find that he is recommending for parents the very process which we have been idealistically teaching to children. His detailed description of the steps to deal with an out-of-control child match those recommended by Diane Levin in her book *Teaching Young Children in Violent Times*. Greene asks parents to find the child's perspective and empathize first, then work to define the problem and invite the child to look for a mutually satisfactory solution.

Greene recognizes that he is asking parents to exercise a difficult skill and counsels that it will take time to perfect. It is worth it, he maintains, because other authoritarian approaches are not working. Inviting the child to be a part of the solution is the key. Yet, how many adults are prepared to give up their power, whether it is in a conflict with a child or another adult? We have not been trained in this skill. Too often, we turn away from conflict, let it fester, or try to muscle through to a victory over others.

I look at the determination of my almost four-year-old grandson as he asserts his wishes. He is trying to match the power he finds in the larger people around him. We adults are taken aback by his bluntness and want to subdue it. His lack of "social skills", as we call it, reveals the model he experiences daily in adults' assertion of power in his life. We tell him he must do whatever we ask and are surprised when he counters us with his own desires. Are we prepared to reach out and compromise? Usually not! There are times when we cannot for reasons of safety or our sanity. But when we could, we have not learned the

steps to achieve a mutually acceptable solution to such problems. It must begin with empathy.

Greene's book addresses the extremes of such confrontations. He is writing about children who are beyond the normal scale in their inflexibility and frustrations. Yet, in his words I recognize the daily struggles of adults with adults and adults with children. Can we step back and accept the reality of another's point of view? Can we commit to looking for a solution which will satisfy both our own and another's needs? Can we give up our need to assert our power and accept compromise? Children may learn these skills before the adults around them. It is my hope that we will learn together.

Lucy Stroock, Cambridge, MA

A COURAGE OF WORDS

We the People stand up for peace.

In the House Jeannette Rankin votes nay
for both World Wars; after 9/11, Barbara Lee
presses the lone red button against retaliation.

We raise our voices—
ballot box, rally, street corner, lunch room,
buttons and bumper stickers.

Martin Luther King, Jr. marches the long road
to the Hill. We march behind, singing
*Give Peace a Chance, If I Had a Hammer,
We Shall Overcome.*

Denise Levertov, Langston Hughes,
Carolyn Forché shine poetry's light
on shadows of injustice.

Our speeches, signs, letters,
petitions and poems float across
the land on airwaves,
wires and paper,

a courage of words
powerful enough to withstand
fire stone blade bullet time.

—Irene Lipshin



Growing Into Peacemakers

Each fall when new students enter our classrooms, we work to establish a classroom community of learners. Part of that process includes children working together to create a set of classroom expectations and logical consequences. Collaboratively with the children, we write a class promise. A key component of our promise includes empathy for one another and establishing a peaceful environment. Through modeling and classroom discussions, children practice peaceful actions and resolutions to problems. These skills lay the foundation and provide students with the tools necessary to ensure harmony.

When children are immersed in thematic units, they become active participants in their own learning. Thematic units integrate all curriculum areas and are carefully planned to coincide with the world outside of the classroom. Children understand the study of life cycles when they watch a Monarch caterpillar turn into a beautiful butterfly during the fall months. Likewise, in the month of April, when the seasons are changing, children naturally experience and observe weather patterns. This is a perfect opportunity to incorporate a thematic unit about weather and the water cycle.

In today's world, teachers are faced with the challenge of choosing a thematic unit in December. It used to be that December was a month for celebrating holidays. Today, it is much more difficult to celebrate these holidays due to the diversity and beliefs of many families. It is a finer line where the school and home meet. What is our job to teach and what is a family's job to teach? How do we separate church from school? How do we value and respect each child's beliefs and culture without highlighting what the majority of children celebrate?

Two years ago, we started a new unit titled "Peacemakers" during the month of December. We revisit our class promise from the beginning of the year and define what it means to be a peacemaker. We teach the children the characteristics of a peacemaker. They can clearly see that they are all peacemakers in our classroom. Children research peacemakers in history by reading biographies. They create a timeline of that peacemaker's life with important dates and facts. We create a giant timeline in the hallway to see which peacemakers overlap in time. As a culmination of our thematic unit, we invite parents into our classroom to share in our learning. On the day of the sharing celebration, children dress as their peacemaker and create a name tag explaining the significance of that peacemaker in history. We share a slideshow where we sing songs about peace and show pictures of peacemaking actions in our classroom. Children take their parents through a variety of stations where they complete a quilt square for our class quilt, make a bead necklace that

includes a word about peace, color paper dolls from around the world, and decorate cookies shaped like people.

We end our sharing with a slideshow of photos from our classroom. Each slide is a picture of the children that represents a quality of a peacemaker. Children help write the text to match each picture. They learn that "Peace" can be as simple as tying one's shoe or complex as helping two friends solve a disagreement. Children are always surprised to know that they can help make the world a more peaceful place by being peacemakers themselves. One child said it best when she shared "People like George Washington and Rosa Parks must have been peacemakers when they were little to turn into such important people. Maybe if I'm a peacemaker now, I will be important like them when I grow up."

At a time when our world is struggling to peacefully resolve differences and conflicts, it is important to provide our children with the tools to become the next generation of peacemakers.

Paula Jensvold and Brigid Kulhowlvick,
South Burlington, Vermont

The Book Fairy

There are small moments in our lives that remind us of the important things in life. I can remember one such moment occurring during a training I did with a group of family home care providers for the Vermont Humanities Council "Never too Early Programs". One provider's children were there, and her four year old sat with rapt attention for the entire two hour training even though it was for adults. When I was finished, she came up to me shyly and stroked my skirt. She whispered, "Are you a fairy?" "What do you think?" I asked. She nodded solemnly. The next week, I arrived at the same house to do the second part of the training. She was waiting for me in the driveway, and when she saw my car turn in, she ran up to her front door shouting, "Mommy, mommy, the book fairy is here!" You might think that would have been the highlight of that training for me, but it wasn't. Afterward, one of the providers approached me and thanked me effusively. "Now," she said, "I have books to read to the children. I couldn't afford any before, but I know they are important, and I know I should read to the children even though I don't read very well". Imagine what an incredible world this would be if every child had plenty of books to read.

Robin Ploof, Burlington, VT

Creating Community



It was heart-wrenching to learn about the tragedy at Virginia Tech. As days went by, more pieces of the story began to unfold. I found myself both disturbed and uplifted. I was disturbed by the stories about Seung-Hui Cho, particularly the comments of his grandfather that he “deserved to die with the victims.” I was uplifted by the stories of heroes: Professor Librescu, a Holocaust survivor who barred his classroom door so students could jump out the window, instructor Jamie Bishop who did the same, both professors gave their lives in the process; students who barricaded doors and shielded each other with their bodies. I could easily understand the sacrifices of the two teachers. As a teacher myself, I hope in the instant of a heartbeat that I would display that same courage.

The young people are the part of the story that I continue to reflect on and ponder over. On the same campus sitting in the same classroom you have students who would sacrifice themselves for the lives of their fellow classmates and at least one student who would take those lives. How is it that both can exist in the same learning community?

I realized that it is community. It is all about community. I am a director and early childhood educator at a small center. I felt so strongly about community connections that when I founded our program, I placed it in a house in a residential neighborhood. I wanted children to feel connected to a community, to their community. Children feel part of their community by having an art show at a local café, by delivering bread they baked themselves to an elderly neighbor whose husband passed away, by making the street more beautiful by passing out sunflower seeds to our neighbors by hanging pine cone birdfeeders on the trees up and down the street, and by frequenting businesses within the neighborhood for goods and services.

In our neighborhood, children can be bussed to and from the local elementary school if they choose. One day,

shortly after the bus had passed in the afternoon, there was a knock on the door of the center. There on the porch was a first-grader who was dropped in front of his house by the bus only to find no one was home. He had the good sense to come and get help. In the morning, I walk by the children waiting on the corner to take the bus to school; most of the children know me by my first name, or as “that lady with the kids,” or some by being alumni of my program. There is always a morning conversation about last night’s basketball game, the dreaded test, or “I’m not really feeling so well today.” These are children who feel connected to their community. These are children who know there are ears to listen and people who will help if they need it.

At my center, I am part of this amazing community of teachers, children, and families. We have several family events a year and several that are just for parents and teachers to support connections with each other. In light of what happened at Virginia Tech, this model of strong community is more important than ever. Building strong community is what makes sure everyone is supported and connected to someone.

Together at Stepping Stones, we have built a place of belongingness where everyone is respected and valued, where everyone is connected, and where all the members care about each other deeply. Here we celebrate each other’s learning and share each other’s joy. Clearly, this sense of belonging reaches beyond our doors and out into the neighborhood at large. Building a strong community is what helps to prevent what happened in Virginia. If Cho had really felt a sense of connection and belonging to his academic community, would he still have done what he did there? I will never know the answer, but somehow I don’t think so. In my community, we are striving to make sure the children grow up knowing they belong. I want that for every child in every community.

Robin Ploof, Burlington, VT

“Our children are the only tangible connection to the future that we have.”

Olof Palme, 1927-1986



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.**

YES, I WANT TO JOIN THE CEASE NETWORK

Date _____

- Enclosed is my \$10 subscription. new subscription renewal
- Enclosed is my \$5 student subscription. Here is an additional gift to help defray expenses.
- Enclosed is a gift membership for:

Name _____ Phone number () _____

Address _____

_____ e-mail _____

Place of work _____ position _____

NAEYC Member How did you learn about CEASE? _____

For tax deductible contributions over \$50 make check payable to Survival Education Fund

Return to CEASE, c/o Lucy Stroock, 55 Frost Street, Cambridge, MA 02140

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Updates *continued from page 2*

violence in the lives of children and a new synthesis of statements concerning the array of entertainment, computing, and communications devices now available to young children. Our preparatory work in that area will be included in that consideration, but the Staff will be seeking input from the full array of sources of informed opinion, including those who disagree with us. CEASE expects to be involved closely as those policies develop. If you are interested in participating directly in any particular part of that policy development, please communicate that interest to surr@his.com, and we'll get together by e-mail when the need to mobilize again arises.

- c. Advertising & Exhibits:** CEASE is continuing to hold NAEYC's feet to the fire about its lackadaisical answers to our call for social responsibility in its own acceptance of advertising and exhibit money from those who harm young children, directly or indirectly. We have asked the NAEYC Governing Board to reconsider that policy at its July 2007 meeting, and will follow up for as long as it takes to bring them to the kind of moral integrity that we feel they need to have.

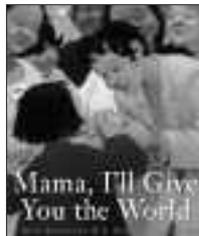
If you have any views to express on these issues, please do get in touch with either hsmith@sover.net (for letters to the editor of this Newsletter) or surr@his.com (for opinions about how we should be relating to the NAEYC Board and Staff). Thank you!



Book Review

Mama I'll Give You the World

by Roni Schotter with illustrations by S. Saelig Gallagher.



This charming story is about a young child, Luisa, who with the help of her mother's friends at work, surprises her mom for her birthday. By being observant, the girl re-created a nostalgic time in her mom's life, when she used to dance. The oil paintings beautifully capture the essence of the book. Mom works at

Walte's World of Beauty and has loyal customers who help Luisa keep the big surprise. I have used this book from Preschool to grade 2. The book launches discussions about making people happy and finding clues on what makes specific people smile.

Karen Kosko, Cambridge, MA

Please feel free to copy this newsletter and any other materials you receive from CEASE and distribute them to colleagues, parents, students.... Help us to reach out!

**Let people know about our website
www.peaceeducators.org**

CEASE welcomes contributions to the newsletter. Please write us about your work for a peaceful and safe world for children. Send us resource information you value. We will publish as space allows.

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