

Peace Education Strategies

Peaceful Conflict Resolution is a process that enables children to work together to resolve interpersonal conflicts. The goal of peace education is not to eliminate conflict, but rather to acknowledge that it is a natural part of life and can be a source of positive growth and development. The peaceful conflict resolution process creates an environment where differing points of view and conflicting needs are seen as an opportunity for understanding one's own feelings and needs as well as understanding the perspectives, feelings and needs of others.

I recommend the following six basic steps for peaceful conflict resolution: 1. Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions. 2. Acknowledge children's feelings and calm the children – essential so that the children can move from emotional to cognitive mode. 3. Gather information: *what is the problem? What do you each want/need?* Children speak one at a time as they share their view of the problem. This “defining” the problem may take some time! 4. Once you get a sense of the problem, restate the problem, i.e. *I am hearing that two children want one swing? Is that the problem?* 5. Ask children, *How can we solve this problem?* and invite them to become a problem solving team by brainstorm ideas. Their peers are welcome to contribute to the process. 6. Try out the idea and later reflect together on how the idea worked.

Class Meetings are a more formal way to build peace-making skills. Class meetings offer the opportunity for such activities as planning group projects, which in turn create a habit of working as a team. They also provide an opportunity to discuss social problems that have arisen in the group and come up with solutions. The children brainstorm ideas as the teacher facilitates the collaborative process. Children get repeated opportunities to practice hearing everyone's voice, developing listening skills and making decisions together.

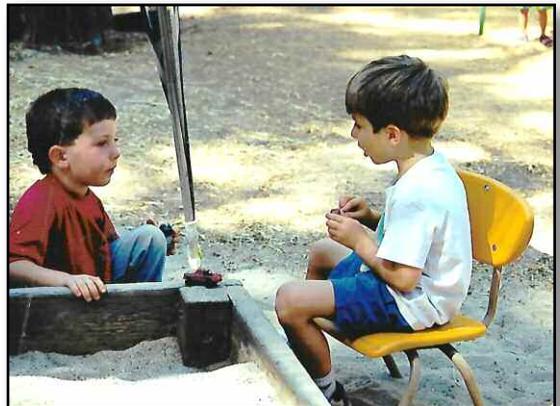
Class Agreements are, I believe, one of the most empowering strategies we can use in our peaceable classroom. The children are invited to co-create guidelines for their own behavior. The standard is simply “A Safe School.” See how excited children are to have their ideas written down! One of the important ways to build a democratic classroom is to give the children ample time to hear and consider each other's ideas. Rather than have the children vote on each suggestion, work toward coming to consensus about the agreements. If everyone agrees, then the idea is included on the document.

Earth Care. Just as we teach children to respect and care for one another, we teach them to respect and care for all living things. Earth care has long been recognized as an integral part of peace education. Nature offers ample

opportunities for nurturing gentleness and compassion in children. Planting and tending school gardens, growing butterfly gardens, caring for classroom plants and pets, learning to conserve natural resources (reduce, recycle, reuse), and observing and documenting the natural world around us, all contribute to building a relationship with nature. Children develop a respect for nature and eventually take responsibility for their impact on all life on our planet. These simple acts help children develop a habit of caring for nature and a disposition toward sustainability.



Story Time Gathering



Solving Their Problem

Strategies and photos from Sharon Davisson,
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