

# *A Culture of Peace*

## *Nurtured at Stepping Stones Preschool*

Mennonite Early Childhood Network Assembly  
San Jose, California  
July 4, 2007

**Sharon Davisson, Adjunct Faculty**  
**Pacific Oaks College**  
**sdavisson@pacificoaks.edu**

CEASE (Concerned Educators Allied  
For a Safe Environment) [www.peaceeducators.org](http://www.peaceeducators.org)  
NVP (Nonviolence in the Lives of Children Project)  
[www.nvpchildren.org](http://www.nvpchildren.org)

## *Foundations of Peace:*

### Meaningful Relationships and a Sense of Community

#### **Meaningful Relationships**

Develop Trust

- *Be* trustworthy
  - Establish a bond with each child
  - Be predictable, authentic and truthful

Discover the child's "True Self"

- Become a keen observer
  - Maintain a deep respect for the child
  - Practice mindfulness

#### **Sense of Community**

1. Develop meaningful relationships with families
  - Home visits
  - Frequent conferences
  - Potlucks
  - Parent Participation (formal or informal participation in the program)
    - Encourage family participation
      - The Grandparent Project (handout)
      - The Family Book Project (handout)
2. Use a Class Meeting process for discussions, problem solving and planning with children
3. Practice decision making through consensus
  - Plan and discuss class projects
  - create class agreements

## Class Meetings

- Discussions, planning and problem solving
  - o Facilitates child-initiated projects.
  - o Structured sharing of authority can create trust, responsibility and respect.
  - o Solving problems and planning together promotes inclusiveness, empowerment and empathy.
- Create Class Agreements
  - o One of the most effective ways to create a *Culture of Peace* is to share authority with children.
  - o Creating their own class agreements is a wonderful way for children to develop trust, autonomy and self-regulation.

## Peacemaking

### Concrete Problem Solving

Offers children the opportunity to be creative problem solvers and develop a sense of *interdependence*.

### Interpersonal Problem Solving

One of the most effective ways to build a *Culture of Peace* is to teach children conflict resolution skills.

The children get to know one another's "true selves" as they learn to take on another's perspective.

When children struggle together over common ground (their conflict), they end up forming meaningful relationships.

### Feelings - a foundational piece of conflict resolution

Build an extensive "feelings" vocabulary

Teach sign language to express feelings (handout)

### ***Basic Steps to Peaceful Conflict Resolution***

**Assess** the situation and see if there is immediate danger of someone getting hurt, or if the children are resolving the conflict in an equitable manner themselves. If the adult determines you are needed, approach the children quickly and *calmly*.

**1. Calm children and acknowledge their feelings.**

**2. Ask children "what is the problem?"**

**3. When children are calm, ask each child to express what they want or need.**

**4. State the problem clearly and nonjudgementally.**

**5. The children brainstorm ideas about how to resolve the conflict. Work with the children until there is a solution to which all parties can agree.**

**6. Try the idea (take action) and evaluate.**

## Tools and Strategies for a *Culture of Peace*