Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in Environment & Sustainability Education

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What kind of ‘peace’?
Goals for handling conflict

- **Peacekeeping** — control for safety and security ("negative peace" = absence of direct violence)
- **Peacemaking** — dispute resolution & dialogue (via negotiation, mediation, circle processes)
- **Peacebuilding** — long-range prevention of direct and structural violence by (re)building healthy relational environments, equity/ rights, democratization (sustainable, just “positive peace”)

The Conflict Cycle: Locations for Learning

**Beliefs & Attitudes About Conflict**
- **Conflict Occurs**
- **Response** — what we do
- **Consequence**

INQUIRY: Peace-Building Citizenship
Learning amidst Violence: School (Dis)Connections with Lived Experience

Young (age 10-15) people’s experience-based understandings & concerns about social conflicts & violence, and what people can do about them: urban Mexico, Canada, Bangladesh, Colombia. (Mis-)match with their teachers’ understandings, educational practices, implemented curriculum. In each school/ region:

- One workshop each with 3-6 focus groups of 5-6 STUDENTS (age 10-15)
- Series of 2-5 focus group workshop sessions with 4-6 interested TEACHERS (gr. 5-9)
- Document analyses re: (state-funded) school contexts & policies, curriculum mandates in social studies (history/ geography, civics/ ethics), health, language arts, & science
Dimensions of Lived & Experienced Curriculum about Eco-Peace Conflicts & Possibilities

**Cultural Dimensions:** Beliefs + identities collectively recognized, reinforced

**Social-Structural Dimensions:** Acknowledged/roots of historized imbalance/injustice

**Emotions & Relationships:** (Who are the change-makers & helpers?)

**Repertoire of Citizen Options to Reduce & Resolve:** (Individual + collective)

**Direct Symptoms & Causes:** Actors, who's affected & how so

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Sample discussion prompts:

- Resource, land & environmental conflicts

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PBC Results: Lived & Experienced Curriculum about Eco-Peace Conflicts & Possibilities

**Cultural Dimensions**
- Beliefs recognized & reinforced (de-linked)

**Social-Structural Dimensions**
- Invisible roots of historized imbalance/injustice

**Emotions & Relationships**
- Anxiety, frustration, isolation—few helpers

**Repertoire of Citizen Options to Reduce & Resolve**
- Self-control & distrusted securitization

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Examples: Opportunities for Ecological Peacebuilding Citizenship Learning (Ingredients & Instances)

- **Language Arts & Social Sciences:** Identify interests/needs, perspectives/biases, power sources of various characters/parties, processes of escalation & de-escalation of conflicts over time, in news, literature & other stories

- **Health:** Human wants & 'really-needs,' healthy living skills

- **Math & Sciences:** Examine, predict & assess impacts of actions on various environments & stakeholders
  - Team projects (also language arts): inquiry > create public exhibit re: environmental problem
  - Change-maker biographies & histories: how problems have been handled before (e.g. innovators at first ridiculed or censored, current & past social change movements/actors)

- **Pedagogies (model/practical guide):** Conflict/case study analysis, inquiry, problem-solving persuasion/action (role-play & actual), negotiation/mediation, reflective writing, circle dialogue …
Sample ON Curriculum Expectations (gr.5-9)

**Science & Technology:** • Multiple stakeholders’ perspectives & challenges of minimizing negative outcomes or inventing/implementing positive solutions; • eg ‘new running shoe designs provide better body protection, but manufacturing them may involve social (eg unsafe working conditions, child labour) & environmental costs;’ • eg (automation) contrasting consequences of introduction of tractors (higher production, unemployment, pollution); • eg (fluids) impact of technological advancements on water systems; different ways to clean up oil spills; (biodiversity) diverse stakeholders’ perspectives on overfishing; (water systems) multiple actors/potential actions in water sustainability, bottled water industry

**Social Studies, History & Geography:** • How global development issues affect life in Canada & beyond, eg child labour, dwindling oil supplies, ownership of & access to fresh water; • How political events (eg in colonial Canada) affected diverse communities socially, politically & environmentally; • How various Canadian govts have responded to geographical challenges; • Diverse historical actors’ perspectives on ‘the use of natural environment to meet human needs;’ • How various First Nations & European groups would each interpret the interactions among them (before 1713); • Interrelationships among factors that can contribute to quality of life … & economies of specific developed & developing countries’

**Health/Physical Ed** (esp. Healthy Living strand): • Communicative skills for fair play, responding to intolerance/stigma; • Metacognition & thoughtful problem solving; • Critical literacy/recognize bias; • Environmental ed. eg “explain use of active human-powered transportation to reduce air pollution,” community action solutions to environment & health problems, outdoor ed

**Language Arts:** • Recognize contrasting perspectives surrounding any narrative eg news, literature; • Discern missing or possible alternative points of view; • Determine if a view is balanced & supported by the evidence (bias), whether it achieves a particular goal; • Evaluate the credibility of sources; • Role play ‘how [Ss] would resolve a particular character’s dilemma’
Step one (brainstorm):
What (knowledge, skills, inclinations +) would students need to learn and practice, for 'ecological peace-building citizenship' to handle sustainability questions, conflicts, challenges, collective decision-making & community (global) change?

(How might you categorize these teaching-learning goals – main dimensions [ingredients] of eco-peacebuilding citizenship capacity?)

Step two (pairs/groups):
Finding Spaces for Ecological Peacebuilding Citizenship- Relevant Learning & Practice

- Brainstorm & co-invent lesson activities, pedagogies, instances/content, & resource materials that dovetail one or more ecological peacebuilding citizenship learning goals with one or more subject area goals.

- How might you prepare & support all students for this conflict education?

Results from Participants’ Brainstorming:
Knowledge, Skills & Inclinations for Eco-Peacebuilding Citizenship to infuse and dovetail with regular activities and subject-matter to be practiced in classroom and school

1. Communicative & Relational (How to) Create safe(r) spaces to share
   - Empathy + listening with respect
   - How + why to listen
   - Ingredients of (effective) communication (verbal, nonverbal, artistic, digital in groups)
   - Self-awareness ‘What do I (& they) want and really need?’
   - Speak/write/communicate persuasively – autonomous expression
   - Taking explicit time to teach, practice, & reflect on these language/social/learning skills

2. Conflict Analysis + Problem-Solving (Peacemaking Elements)
   - Recognize, ‘take,’ & respond to Multiple/contrasting perspectives
   - Metacognition – put thinking processes & emotions into words
   - Nature of conflict
   - Parties + their wants/needs/beliefs
   - How conflicts escalate and de-escalate
   - Observation (noticing, collecting evidence … eg: re: environmental problems)
   - Find interests (wants/needs) in common among parties (+ build on commonalities)
   - Start with small and distant problems, e.g. in news, fiction, history, science

3. Respond to Power + Inequalities (Peacebuilding Elements)
   - Recognize (our) biases
   - Take responsibility/ownership (For WHAT? – bigger systems beyond individual symptoms)
   - Analysis: Who has been affected, directly + indirectly, by the problem?
   - Repertoire of responses
   - What options have they had?
   - What makes us (& them) HAPPY?
   - Learn to value Active Citizenship: Contribute to collective good
   - Practice!

4. Collective Decision-Making, Governance, Action
   - Recycling > become environmentally responsible
   - Joint inquiry and problem-solving about community commitment patterns
   - Student parliament, school ‘town’ meetings, class meetings, group decision-making
   - Peace circle processes: RE: issues in curriculum (+ real life)
   - Goal-setting (together, for collective, not just for ‘them’ or oneself)
   - Cooperative tasks + learning activities: Proactive environments for peace/justice
   - Creative invention, elaboration of multiple options for resolving problems
   - Apply abstractions to tangibles: Lived examples (from students’ experiences, global/local news, subject matters)

Thank you!

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