

Building and Sustaining a Culture of Peace in the School Community

For nearly two decades from 1980-1996, armed rebels and military forces in Peru violently opposed one another and demanded that the Peruvian people take a side. This long-term violence left a horrible toll of more than 69,000 deaths, the poorest of the country experiencing the greatest loss. Peasant farmers living in the Andean region were internally displaced and harshly discriminated against primarily on the basis of race, economic and social status and language. The vast majority of these poor populations had limited access to education and where education was available to them, it was permeated by violence and stigmatized by society.

The Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report of 2003 underscores the negative impact of low quality education on Peruvians.¹ The report implores that both government and society guarantee relevant, quality education that prepares students to live and work in a more just and peaceful society. EDUCA's Culture of Peace Project in Lima, Peru, responds to this call by working to reform educational systems and Peruvian society for the better.

EDUCA prepares teachers in urban and rural areas of Peru to use curricula as a tool for social, economic and political change at the local and regional levels. Through training, teachers learn to deal with violence and conflict occurring in schools as well as in the homes and communities of their students. Despite low salaries and working overtime, teachers

¹ For the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Report of 2003 in Spanish, visit <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/conclusiones.php> and for the 'General Conclusions' of the report in English, visit <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ingles/ifinal/conclusiones.php>.

participate in peace-building workshops to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to confront violence and manage conflict.

Building and Sustaining a Culture of Peace in the School Community offers some of the tools used to measure the qualitative and quantitative effects of EDUCA's peace education pilot project in five public schools of San Juan de Lurigancho. San Juan de Lurigancho is a very poor, marginalized area in the largest district of Lima where a population of 1.5 million formed by families fleeing violence in the Andean region. The five schools agreed to participate in the pilot project and to serve as a model for replication in a greater number of schools in the future. The assessment tools were developed to improve peace education programming, to understand its impact and to sharpen short-term and long-term strategies *with* school principals, teachers and students to sustain their efforts over time.

Each evaluative tool designed by EDUCA addressed critical issues affecting the school and its community as well as took into account issues relevant to each school such as its size, infrastructure, level of teacher preparedness and/ or commitment, degree of parental participation, and socio-economic status of families. These tools aimed to measure the impact of peace education content and methodology that was implemented in the schools to counteract violent acts and increase peaceful ones.

Assessment tools measured themes upon which EDUCA's program had been structured.

Some key themes included:

- Appreciating Diversity (respect, anti-racism and anti-discrimination)

- Peaceful Conflict Resolution (anger management, non-violent language and behavior)
- Group Participation and Collaboration (cooperation and consensus-building)

EDUCA created questions for surveys, interviews and group discussions. Throughout the assessment, a minimum of two sources of data e.g., interviews with *both* principals *and* teachers or teachers *and* students on the same issue were used to balance points of view. An evaluation expert was also consulted.

The following sample assessment tools hope to serve other school communities in identifying and reducing violence and simultaneously nurturing a culture of peace. The samples provided specify a group i.e., teachers or students for whom they are intended, however each tool is adaptable to both groups. Adaptations are made by simple changes to the language used. Samples include:

1. Interview Questions for Teachers
2. Focus Group with Students
3. Questionnaire for Students

Educators and students are encouraged to:

- a) adapt these samples to suit their school environments and to identify the needs and wants of their school communities;
- b) make the surveys, questionnaires and interviews anonymous to ensure honest response;
- c) keep a record of results;

- d) schedule time (at least twice a year) to refer to the surveys, questionnaires and interviews and to measure progress;
- e) compare results to measure changes in behavior and attitudes in the school community's efforts toward building a culture of peace;
- f) invite the various actors in the school community (teachers, principals, students, and parents) to review the findings and to create new goals if desired.

Source: Institute for the Promotion of Quality Education (**EDUCA**)

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Age Range: Teacher educators, teachers and secondary school students

Subject: Interdisciplinary school-wide project

Materials: Survey and interview questions, blackboard or large piece of paper, pens or pencils (tape and/ or video recorders, if available and desired)

Duration: A series of sessions over the course of 1-2 weeks. It is recommended that this activity become a part of a long-term class or school project such as the length of an academic semester.

Learning Objectives:

- To provide ideas for developing assessment tools that identify and measure levels of violence and peace in schools
- To increase awareness of where, when and how violence and peace occur qualitatively and quantitatively
- To recognize areas of improvement among all actors within a school community in contributing to the development of a culture of peace

Sample #1 –Interview for Teachers

Interview questions ask teachers to rate the frequency in which they demonstrate appreciation for diversity, peaceful conflict resolution and encouragement for student participation and collaborative decision-making. Mark an “X” in the appropriate box.

Note: This interview is not intended to evaluate nor criticize, but to recognize the tendencies of teachers, both negative and positive.

<i>Appreciation for Diversity</i>	A lot	Often	Somewhat	Little	Very little
I value the cultural diversity of my students.					
I am biased toward students of a particular race, gender or physical appearance.					
I know about the different cultures that my students represent.					
I treat both female and male students in the same manner.					
I act differently toward female and male students.					

I am a role model of a respectful and nonviolent person for my students.					
I am consistent in my behavior toward all students.					
I express my disagreement upon witnessing acts of discrimination or racism.					
I teach my students about different cultures and ways of living.					
Teacher's comments:					
<i>Peaceful Conflict Resolution</i>					
I commit to nonviolent language.					
I threaten my students.					
I commit to nonviolent behavior.					
I use physical punishment.					
I use a calm (can be stern) voice with students even when I am upset.					
I yell at my students.					
I give my students recognition and praise.					
I insult and humiliate my students.					
I give constructive criticism.					
I bribe my students to get them to do things.					
I speak to students privately when there is a problem.					
I confront students in front of the class.					
Teacher's comments:					
<i>Encouragement for Student Participation and Collaboration</i>	A lot	Often	Somewhat	Little	Very little
I consult with and listen to my students when a decision has to be made which will affect them.					
I make decisions for the class because I know what is in their best interest.					
I try to reach consensus among my students when making decisions.					
I do not consult my students on class decisions.					
I delegate tasks and responsibilities to the students.					
I do most of the work in the classroom.					
My students learn by working as a team.					
My students work independently.					
I use cooperative learning strategies with my students.					

Teacher's comments:

Sample #2 - Focus Group with Students

Procedure: Brainstorm, Survey, Dialogue, Collaborative Decision-Making

Step One: In groups of 10-15, discuss the topic of “Student Participation in Decision-Making and in the Organization of the Classroom.”

Step Two: Provide 2 copies of the following chart to each student. Ask students to hold onto one copy (for use later in the activity) and to complete the other copy and hand it in. Gather student responses and tally them. On a large piece of paper, copy this chart and fill in the results of the survey.

	In the classroom						In the school
Frequency of student participation	Teachers consult the students about issues that affect the class.	We listen to and take into account the concerns of everyone.	We make decisions by consensus.	Teacher delegates tasks to students.	We learn in a cooperative manner.	We work in teams.	We participate in classroom committees and the school student government represents us.
Very high							
High							
Medium							
Low							
Very low							
Never							

Step Three: Students use the second copy of the survey for reference. In groups of 4-5, ask students to prepare concrete examples that have happened in the classroom of the different

categories on the survey, write the examples on small pieces of paper and place them accordingly.

Step Four: As a class, analyze and discuss the results.

Step Five: Discuss scheduling time and creating mechanisms for making group decisions and working as a team in the classroom.

Sample #3 - Questionnaire for Students

This activity can be prepared into a report for both teacher and student reference in building a class community based on anti-discrimination and respect for diversity. Teachers and students are encouraged to record and analyze responses to discussions and the questionnaire.

Procedure: Brainstorm, Reflection, Information Gathering, Group Problem-Solving

Step One: Write the two terms in front of the class: “discrimination” and “respect for diversity.” Ask students:

- *What does each term mean?*
- *How are they different?*
- *Why is it important to understand each term?*

Step Two: As a class, ask students to identify different types of discrimination witnessed in school i.e., discrimination on the basis of gender, race, physical appearance, and/ or socio-economic status. Hold a class discussion on the following questions:

- *Why does discrimination and racism exist?*
- *How do victims of discrimination tend to feel?*
- *How do people who discriminate against others tend to feel?*
- *How are both of these feelings and experiences (of being discriminated against and discriminating against others) harmful?*

Step Three: Ask students to individually answer the questionnaire and hand it in.

Questionnaires should remain anonymous, tallied up and used to help identify and reduce discrimination at school.

Step Four: After gathering responses and analyzing them, ask students:

- *What are some strategies to reduce discrimination at school?*
- *What are some strategies to identify and increase acts of respect at school?*

Questionnaire for Students: *Appreciation for Diversity*

Please answer the questionnaire according to the following scale:

1=Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree, 5=Do Not Know

I THINK...

All people are equal and have the same rights.

1 2 3 4 5

At my school, female and male students are treated equally by the school community.

1 2 3 4 5

Racism exists at school.

1 2 3 4 5

Rich students are smarter and more likely to achieve than poor students.

1 2 3 4 5

Students in my class respect one another.

1 2 3 4 5

I value the differences among my fellow students and teachers i.e., racial and cultural differences.

1 2 3 4 5

Students and teachers of different cultures are made fun of at my school.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments about the physical characteristics of students e.g., skinny, fatso, and four-eyes are commonly heard in my school.

1 2 3 4 5

I see more acts of respect than acts of discrimination in my school.

1 2 3 4 5

It is important to speak out when someone discriminates against another.

1 2 3 4 5

It is important to learn about different ways of life.

1 2 3 4 5

Going Further: In groups of 5, ask students to prepare and present a small sketch e.g., artwork, a composition, or theater piece on anti-discrimination that happen at school.

Sketches might include the following elements: an act of discrimination, negative consequences of such an act, conflict resolution, and an act of more positive, respectful behavior and decision-making.

As a long-term strategy, teachers and students could make use of the research gathered by these activities and work together to foster campaigns that help reduce violence and stimulate positive alternatives.

Connection: See *Perspectives and Common Ground* in Strand Three on Prevention, Resolution and Transformation of Violent Conflict.

Resources: Educational materials that support a culture of peace are available in Spanish at:

www.educa.org.pe. See “Publicaciones Educativas”