

PEACEFUL SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL: *celebrating peaceful schools around the world*

Peaceful Schools International is a charitable organization that provides support and recognition to schools that have declared a commitment to creating and maintaining a culture of peace. PSI acts as a catalyst and clearinghouse for innovative ideas created by educators around the world. PSI has over 270 member schools in 13 countries. To read more, go to www.peacefulschoolsinternational.org

Membership in Peaceful Schools International enables schools to receive the electronic organizational newsletters, suggested monthly school-wide initiatives and participate in internet links with other teachers, administrators, and students in other peaceful schools throughout the world.

In addition, Peaceful Schools International offers a recognition program for schools that have dedicated themselves to creating a climate of peace for their students, staff, and families. These schools receive a Peaceful Schools International flag to fly on their flagpoles and will receive all network connection materials. Schools can join Peaceful Schools International at any time.

Membership in Peaceful Schools International is a statement of intent, a focal point that identifies a goal and mission. This statement of community identity creates a rallying point for a single school culture. All of the school stakeholders can say, "See that flag out there...that says that peace is the way we do things at our school."



Cowan Heights Elementary in St. John's, Newfoundland, celebrates its 5th year PSI membership anniversary with a new flag.

PSI Membership Criteria



Peaceful Schools International seeks to recognize the intentions, actions, and effort of schools to create a climate of peace. Recognition is an active process rather than a static one. No school can be designated as a peaceful school, if such a designation is meant to imply perfection or a guarantee that its members will always act peacefully. The choice to respond in peaceful ways is made moment by moment by all members of the school community. Nonetheless, there is power in articulating intentions for a school community and modeling, teaching, coaching, encouraging, and delegating behaviors that support the community vision.

Peaceful Schools International identifies six major areas that are assessed in the recognition process. They are:

1. A collaborative approach to school-based decision making
2. Curricular and/or extracurricular peace education activities
3. Teaching methods that stress participation, cooperation, problem-solving and respect for differences
4. Student and community-centered conflict resolution strategies such as peer mediation
5. Community service projects
6. Opportunities for professional development of all staff focused on creating a culture of peace



1. A Collaborative Approach to School-Based Decision Making

- Are there formats and procedures available to solicit information, ideas, and feedback from all interested parties?
- What activities are conducted by leaders to give the message that we are in this together and we are interested in your ideas?
- Do people get consulted, as well as informed?
- Do pupils have a voice in decisions that affect them?
- Are parents welcome to sit on committees that make important decisions?

EXAMPLES

- **Safe School Committee** – Each class has a representative on the committee who participates in the decision making and planning of events at the school.
- **Staff Check-ins** - Routinely brainstorm for ideas during staff meetings, delegate issues to subcommittees, involve students in the process of deciding class rules.



2. Curricular and/or Extracurricular Peace Education Activities

- Is there a peace-oriented theme that defines the school?
- Do the staff members teach conflict resolution lessons, character education, or other school-wide curriculum designed to promote the ethical treatment of people and the environment?
- Are there posters, banners, or similar visual aids that reinforce the message?
- Do all the adults within the school view themselves as having the responsibility to model, teach, and coach the positive school culture?
- Do announcements, special activities or events take place to support the core program?
- Does the school year include special activities like Random Acts of Kindness, No-Name-Calling Week, etc?

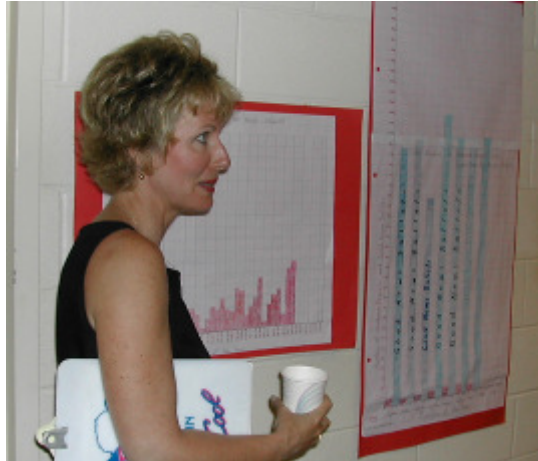
EXAMPLES

- **Pledge** - Each class writes a pledge for peace or respect to be hung in the hallway outside of the classroom.
- **Valentine's "Heart of Gold"** - For Valentine's, teachers submit names of students caught in acts of kindness. Each child has her/his name proudly displayed on a heart on a bulletin board.
- **"Pieces of Peace"** - Write a message of peace or a message that will cheer someone up – put the messages in a box labeled "Pieces of Peace" and encourage anyone needing a message to lift their spirits to take one from the box.
- **Peace Teams** - Every week, students and staff meet together in multi-age groups for peace lessons. A committee made up of several staff members meets on a regular basis to plan these lessons based on the themes of cooperation, positive emotional expression, acceptance, communication and conflict resolution. These peace lessons have been compiled into a book that continues to evolve and grow each year.



Kindness and Justice Challenge

3. Teaching Methods that Stress Participation, Cooperation, Problem-Solving and Respect for Differences



Graphs of incidents on display

- Do staff members seek to create an environment where students feel valued, respected, and welcomed? How?
- Are discipline procedures designed to help students learn social competencies rather than simply punish misbehavior?
- Do students have the opportunity to create agreements with their classmates regarding conduct, or are all the rules created by the teachers?
- Are class meetings conducted that allow for communication and problem-solving among students and between students and the teacher?
- Are there formats and activities that are designed to create multi-cultural understanding and acceptance of differences?
- Do staff members interact with pupils in a fashion designed to promote a positive connection with school?
- Are discipline procedures designed to educate or punish?
- Do pupils help create agreements and social contracts?

EXAMPLES

- **Playground Activity Coordinators: (PAC)** - A cohort of grade 6 students helps out on the playground by planning, organizing and coordinating eight different activities during recess each day. Dressed in bright red vests, P.A.C. (Program Activity Coordinators) members are easily recognized on the playground. P.A.C. members meet monthly to discuss new games and sort out inefficiencies in the activities.
- **Kindness and Caring Coins** - Some classes used kindness coins. When a student did something nice for someone else, they could receive a kindness coin. Then, when someone did something kind to them, they passed it on.



4. Student and Community-Centered Conflict Resolution Strategies such as Peer Mediation

- Are there established channels for dispute resolution apart from arbitration and traditional discipline?
- Are these channels communicated to staff, students, and parents and are they utilized effectively?
- Are adults trained in mediation techniques in addition to traditional school discipline strategies?
- Are students trained and utilized as peer mediators?
- Do adults and students ever seek mediation with each other?
- Is there a process for Restorative Justice in place?
- Are pupils trained in bullying prevention and are they involved in a deliberate way in the protection of the school climate?

EXAMPLES

- **Pebbles for Peace** – When a positive behavior is observed, a pebble is placed in a jar culminating in a class celebration when the jar is full.
- **Solution Station** – A peace mat is available in a corner of the room where pupils are encouraged to settle classroom disputes. Each child involved in the conflict has an opportunity to tell his/her side of the story without interruption. Together they think of three solutions and choose one upon which they both agree. The following rules are reviewed and posted along with a list of “feeling words.”

Tell the truth.

Talk one at a time.

No name-calling or putdowns.

Find 3 ideas to solve the problem.

Choose 1 you can agree on.

Shake hands.

- **Changing Places** - Two pairs of shoes (facing each other) are nailed to a board. Each student stands in one pair of shoes and is given an opportunity to speak. Then they change places and tell how they understand what the other one feels.



- **Class meetings** - Class meetings foster the democratic process, a respect for differing opinions, and build a caring and safe classroom community. The principal purpose of class meetings is to solve problems. Most models start with a round of compliments before delving into problem solving. Keep the meetings regularly scheduled. Use a circle formation. After some coaching invite students to facilitate the meetings.

5. Community Service Projects

- Do students have opportunities to perform voluntary service within or outside the school?
- Does the school as a whole, or do sub-groups within the school, take on special projects to help disadvantaged groups in the community?
- Are there opportunities to raise and contribute money to worthy community efforts?

EXAMPLES

- A **“Thought for the Day”** is posted each week for students and staff for reflection. During the Christmas season, students give a gift of thankfulness to someone or a group who made a difference in their lives. These “gifts” are written on paper angels and displayed in the hallways.
- **Pennies for People and Peace** – pennies collected are rolled by senior students. These funds are sent to “Sleeping Children around the World” to purchase bed kits for children who are in need.
- **Kid Community Council** – one child is nominated from each classroom to be a representative. This group of pupils is involved in organizing activities to support community service initiatives.



6. Opportunities for Professional Development for all Staff Focused on Creating a Community of Peace

- Are there opportunities for staff to receive pertinent information regarding the content and process of conflict resolution programs, character education programs, or related programs?
- Are workshops available for exploring relevant personal topics such as anger management, stress management, self-care, and time management?
- Does the school utilize peer coaching, support groups, or other structures to aid teachers, especially new teachers?

- Are there opportunities available to orient new staff members to the policies, procedures, and activities that support the school's peace vision?
- How have the structures and activities been institutionalized and made self-perpetuating?

EXAMPLES

- training in a range of skills from de-escalating potentially violent classroom situations to responding to a serious crisis
- dealing with disruptive students
- preventing and responding to bullying
- peer mediation
- becoming familiar with programs that promote positive social skills
- anti-racism, anti-sexism policies and programs
- cooperative learning strategies
- conflict resolution skills
- helping students deal with peer pressure/gangs
- legal rights and responsibilities of school staff



General John de Chastelain presents the PSI membership flag to Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, October 26, 2008