

Introduction

In 2003 I accepted a challenge that radically changed the direction of my life. When I agreed to teach two classes a week in conflict resolution at my local elementary school, I never imagined that it would become a full-time, whole school program. I never imagined that it would become my life's work. I have had the privilege of working with hundreds of kind, funny, thoughtful, loving children. I have been given the chance to learn and teach concepts that come straight from my heart, and I have been given the freedom to create and reinvent and experiment. I wish that every teacher could have these opportunities.

Over the years, many people have asked me how they can start a "peace program" like mine at their school. This curriculum is my attempt to answer those requests and share some of what I have learned over the past twelve years. This curriculum does not represent my whole program but rather a snapshot of what I get to do every year. I teach 25 classes a week for 40 weeks a year. I get to work with the same children week to week from the time they are in first grade until they graduate from 5th grade. But it didn't start out this way.



Twelve years ago I was teaching two classes a week as a volunteer. This program grew very slowly and responded to needs that I saw at my school. The greatest need I saw was for a way to help the children learn how to calm down when they were angry. After several years of teaching conflict resolution, I felt frustrated that the kids didn't often use their skills in the heat of the moment. I searched for a way to teach the kids to recognize their feelings before they became overwhelming and to manage their strong feelings. This search led me to mindfulness, which changed my life and, perhaps, the lives of all of the children in my program.

I have found that combining the internal lessons of mindfulness with the external tools we learn in conflict resolution and social and emotional learning is powerful. The combination, with mindfulness as the foundation for all of the SEL lessons, is, in my experience, much more effective than one or the other in isolation.

Peace of Mind grew slowly and organically over the years as I was immersed in an elementary school. This curriculum is the result of what I have learned works with real children. Our school is a kinder and more mindful place now and the children take these lessons to heart and take them with them into their lives after elementary school.

In my public school, "Peace Class" is a special like Art, Music or PE. These lessons work in this way, but they can also easily be used by a classroom teacher or in many other settings. Whether you are a teacher, counselor, scout leader, youth group leader, or parent, I hope that this curriculum will give you some ideas and a foundation, and that you will take the opportunity to experiment, to be creative, and to adapt **Peace of Mind** to your needs.

Thank you for taking up this important work. The world needs mindful, peaceful people now more than ever.

In peace,

Linda

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