

Peacemaking comes to life through what we believe and how we act. Peace First's approach to peacemaking focuses on teaching the essential concepts of peacemaking, modeling and practicing critical skills, and building the relationships that are central to becoming an effective peacemaker.

Our Vision

Peace First believes young people are natural problem solvers. We envision a world where every child has a set of concrete skills to resolve conflicts peacefully, build empathic relationships across lines of difference, and work together to solve community problems. A world where all educators, families, and youth service leaders teach, model, and promote peacemaking as a core element of their work.

What Is Peacemaking?

Peacemaking is the creative process of engaging with others to make positive and lasting change. Peacemaking requires courage, compassion, and collaboration to create justice where it didn't exist before. Peacemaking also means taking a stand, being willing to take risks, and committing to creating change, no matter what challenges come up. Peace First supports young people in becoming active peacemakers who are capable of creating positive change in their schools and communities.

Curriculum Design

The Peace First curriculum is designed to build the knowledge, skills, relationships, and experiences that students need to become effective peacemakers at each developmental level, from Pre-K through 8th grade.

- **The Peacemaker Skills lessons** are the first ten curriculum lessons for each grade level. They focus on developing knowledge and awareness that build students' peacemaking skills of communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, empathy, and civic engagement using a cooperative learning approach.
- **The Peacemaker Project lessons** are the eight lessons comprising the second half of each grade level's curriculum. Students identify a community problem they wish to address, and design a creative solution in the form of a Community Service Learning (CSL) project, or Peacemaker Project. Ranging from the very local (school bullies) to the global (helping refugees), Peacemaker Projects enable students to collaborate and put their newly acquired peacemaking skills into action to effect change at an age-appropriate level.

Why Peacemaking?

Mastering peacemaking is the key skill of our time. In an increasingly connected world, our ability to form healthy and productive relationships, particularly across lines of difference, to care for one another, and to work cooperatively to improve the lives of others has no parallel. Peacemaking starts with learning the essential social and emotional skills of personal awareness, relationship building, and addressing exclusion and bullying, and goes beyond these to engage young people in seeing themselves as agents of social change.

Core Principles

Several core principles have guided the development of content, themes, and structure of our curriculum.

- **Developmental Match**— Lesson activities are designed to support and challenge students in developmentally appropriate ways.
- **Experiential Learning**— Our activities provide students with opportunities to learn, practice, and reflect on peacemaking through direct experiences (role playing, small-group work, cooperative games, and guided practice) and offer room for “teachable moments.” Activities are structured to allow students to discover new ideas and skills for themselves rather than being spoon-fed new strategies.
- **Reflection**— Lessons provide time and prompts to support effective debriefing and personal reflection. Experiential learning is most successful when students can connect the learning activity to their life experiences.
- **Community Service and Civic Engagement**— Effective, sustained peacemaking involves community service and social action. The second semester of the curriculum includes lessons and activities that encourage students to help their peers and improve their communities. Our resources for educators support Peacemaker Project planning and implementation.

Outcomes

Our curriculum is designed to provide opportunities to increase students' abilities to work effectively and purposefully with others to resolve conflicts, solve community problems, communicate ideas, and form positive relationships. As students progress through the Peace First curriculum, they develop the courage and compassion they need to see themselves as leaders and to act with empathy toward others.

Knowledge

Each lesson in the curriculum identifies a key area of understanding or knowledge. These include:

- Personal awareness and identity
- Choices and consequences
- Feelings and their relation to peacemaking
- Friendship and fairness
- Group awareness and identity
- Bullying, courage, and standing up against injustice
- Leadership and its relation to conflict resolution
- Gender and cultural identity in relation to personal change
- Social justice and its relation to social change

Skills

Each grade-level curriculum is built around a theme and an age-appropriate set of skills for peacemaking. The Peace First curriculum includes activities that introduce, practice, and apply the core peacemaking skills to real-life conflicts. Games, role playing, discussion, art activities, and community service learning projects help introduce and strengthen five core peacemaking skills. These peacemaking skills are:

- **Communication** (listening, speaking, writing)
- **Cooperation** (taking turns, sharing, collaborative decision making)
- **Conflict resolution** (perspective taking, negotiation, de-escalation, brainstorming, mediation, managing anger)
- **Civic Engagement** (willingness to apply peacemaking skills to resolve real-life conflicts and to improve the community)
- **Empathy** (identifying feelings, personal awareness, perspective taking)

Relationships

Peacemaking requires supportive relationships with peers and adults. Effective peacemaking relationships are: stable, consistent and predictable; affirming and nurturing; honest and trustworthy.

The Peace First curriculum is designed to build and sustain positive, peaceful relationships not only among students, but also with the educator.

- Games, stories, role plays, service learning projects, small-group and cooperative learning strategies, student choice, and democratic classroom management are all intended to help promote positive, peaceful relationships with the people in students' lives.
- In addition, some activities take a formal approach to exploring key social relationships, including friendship, inclusion and exclusion, bullying, bystander and upstander roles, and community change agents.

Grade Level Themes

Primary and early elementary grades' activities focus on helping children understand and value their personal identities, skills, and attributes; upper elementary grades' activities focus on interpersonal issues of friendship, fairness, cooperation, conflict resolution, and inclusion and exclusion; middle grades' lessons expand on these concepts and skills to include issues of group identity, social justice, and social action.

Pre-K	Friendship and Sharing	Students explore friendship and sharing through songs, books, and cooperative games that demonstrate the positive outcomes of sharing and taking turns.
K	I Am Special	Students explore how they and their families are special. This curriculum celebrates the theme "I Am Special" through literature, art, and cooperative games.
1st	I Have Feelings	Students explore feelings—how to identify and cope with their own feelings, how to understand the source of feelings, how to recognize and name others' feelings—and deepen their understanding of how feelings play a role in helping them become effective peacemakers. This curriculum celebrates the theme "I Have Feelings" through literature, art, and cooperative games.
2nd	I Am a Friend	Students develop relationships with others and explore issues that affect their friendships, such as inclusion and exclusion. This exploration helps children to deepen their understanding of friendship and the role it plays in helping them to become effective peacemakers. This curriculum celebrates the theme "I Am a Friend" through literature, art, and cooperative games.
3rd	Communication and Cooperation	Students develop skills and awareness around communication and cooperation. The students apply these skills to build positive relationships with their classmates.
4th	Taking a Stand	Students examine bullying, activism, courage, choices, and consequences. The knowledge and skills they gain are applied to build positive relationships with others.
5th	Exploring Conflict	Students focus on understanding how their actions affect themselves and others, as well as how they can resolve conflicts.
6th	Gender, Culture, and Identity	Students explore and define attributes of their own identity and the identities of others. Students feel more confident with their own perspective and have a better understanding of the perspectives of others.
7th	Friendships and Peer Groups	Students explore the value and the struggles associated with friendships and peer groups in adolescence. Students practice developing strong and supportive relationships both with each other and with their community outside the classroom.
8th	Peer Mediation and Leadership	Students study the skills of peer mediation to become active leaders and role models in their school, peer groups, and communities. Students can use their skills to create or contribute to a peer mediation program at their school.

Lesson Plan Key

The following key will help you navigate through the lesson plans in the Peace First curriculum.

	Goal The major goal or purpose of an activity will appear next to this icon.
	Say Throughout the lesson plan, this icon directs your attention to anything you will need to say to students. In some cases you will find an explanation of what you are to tell or ask students; in others, direct scripting will be provided.
	Write This icon highlights places in the lesson where you'll need to write something for all students to see.
	Transition This icon appears beside instructions for transitioning students from one activity to the next.

	Teacher Tip This icon denotes a Teacher Tip, which provides additional information about certain aspects of a given activity. This might include: a suggested adjustment to an activity to meet your students' needs; how to prepare for certain reactions from students; or other suggestions for extending learning.
	Distribute You'll find this icon whenever materials are to be distributed to students. It also indicates when you'll need to collect materials from students.
	Timing This icon indicates specific places within the lesson when you will need to provide time for students to complete an activity.