

Prize Winner Video Guide: Sarah

Time: 20-30 min

Purpose: To explore how youth peacemakers can take on challenging problems and create change.

Skills: Appreciating similarities and differences, Teambuilding, Empathy, Problem Solving

About The Peace First Prize

The Peace First Prize showcases young people who have confronted injustice, crossed lines of difference, and had the courage and compassion to create lasting change. Peace First's goal is to share this daring work far and wide, invest in winners' leadership, and inspire others to make peacemaking a part of their daily lives.

In October 2013, ten Prize Winners received \$50,000 and a two year Peace First Fellowship to take their peacemaking to the next level of impact. Sarah was chosen as one of the inaugural Peace First Prize Winners.

[Click here](#) to meet the other winners.

About This Guide

This guide is designed to support educators in using the Prize Winners' stories to inspire young people to take action and become part of a growing youth peacemaking movement. Watch Sarah's video and read his profile page together as a group. Then, choose from any of the following discussion questions and extension activities below to help participants explore how young people can take on challenging problems and create lasting, positive change.

You will need...



- Upper Elementary School age participants or older (age 9 and up)
- Access to the internet, speakers, and a computer
- Printed copies of the Winner Profile handout (attached)
- Pencils, pens, and/or highlighters
- Enough space for participants to discuss in large and small groups

Before You Begin



- Review Sarah's online profile and video ([click here](#)). Note any moments in the video where you might want to pause to provide additional information or context.
- Select discussion questions from the list below, and decide how you would like to structure the discussion (whole group, small group, written reflection, or a combination).
- Prepare any additional questions that may help participants better understand or engage with Sarah's story.
- Select extension activities, if desired.



Tip: Consider how you will introduce the video and provide context to ensure participants understand the issues Sarah's project addresses (inclusion and disability justice). See the Extension Activities below for ideas.

Discussion

Watch Sarah's video as a group. Pause at any point if additional information or context is needed to support participants' understanding of the project.



Distribute the Winner Profile handout. Participants may wish to underline or highlight information they find interesting, inspiring, or confusing.

Choose any of the following questions to support your discussion.



To invite participants to think more deeply about Sarah's project, ask:

- Sarah's project brings together students with and without disabilities to work as a team. Why is inclusion of people with disabilities important? What are some of the challenges of bringing together people who are different from each other?
- An ally is someone who works in support of someone else who is experiencing an injustice. How is Sarah an ally through her project work? How can you support a group of people who experience prejudice, discrimination, and other challenges that you do not experience yourself?



To invite participants to think more deeply about Sarah's approach, ask:

- Sarah describes how "hundreds of thousands of students... are experiencing a total shift in perspective as they see for the first time what students with disabilities can do." How is changing people's perspectives an important part of peacemaking?
- Sarah began her project with one inclusive cheerleading team at her school, and has since helped support the creation of over 100 inclusive teams across the United States. How has the expansion of her project helped lead to even bigger change?



To invite participants to explore how they might apply Sarah's approach to their own lives, ask:

- One way to create lasting change is to teach others. Sarah created an 11-step guide and provides trainings for new Sparkle Effect teams. What skills could you use to create change? How could you teach these skills to others?
- Sarah said, "Jared's simple act of kindness proved to me...the power that young people have to make a difference in each other's lives." When was a time that you were inspired to take action by someone else's small act of kindness?
- Sarah noticed something unfair in her community and took action. What do you see in your community that is unfair? What is one action you could take to stand up for fairness?

Extension Activities



To encourage participants to continue exploring peacemaking on their own, with a friend, or with a group, invite them to try out any of the following activities:

- Watch all ten Winners' videos at peacefirst.org/prize to see more youth peacemaking in action.
- Think about a problem your own community faces. How might an approach like Sarah's be useful in addressing that problem? What other solutions or approaches might be useful in creating positive change? Invite your friends to brainstorm together.
- Start an inclusive cheerleading or dance team at your school! Download the Sparkle Effect's [Quick Start Kit](#) for guidelines on how to create a squad that includes all students.
- Show a young person you believe in their peacemaking work by nominating them for the Peace First Prize. Nominations and applications for the Prize are open from January to March each year. To nominate a young person, or to learn more about the Prize, visit <http://peacefirst.org/prize/>.



Parents and teachers:

- Make peacemaking a regular part of your family or class. To get started, search our library of over a hundred peacemaking games and activities on the Peace First [Digital Activity Center](#).

Sarah Cronk

The Sparkle Effect

Bettendorf, Iowa

20



Mission

Make the inclusion of students with disabilities the norm for school-based cheerleading and dance teams, leading to greater overall awareness and social inclusion

Summary

Motivated by her autistic older brother's experience, Sarah brings a lifelong commitment to helping students with disabilities feel like a welcomed and fully included part of their school communities. To accomplish this, she has created the Sparkle Effect, an inclusive cheerleading squad that has since been replicated across the country in over 100 schools.

Motivation

Sarah's older brother has a disability, but it wasn't until high school that she noticed he wasn't included in school activities and sports. One day, a popular athlete invited her brother to sit with him at lunch—this changed both Sarah's and her brother's high school experiences. Sarah then realized she wanted to and could positively impact that lives of other students with disabilities in a similar fashion.

Impact to date

The Sparkle Effect has generated 108 inclusive teams in schools nationwide that directly include over 2,000 students. Sarah's project has also raised close to \$190,000, and provides mentoring, free uniforms, and free on-site training all the Sparkle Effect teams.

Project overview

In 2008, Sarah helped create the first high school-based inclusive cheerleading squad in the nation. Soon her squad became so large she could no longer include everyone that wanted to participate. So, Sarah created a free downloadable "Quick-Start" Kit and a website so that other students and cheerleaders could create their own squads.

Future plans

Sarah is committed to continuing the growth of the Sparkle Effect into more schools, while also building organizational infrastructure and fundraising to support sustained growth and impact.