

# **TeachPeaceDC: How Peace Education can Define and Create Great Educators**

**By: Meredith Norris**

**Advisor: Daryn Cambridge**

**9 December 2011**

**American University Honors Program**

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>What is Peace Education?</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Why DCPS?</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>What is IMPACT?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Peace Education and IMPACT: Defining a Great Educator</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>The Missing Piece: Why isn't Peace Education More Popular?</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Next Steps for Further Research</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Works Cited</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Appendix 1: IMPACT Guidelines</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Appendix 2: TeachPeaceDC Survey</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Survey Results and Data</b>	<b>41</b>

## **Introduction**

In the past few years, education reform has found a new buzzword: Teachers. In the media, political discussions, and new policies passed by school districts, conversations keep coming back to teacher quality. Anyone who has ever had an exceptional teacher, or a terrible one, knows that these discussions are on the right track. Good teachers inspire students to change their own lives and continue to affect their students long after class time is over. Great teachers challenge students to think beyond the ordinary and to live up to their full potential. In a perfect world, every classroom would be filled with a teacher that inspires imagination and helps his or her students discover their own skills and ideas.

Training, assessing, and maintaining exceptional teachers is an admirable goal for any school district, and across the country districts are brainstorming creative and controversial ways to accomplish that goal. In the District of Columbia Public School system (DCPS), they've taken on a business-style performance evaluation model, where teachers are evaluated yearly and rewarded according to their performance. Under the leadership of Chancellor Michelle Rhee, the IMPACT guidelines, a comprehensive teacher evaluation system, was rolled out in the hopes that recognizing excellent teachers and identifying sub-par teachers would help create a better school system. As part of the IMPACT framework, teachers are subject to a series of in-class observations by principals and other third-party experienced educators who sit in on class time in order to better understand how teachers perform day-to-day in their classrooms.

The evaluations have an in-depth rubric that scores the teacher on his or her ability to engage students, use class time efficiently, and promote higher-level thinking, among other things. Surprisingly, this is not the first time that the idea of a "great teacher" has been defined and quantified in these terms. In other publications, we find similar language referring to

educators who promote peace. Ian Harris, Paolo Friere, Riane Eisler, Betty Reardon, and other key peace education advocates have spent decades promoting the idea of a “peace educator” who encourages students to see the world in a new way, engages different styles of learning, makes learning relevant to students, and helps them build critical thinking skills. In essence, these two groups are telling us that great teachers are, by nature, peace educators, and that great peace educators are also great teachers.

So, if peace educators and institutionalized school systems are both saying that these characteristics embody exceptional educators, why aren’t more teachers using these skills, resources and knowledge? In theory, when peace education principles are incorporated into the standard classroom, it not only makes the classroom more productive and efficient, but also creates an environment where students are attentive, passionate, and engaged. Beyond that, peace education in DCPS classrooms could help teachers achieve a higher score on their IMPACT evaluation, and help them keep their jobs or even receive a pay raise. The incentives to use peace education exist, yet it is still absent in most classrooms.

In my research, I would like to focus on the question: why is peace education so absent in DC Public School classrooms if there are such strong incentives to use these resources? It is possible that teachers do not know the breadth of resources available to them, or that they are unsure of how it could help them in their classrooms. Maybe there is a misperception of the term “peace education” and this discourages teachers from pursuing these goals.

While others have looked at the prospect of implementing peace education programs in public schools, literature does not yet exist proving how these programs relate directly to already existing district goals. DC Public Schools is a perfect testing ground because they have highly defined public goals for their teachers and a strict rubric for evaluation. This detailed rubric

enables me to find peace education solutions that fit specifically with district goals and find ways to apply them within the existing framework. Beyond this, my own personal connection to and passion for the DC Public School system encourages me to pursue solutions to problems that I have seen within the district.

To expand my research, I created a survey that was made available to a wide range of educators within the DC Public School system to help evaluate the cause of this peace education knowledge gap. With this information I hope to make a full analysis of the current perceptions about peace education in relation to DCPS, and structure a possible solution to the problem or a framework for groups that hope to implement peace education in the DC area.

### **What is Peace Education?**

*Peace education is the transmission of knowledge about requirements of, the obstacles to and possibilities for achieving and maintaining peace, training in skills for interpreting the knowledge and the development of reflective and participatory capacities for applying the knowledge to overcoming problems and achieving possibilities (Reardon "Peace Education", 6).*

Riane Eisler, a powerful voice in the peace education field, argues that education has the power to change cultures. Unlike some other theorists in the areas of peace and conflict studies, Eisler believes that violence is not an integral part of human nature, but something that is institutionalized into our culture, and thus something that can be removed from our society (14). Eisler believes that we currently operate under the "dominator model" of existence and of education, where violence, as well as violent behavior and thinking are reinforced through a strict hierarchy and the use of fear as a tool for control (15). She suggests that education however, is not bound to this system, but has the potential to change the domination paradigm toward a "partnership model" that values equality, trust, empathy, and caring relationships (Eisler, 15). In the partnership model, conflict and hierarchy still exist, but conflicts are resolved

in nonviolent ways and leaders use tactics to empower others under their supervision, instead of threats and fear:

“In hierarchies of domination, power is defined as power over: a means of imposing and maintaining top-down control. It is the power to give orders that must be unquestioningly obeyed. In hierarchies of actualization [aka. the partnership model], power is defined as power to and power with. Parenting, teaching, and leading are designed to empower rather than disempower, to inspire others to realized their potentials. Accountability and respect not only flow from the bottom up; they also flow from the top down” (Eisler, 20).

This model of domination or partnership, Eisler suggests, can either be reinforced or challenged through education. Eisler even claims: “formal education has an *obligation* to counter these messages [of a dominator model]” (24). Another peace educator, Paulo Freire, a well-known Brazilian education activist and theorist, described a similar dichotomy in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In his own work, Freire saw that current education systems had the power to dehumanize and oppress populations, but that true empowering, peaceful education could give people the freedom to transform their lives (43-69). For Freire, the goal of education was to help students develop the skills and knowledge needed, not only to change their place within an oppressive system, but also to change the system entirely to be one of liberation instead of oppression (43-69).

The question that remains is: how to make that happen? What is necessary to create an educational environment that fosters a “partnership model” culture and liberates people from oppressive systems? Over the past 50 years a new field of study has developed known as “peace education”. This field marks the intersection of existing academic fields, including peace and conflict studies, international relations, education policy, and other social sciences, but unlike other formal fields of study, the concept of peace education and has risen organically from multiple unrelated sources around the globe and throughout history as different groups of people tried to answer the question: how do we teach peace? (Reardon, “Peace Education” 4). Betty

Reardon, one of the world's leading authors in the peace education marks the progression of the field from its earliest years in her article *Peace Education: A Review and Projection*.

While concepts that inspire and impact peace education have existed for centuries, its emergence as an academic field of study in western education systems is a more recent development. In the years following World War II, peace education arose in multiple locations, with a distinctly anti-nuclear theme, but in the decades that followed, the field widened to include a greater variety of topics (Reardon, "Peace Education", 17). The Vietnam War helped to redefine what peace education looked like, as educators in this time used the existence of the war to develop critical discussions on foreign policy decisions, the role of the military, and social-economic disparity around the world (Reardon, "Peace Education", 20). Also in this time, the works of Paulo Freire became wildly popular among educators, and his dialogical, problem-posing method of teaching was incorporated into classes of all subjects (Reardon, "Peace Education" 20). Between the rise of discussion-based classes and the challenges posed by the Vietnam War, the field began to encompass broader themes of social justice and ethical dilemmas and the development of critical thinking skills (Reardon, "Peace Education", 22). The final years of the Cold War brought about a focus on "disarmament education" and the 1990's saw a rise in conflict resolution programs and human rights promotion (Reardon, "Peace Education", 26). By 2000, the term "comprehensive peace education" came to mean a pedagogical approach that "advocates conflict resolution training as a skill development component of a cross curricular approach to peace education at all levels of elementary and secondary education" (Reardon, "Peace Education", 26). With such a complex history and a constantly-changing definition, the term "peace education" has developed a diverse set of connotations and uses within the education and peace and conflict fields, but even with these

complexities, a common attitude and view of peace education has managed to emerge. Reardon loosely defines peace education as:

The transmission of knowledge about requirements of, the obstacles to and possibilities for achieving and maintaining peace, training in skills for interpreting the knowledge and the development of reflective and participatory capacities for applying the knowledge to overcoming problems and achieving possibilities (Reardon, 6).

Another peace educator, Daniel Bar-tal, an education professor at Tel-Aviv University posits that the general objective of peace education is “to foster changes that will make the world a better, more humane place. The goal is to diminish or even eradicate, a variety of human ills...in order to create a world of justice, equality, tolerance, human rights, environmental quality, peace and other positive features” (Bar-tal, 28). Attempts to accomplish this goal can manifest itself in a variety of ways, ranging from nonformal education programs that exist within communities and focus on specific skill sets, emotions, or conflicts, to formal academic classes that focus on peace and nonviolence principles and theory. Programs that foster creative problem solving, artistic expression, emotional intelligence, community building, conflict resolution techniques, critical thinking skills, global understanding, and healthy relationships can all be considered part of the peace education field, even if they exist outside a formal school setting.

Peace education can also be seen as a way of teaching, a pedagogical approach that allows students to participate more actively in their learning and grow as learners and as human beings, beyond their understanding of testable facts and dates. Friere described this model of teaching as “problem-posing education” that engaged both the student and teacher in the process of learning and thinking, instead of the teacher simply “depositing” knowledge into the heads of his/her students (71). Education, Friere claims, should never be static, the act of learning should be a dynamic process that challenges and analyzes realities (84). For him, the way that education systems are currently organized limit the power that students have to transform their world, and

the only way to bring peace is through an education system that builds “authentic” human beings who are able to respond to the world’s challenges: “Problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of persons as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation” (84).

According to Ian Harris, another well-respected academic in the field, peace education, in every form, has ten concrete goals (Harris, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 17). These goals are:

- To appreciate the richness of the concept of peace
  - “Peace education provides in student’s minds a dynamic vision of peace to counteract the violent images that dominate culture” (17).
- To address fears
  - “Because powerful emotions about violent experiences can interfere with pedagogical efforts, peace educators enter the affective domain to become aware of the tensions and problems created by living in a violent world. Understanding these problems can help address student concerns and make relevant the study of tensions that threaten human existence” (18).
- To provide information about defense systems
  - “Citizens need to know what goes into [defense] systems, the implications of developing and depending upon them, and their cost...[with this knowledge] citizens can make enlightened choices about the best security systems for their circumstances” (18).
- To understand war behavior
  - “Because human groupings have different values and differing security needs, peace education includes the psychology, sociology, and anthropology of human aggression. Peace educators provide their students with an understanding of how different individuals, cultures and political systems respond to conflict” (18).
- To develop intercultural understanding
  - “Since wars occur as a result of conflicts between individuals, cultures, religions, and nations, peace education promotes respect for different cultures” (18).
- To provide a future orientation
  - “Students and teachers in peace studies classes imagine what the future will be like and then discuss what can be done to achieve peace” (19).

- To teach peace as a process
  - “Peace education focuses on strategies to achieve both individual and societal change [...] peacemaking is a process that must be taught if human beings are to alter their violent behavior” (19).
- To promote a concept of peace accompanied by social justice
  - “Since the absence of war does not necessarily bring peace or harmony, peace studies programs do not focus only on national security issues but also include the study of social justice, human rights, development, feminism, racism, non-violence, and strategies for social change” (19).
- To stimulate a respect for life
  - “Peace education students need to develop positive self images, a sense of responsibility for self and others, and a capacity to trust others [...] peace educators teach caring and a spirit of empathy, not just a rational understanding of the problems faced by others” (19-20).
- To end violence
  - “Peace education can’t directly halt violence, but it does teach about violent situations, the effects of violence, and alternatives to violent behavior. Peace education students learn how to resolve disputes non-violently and how to make the world a more secure place” (20).

These goals, however, were defined during the Cold War, and some would argue that a few of these goals, such as “knowledge of defense systems” are a little outdated or need to be updated to reflect current events and theories. However, Harris also describes the five important skills that peace education tries to foster, skills which continue to be relevant and necessary in today’s education system and economy, such as (1<sup>st</sup> edition, 127):

- Building a democratic community
  - “In order for there to be peace in the world, individuals will have to learn to live with each other without resorting to destructive violence. Education which fosters disunity cannot foster a sense of hope. Where there is no sense of community and no sense of belonging, people will not develop a sense of responsibility for others” (127).
- Teaching cooperation
  - “Teachers in peace education classes can teach students to become proficient in group processes by determining what skills students need, helping students get a clear understanding of specific group techniques, setting up practice situations, providing feedback and support, and making sure the techniques are used often enough so they become part of a student’s behavior” (129).

- Developing moral sensitivity
  - “The basis of morality is sensitivity and care for other human beings” (130).
- Promoting critical thinking
  - “[R]eal-life problems are rarely settled in a rational matter because of opposing points of view, contradictory lines of reasoning, the realities of power, and value-laden assumptions. Because of this ambiguity that exists in the real world, the type of critical thinking promoted in peace education classes must be dialectical, where students are encouraged to reason with other people’s ideas and think through belief systems, moving back and forth between different points of view” (133).
- Enhancing self-esteem
  - “Research shows that certain skills and attributes contribute to the creation of altruistic individuals who have the capacity to change the world. The experiences that help individuals realized their own power are successful past experiences with problems solving; the ability to cope with stress; feelings of optimism about society; confidence in self; feelings of responsibility for the well-being of others; experience of emotional warmth; and reward for helping behavior” (134).

In my own opinion, peace education is a way of thinking about education. For peace educators, education systems are not about creating “good workers” to participate in the economy or a generation of citizens that maintains the status quo. Instead, they view education as a change agent that has the power to transform the opportunities that individuals have to participate in the world and the status of their everyday lives and create thinkers who challenge the structures of the world that prevent societies from living a liberated, peaceful existence. This way of thinking affects how educators run their classrooms, treat their students, the topics they choose to teach, the way they choose to teach them, and the values they aim to impart to students as part of that education.

The misconception about peace education, I believe, comes when educators believe that this framework of “peace education” is not compatible with the formal school system. A lack of knowledge about the field means that teachers don’t understand what peace education is, or how it could help accomplish well-established educational goals. Some think that peace education

involves an extra subject of study, a special class only dedicated to the idea of “peace”, and for most public schools in the US, that goal is unrealistic. With such a strong emphasis on test scores and student achievement and a dire lack of resources for new programs, it is unlikely to get support for an additional class on a non-testable subject like “peace”. However, when peace education is approached as an ideology, something that can permeate and affect existing structures, classes, and systems, adding knowledge and potential to education without an overwhelming drain of resources, the goal seems more attainable. My belief is that the addition of basic peace education principles to current school structures and curricula could help create educational environments where students are more successful and empowered, teachers are more effective, and schools are places where real human and community growth can occur.

### **Why DCPS?**

In my search for a school system that could benefit greatly from the use of peace education, I settled on the public school system of Washington, DC. DC Public School District (DCPS) is unlike any other school district in the country. The District of Columbia, although a small area of land, houses a diverse spectrum of socio-economic and ethnic groups with diverse needs and access to resources. According to The National Research Council of the National Academies’ report on DC Public Schools,

“Over half the residents [of Washington, DC] are black, and almost one in five speaks a language other than English in the home. [DC] is home to the nation’s largest concentration of college-educated blacks...[h]owever blacks also make up the largest group of economically disadvantaged residents in the city... [M]edian household income and the share of residents who are college educated are higher than national averages, poverty rates area also higher and there is large variation in economic well-being by neighborhood” (National Research Council, 11).

Because of these extreme socio-economic diversities local governance in Washington is also often fragmented and divisive. Beyond that, DC's non-state status and special federal government regulations complicate the process and efficiency of the city government. These same tensions and bureaucratic challenges have trickled down to the public school system. As the National Research Council points out in its *Plan for Evaluating the District of Columbia's Public Schools*, "Rather than being one of a number of school districts governed by a state department of education, DCPS has been overseen by a changing combination of entities and individuals, including Congress and local officials" (National Research Council, 13). This constant shuffle of leadership made for a highly ineffective school system.

In 2007, only 14% of DCPS 4<sup>th</sup> graders were at grade-level performance in reading and math compared with other states, and only 8% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders scored "proficient" in math according to NAEP standards (National Research Council, 69). Even on local standardized testing known as the DC CAS, proficiency scores were not above 40% in either math or reading at any level (National Research Council, 69). DCPS had seen six different superintendents in ten years, and long-standing tensions between these superintendents and other local leaders dated back to the 1960s (National Research Council, 39).

In 2007, a landmark local government election changed the way that system was organized. Adrian Fenty was elected mayor, and one of his first actions was to approve the Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA), which moved public school control to the mayor from the school board, created a state department of education, integrated new provisions for school system evaluation, and created the position of Chancellor, among other changes (National Research Council, 1).

Appointed to this new Chancellor role was Michelle Rhee, an education reformer from New York who was criticized for her lack of education experience and understanding of DC's particular needs. Others applauded these same qualities, claiming that they actually served to her advantage. Because Rhee did not come from "within the system", she attempted policy changes and school reforms that were unheard of in national education discussions, and her popularity suffered because of it. School closings and teacher firings angered long-time DCPS employees, supporters and community members. A shift to "standards-based reform" and an emphasis on accountability startled stakeholders across the board. Rhee was unafraid to shake up the system and take on some of the biggest challenges that DCPS had faced for decades, and for this, not all responses to Rhee's actions were negative. The outrage she caused created national interest in public education, media attention, and encouraged mass amounts of outside funding to pour into DC Public Schools to support these controversial, but possibly effective, measures (Turque, "Michelle Rhee"). Bright young educators from across the country began to flock to DCPS as teachers and members of the central office, implementing new policies, even amidst a backlash from the established school community.

For three and a half years, Rhee's administration implemented policies that changed principal and teacher hiring and firing procedures, focused on dramatic improvement and investment in highly problematic schools, reformed special education policies, and created new standards to evaluate educators within the system (Turque, "Michelle Rhee"). In the 2010 mayoral election, Adrian Fenty lost his position to Vincent Gray, DC Council Chairman, and vocal opponent of Rhee's policies. Within a month of Gray's victory in the democratic primary, Rhee stepped down from her position as Chancellor, with the understanding that such strong tensions between the Mayor and Chancellor would not benefit the DC Public School system.

Since her resignation, Rhee's position has been filled by her second in command, Kaya Henderson. Many believed that Henderson's appointment to Chancellor was beneficial to the school district, since her ideological similarities to Rhee's policies would help maintain a sense of stability in an already fragile school reform structure, and her strong dedication to the ideals of educational equality and success would maintain the positive energy the district had developed, but she could do all of this without some of Rhee's most controversial qualities ("Naming Kaya Henderson"). One Washington Post contributor described Henderson as "Michelle Rhee without Michelle Rhee...who will carry on Rhee's controversial reforms but will do it without the I-know-everything-so-don't-question-me management style" (The Problem(s)). Those who disagreed with Rhee's policies were upset to see management that continued them, and in the year that has passed since Rhee's resignation, it is unclear as to how effective or supported the new administration is in its reform efforts (Turque, "Michelle Rhee").

### **What is IMPACT?**

*It is difficult to evaluate the achievements of peace education, because its objectives pertain mainly to the internalization of values, attitudes, skills, and patterns of behaviors (Bar-tal, 34)*

Along with Rhee's rise to power came a focus on teacher effectiveness. Because of Rhee's own background with organizations such as Teach for America and The New Teacher Project, much of her emphasis on school reform went to the training, hiring, and evaluation of classroom teachers throughout the district. Rhee proposed that high-achieving students and high-achieving schools came from highly-effective teachers. This implied that a school district's main goal is to identify and reward the most successful teachers within the system and to ensure that low-quality teachers are not allowed in the classroom.

One of the most controversial reforms instituted under Chancellor Rhee was the creation of the Teaching and Learning Framework and its teacher evaluation system, better known as IMPACT. According to the DCPS website, IMPACT serves to improve staff effectiveness by:

- **Clarifying Expectations** – IMPACT outlines clear performance expectations that are tailored to staff members’ specific job responsibilities.
- **Providing Feedback and Support** – Quality feedback is a key element to the improvement process, which is why IMPACT provides staff members with multiple opportunities to engage in conversations with their managers about strengths and areas for growth. IMPACT also provides data that helps instructional coaches, mentors, and other support personnel be more effective in their work.
- **Retaining Great People** – Having highly effective staff members in our schools helps everyone improve. IMPACT helps retain these individuals by providing significant recognition for outstanding performance (“An Overview of IMPACT”)

Each and every educator within the DCPS system is subject to an evaluation under IMPACT.

Evaluation rubrics are tailored to different roles and job responsibilities within the system, but all evaluations maintain the same goals of promoting student achievement, instructional expertise, collaboration, and professionalism (“An Overview of IMPACT”). From the evaluation, teachers can receive a rating of Highly Effective, Effective, Minimally Effective, or Ineffective. Highly Effective teachers are eligible to receive a performance-based pay raise, while Minimally Effective teachers are given a two-year time period to improve their performance, and Ineffective teachers are likely to be removed from the system (D.C. Public Schools, *IMPACT*). When applicable, half of the teacher’s evaluation rating comes from the performance of their students on district standardized tests, such as the DC-CAS (D.C. Public Schools, *IMPACT*). The second half of the evaluation comes from “instructional expertise”: how well teachers follow the Teaching and Learning Framework and manage their classrooms (D.C. Public Schools, *IMPACT*). Also considered is the teacher’s evidence of professionalism and commitment to the school community (D.C. Public Schools, *IMPACT*). These final categories are all evaluated

through a series of in-class observations, three by the teacher's principals and two by "master educators", independent experienced educators who evaluate performance throughout the district ("An Overview of IMPACT").

Some have praised IMPACT as revolutionary, claiming that school districts should have long been using data like this to identify and remove low performing teachers from classrooms instead of the long-standing "last in-first out" approach ("Seniority"). A recent report from The New Teachers Project shows that in 14 states it is actually illegal for school districts to consider any other factor than seniority when deciding which teachers to fire (The New Teachers Project, 1). Also in this report is evidence that teachers themselves agree that seniority should not be the only factor for consideration in firing decisions (The New Teachers Project, 9). In this regard, IMPACT does receive public support. Teachers, parents, and principals within the district value the ability to evaluate and acknowledge teacher performance, but there is great discontent in the manner this evaluation is done.

Often, discussions on the IMPACT evaluation system focus on the "Student Value-Added" or test score portion of the evaluation. Most of the debate and controversy surrounds the legitimacy of evaluating teacher's performance based on their students' test scores and I agree that this is a valid concern. Many factors influence students' testing abilities and some students begin the school year so far behind grade-level expectations that their prospect for "success" on these standardized tests is minimal, and to punish teachers for the disadvantages that their students face seems unfair.

Debate also surrounds the bias of the in-class evaluations. Some would argue that principals may have preconceptions about the teachers they evaluate or that Master Educators lack the context and personal connection necessary to make informed evaluations of the teachers.

I would agree that this could be true in some cases and it requires further exploration to ensure that teachers are receiving the most objective evaluation possible. I also think that the implementation of IMPACT is one of the greatest areas of improvement for the system. Many believe that IMPACT was rushed in its release, and that more research and pilot testing was necessary before its implementation in the DCPS system. On this point, some argue that until the details for implementation and objectivity have been resolved and tested, it is unfair to stake teacher's careers on their IMPACT scores (McCrummen, "Evaluating Teachers").

While public opinion is far from united on IMPACT, the system has had significant effects in the two years since its implementation. In 2010, DCPS fired 75 teachers who received "Ineffective" evaluations and rewarded over 600 "Highly Effective" educators with bonuses (McCrummen, "D.C. schools to use data"). DCPS is also tracking teacher's performance in relation to their teacher training institutions, keeping track of which universities and training programs consistently produce effective or ineffective teachers, in the hopes that a dialogue can begin to ensure that these programs will produce more effective teachers across the board (McCrummen, "D.C. schools to use data"). The most recent development in the IMPACT system is the ability for teachers that score "highly effective" 2+ years in a row to exempt out of three of the five classroom evaluations, if they receive the same high score in their first two evaluations of the year (Turque, "DCPS eases IMPACT").

## **Peace Education and IMPACT: Defining a Great Educator**

*“Education should be devoted to the development of the ability to learn and should concern itself with the deepening and extending the capacities that are comprehended by the notion of the positive human potential” (Reardon, Comprehensive Peace Education, 54).*

Regardless of whether or not this method is the best, most effective, or most fair method of evaluation, IMPACT is the system that DCPS has chosen to use, and teachers are going to be forced to adapt to the system even if they don't agree with it. I do however believe that the IMPACT guidelines have made a valuable contribution to the education debate that many have overlooked: IMPACT has defined what it means to be an exceptional educator.

In the 76-page document that describes the evaluation rubric for classroom teachers, DCPS clearly outlines the specific points that teachers will be evaluated on and provides examples for what this performance would look like. (See Appendix 1 for full excerpts). These points include developing annual student achievement goals, creating standards-based unit plans and assessments, creating objective-driven lesson plans, leading well-organized, objective-driven lessons, explaining content clearly, engaging students at all learning levels in rigorous work, providing students multiple ways to engage with content, checking for student understanding, responding to student misunderstandings, developing higher-level understanding through effective questioning, maximizing instructional time, building a supportive, learning-focused classroom community, assessing student progress, tracking and analyzing student progress data, and improving practice and re-teaching in response to that data (D.C. Public Schools, *IMPACT*). Outside of the classroom, teachers must also show support of the local school initiatives, support special education and ELL programs, promote high expectations, partner with families, and participate in instructional collaboration (D.C. Public Schools, *IMPACT*). Teachers are also expected to attend work, arrive on time, comply with school policies and procedures and

maintain an attitude of respect toward the rest of the school community (D.C. Public Schools, *IMPACT*). In other words, DCPS believes that “highly effective” teachers not only encourage their students to learn the provided material and perform well on standardized tests, but also create safe and encouraging learning environments, adapt their teaching styles to meet the individual needs of students and cater to multiple intelligences, encourage critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, build community, foster the goals and ideas that make schools effective change agents, and help their students find success and fulfillment in and out of school.

Although a detailed definition like this is almost unheard of in school district publications, the *IMPACT* guidelines are not the only place that this description of exceptional educators exists. For years, similar ideas have been promoted in peace education literature and theory. Even Ian Harris describes a similar view to that found in *IMPACT*, “peace educators have fairly traditional goals—hoping that their students will become more informed, think critically, learn the skills of conflict management, and use their rights as citizens” (Harris, 187). Some critics have the misconception that all peace educators desire to “overthrow the system”, or that they promote a curriculum so radical that it is impossible to integrate these ideas, concepts and resources into the current school system, but DCPS’s recognitions of the achievements of peace educators within the district challenges that idea.

One such example of a teacher who exemplifies both a peace educator and a “highly effective” educator within the DCPS system is Educardo Gamarra, a humanities instructor at Oyster-Adams Bilingual School in Northwest DC. Gamarra “prides himself on developing his students to be critical thinkers, extensively organizing his lessons and regularly analyzing student data to identify areas of deficiency and strength” and has been recognized as part of the top 4% of DCPS teachers for raising student achievement (D.C. Public Schools, “Excellence”). Gamarra

includes the lives of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. in his discussions on decision-making and respect and uses poetry and music to “build a classroom atmosphere that encourages creativity, free thinking, and exploration of curiosity” (D.C. Public Schools, “Excellence”).

DCPS not only awarded him with an IMPACT rating of “highly effective”, but also awarded him with the DCPS 2011 Excellence in Teaching Award for his impact on student’s lives and their academic achievement.

### **The Missing Piece: Why isn’t Peace Education More Popular?**

Clearly, Gamarra is just one example that DCPS recognizes peace education’s positive effects on the lives of its students and on its school system. The goal of growing students into motivated, skilled thinkers who have the potential to change the world is a common theme in DCPS publications, and it has been made clear that DCPS believes the best way to do this is to fill classrooms with effective, inspiring teachers (*Home*).

From my own experience, both in the central office of DCPS and as an avid supporter of peace education, I can see that the use of peace education principles and resources in DCPS classrooms could help achieve this goal. Peace education strives to create meaningful learning environments and encourage creative critical thinkers, and by achieving this, students are better able to succeed academically. Teachers using these techniques have the potential to grow their own skills that are evaluated under IMPACT and become more effective educators. Teachers benefit not only from potential higher job evaluations but also from the knowledge that they are having a more significant impact on the lives and the success of their students. Students receive a more complete education and are better prepared with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the academic and economic worlds. DCPS, through a greater implementation of peace

education resources, could see their achievement rates rise, safer schools, and happier communities. If peace education has the potential to bring such powerful change to the district, and the resources exist that could be incorporated easily into the current system, why aren't more teachers using peace education in their classrooms?

My own hypothesis is that there is a knowledge gap in the DCPS community regarding peace education. I believe that teachers are either unaware that peace education exists, have a misconception of what the term means and how it can help them, or they are unsure of how to incorporate these principles into their own classrooms.

To test this hypothesis, I created a survey for DCPS educators that explored teacher's current knowledge of, interest in, and openness to peace education. Included in the survey were many different concepts and terms that make up the field of peace education, with opportunities for participants to describe their knowledge of each, as well as questions about the access they feel they have to peace education resources, the support for peace education that they have experienced, and their own preferences on how to receive more information about the subject. The survey was distributed electronically and in paper copies through a variety of channels to DCPS educators. (See Appendix 2 for a copy of the full survey.)

Preliminary results of the survey imply a few important facts. First of all, there is an overwhelming desire among survey participants to learn more about peace education (17 out of 17 responses) and many felt that the incorporation of peace education into classrooms is important (14 out of 17). Secondly, while many of the participants were familiar with certain concepts that pertain to peace education, such as multiple intelligences (16 out of 17), conflict resolution programs (13 out of 17), and multicultural education (14 out of 17), the term "peace education" and some of its older or more academic names are less well known. Participants

claimed that they feel the use of peace education resources is supported in their classrooms (11 out of 16), but that they lack access to said resources (11 out of 17). The main factors that limit teachers from using peace education in the classroom were a lack of information on how to incorporate peace education into current curriculum needs (10 out of 17), a lack of understanding of the term “peace education” (5 out of 17) and a lack of access to resources (5 out of 17) and the time to incorporate them (8 out of 17). Participants also indicated that they would like to receive more information about peace education through a workshop or professional development session (14 out of 17), a conversation with a peace educator (10 out of 17) or through a website (10 out of 17). (See Appendix 3 for complete survey results.)

These preliminary responses, however, may not be the best overview of teachers within DCPS as a whole. The majority of responses came from teachers who work in northwest DC, the Wards, or regions, of town that already have the best test scores, the most resources, and safest schools. Many of the responses also came from young teachers who don’t have the same opinions or experiences that more established educators could bring to the research. My own connections to the participants may have also impacted the results, as many of the DCPS educators I know are already familiar with peace education principles. The sheer volume of responses (18 total) was also extremely low in comparison to the number of educators that exist within the DCPS system, and a greater number of responses, as well as a greater variety among them may alter the findings of the survey.

### **Next Steps for Further Research**

*“It is up to citizens throughout the world to meet with their peers, colleagues, friends, and neighbors, to discuss transition scenarios to build a less violent future. Peace education can play a key role in that process by giving people skills to pull together other concerned adults to address questions about the role of violence in their lives and to formulate visions for a less violent future” (Harris 178).*

The first step I would like to take to further my research is to continue gathering information in regards to the survey. The more responses collected and the more variety within those responses, the more effective any possible resolution could be. Those who desire to better incorporate peace education into DC Public School classrooms will need an in-depth knowledge of DCPS and it’s particular challenges and it’s teachers’ particular needs in order to craft a proposed solution that will address those needs and create the most change. To do this, I will need better access to more DCPS teachers. For the most part, DCPS teachers are already overwhelmed with the amount and variety of expectations surrounding their performance, and the implication that this research could provide even more work makes teachers hesitant to participate in the survey and pass it along. To gain a more comprehensive view of the status of peace education in the district, I will need new ideas on how to encourage teachers to help me, and new points of contact to reach them.

Secondly, I would like to further explore the role of educators within DCPS who do currently use peace education in their classrooms and discuss with them their own successes and challenges when trying to incorporate these ideas into their lessons. Interviews with these educators could provide insight into what methods work best in the DCPS system and could provide hands-on examples for aspiring peace educators who want to see these methods in action. These educators can serve as role models and valuable points of contact and voices of experience within DCPS for those attempting to grow the use of peace education in DC.

Third, I would like to attempt to close the information gap that surrounds peace education. Survey participants requested a workshop, class, or professional development session that focused on peace education as well as a website with more information about peace education and its applications.

The website would be easy to create and maintain, and would only require further research into peace education resources that already exist in the DC area and a way to notify the public of its existence. I envision that such a website would include resources for teachers to use in the classroom, as well as examples of peace education in action and contact information for peace educators and peace education organizations that curious educators could access for more information.

A professional development session and/or workshop would be more difficult for me to organize on my own, but with the right resources and support, it would be easy to make such an event available to DCPS teachers. The conflict here arises with DCPS's current policy on professional development sessions, which many teachers find unhelpful and disorganized. In an ideal situation peace education advocates would coordinate with DCPS schools and with central office employees to craft a workshop that all interested teachers would have access to and would be supported by DCPS as part of a teacher's required continuing education. With this in-system support, it would emphasize the importance of peace education within the district, and would encourage teachers to pursue further exploration in the subject without adding to their already significant workload.

## Conclusions

Peace education as a field is a constantly evolving and expanding ideology and set of practices that can have great impact on students, schools, communities, and cultures when implemented in formal and non-formal education settings. The goals of peace education such as creating creative, critical-thinkers, caring relationships, and societies that promote human equality and liberty are goals that formal education systems, especially DC Public Schools currently promote, support, and desire for themselves, but are unable to put into practice on a large scale. While much more work could be done to explore the potential benefits and challenges of incorporating peace education into the DC Public School system, this research implies that such actions would be of great use to the district, based on the recent policy and personnel changes that encourage an attitude of change in the system and survey participant's high level of enthusiasm to learn more about peace education.

Tangible steps to resolve the peace education knowledge gap in DC include the development of a website that targets the needs of DCPS teachers and the creation of a workshop or professional development curriculum that better instructs teachers in ways to incorporate these resources into their classrooms. Further exploration should also be taken to better understand the specific needs and concerns that DC teachers have regarding peace education and to find examples of peace education already successfully in use within the district.

With these simple steps, a great change could be made within DCPS to encourage and create a classroom culture of creativity, critical-thinking, human rights, justice and peace and with this shift, also change the way the DCPS is perceived as a successful school district and how the school district perceives itself. By helping support and train peace educators, we support and train exceptional educators, and through those great teachers, we can change the world.

### Works Cited

- Bar-Tal, Daniel. "The Elusive Nature of Peace Education." *Peace Education: the Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*. Ed. Gavriel Salomon and Baruch Nevo. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002. 27-36. Print.
- D.C. Public Schools. "Excellence in Teaching Awards." *2011 Excellence in Teaching Awards Winners*. Sept. 2011. Web. 20 Nov. 2011.
- D.C. Public Schools. *IMPACT: The District of Columbia Public Schools Effectiveness Assessment System for School-Based Personnel*. Publication. Washington, D.C., 2011. Print.
- Eisler, Riane, Nel Noddings, and Ron Miller. *Educating for a Culture of Peace*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004. 11-41. Print.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 2000. Print.
- Harris, Ian M., and Mary Lee. Morrison. *Peace Education*. 2nd ed. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003. Print.
- Harris, Ian M. *Peace Education*. 1st ed. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1988. Print.
- Home - DC Public Schools, Washington, DC*. Web. 06 Oct. 2011.
- McCrummen, Stephanie. "D.C. Schools to Use Data from Teacher Evaluation System in New Ways." *The Washington Post*. 13 Feb. 2011. Web. 20 Nov. 2011.
- McCrummen, Stephanie. "Evaluating Teachers Is a Delicate Conversation." *The Washington Post*. 18 Mar. 2011. Web. 20 Nov. 2011.
- "Naming Kaya Henderson to Schools Post Is a Great Step for D.C." Editorial. *The Washington Post*. 8 Mar. 2011. Web. 20 Nov. 2011.

National Research Council of the National Academies. *A Plan for Evaluating the District of Columbia's Public Schools: from Impressions to Evidence*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies, 2011. Print.

The New Teacher Project. *The Case Against Quality-Blind Teacher Layoffs*. Publication. 2011. Print.

"An Overview of IMPACT." *District of Columbia Public Schools*. Web. 6 Oct. 2011.

"The Problem(s) with Rhee's Successor." Editorial. *The Washington Post*. 14 Mar. 2011. Web. 20 Nov. 2011.

Reardon, Betty A. *Comprehensive Peace Education: Educating for Global Responsibility*. New York [u.a.: Teachers College, Columbia Univ., 1988. Print.

Reardon, Betty A. "Peace Education: A Review and Projection." *Peace Education Reports: Department of Education and Psychological Research, School of Education, Malmö University* 17 (1999): 3-40. Print.

"Seniority Should Not Make Teachers Immune to Layoffs." Editorial. *Washingtonpost.com*. 4 Mar. 2011. Web. 20 Nov. 2011.

Turque, Bill. "DCPS Eases IMPACT for Highly Effective Teachers." *Washington Post: D.C. Schools Insider*. 6 Sept. 2011. Web. 20 Nov. 2011.

Turque, Bill. "Michelle Rhee's D.C. Schools Legacy Is in Sharper Focus One Year Later." *The Washington Post*. 15 Oct. 2011. Web. 20 Nov. 2011.