

A Challenge to Care



Pinwheels for Peace.

Samantha Melvin

It is a challenge to care. It is so much easier to go through one's day meeting objectives laid out by state and national standards than to listen to the stories shared by our students, our communities, and society at large. Bringing those stories into our classrooms, however, is a means to engaging our students in an understanding of the greater good. It is a means to engaging them in compassion and caring.

By cultivating a responsive and caring attitude within our classrooms and schools, students learn that they can be agents of positive change.

Sharing Stories

In his book, *A Whole New Mind*, Daniel Pink states: "We are our stories." It is the stories that are shared that connect us to our past and to our future. How can these stories, shared through artistic experiences, engage our students in becoming better citizens and better humans?

In Riane Eisler's book, *Tomorrow's Children: a Blueprint for Partnership Education in the 21st Century*, the idea of partnership education is presented, which focuses on the collaborative, caring, and pluralistic concepts that are core to democratic values: "that we are all responsible for making ours a better society and

a better world. It also makes learning more relevant to our day-to-day lives, to how we act in our families, workplaces, and communities."

Agents of Change

By cultivating a responsive and caring attitude in our classrooms and schools, students learn that they can

be agents of positive change, responding to the needs of others, of the environment, and of the community.

As we look at student-centered curriculum, we see the importance of bringing caring and compassion into our lessons. It not only challenges students to think beyond themselves, but it also enables them to look at how their own or other's situations and relate.

This approach caters to one's emotional and social intelligence, a facet of intelligence that allows us to function each day in community with others while growing intellectually. We are fortunate to be able to look at the arts as a means to integrate caring and compassion into the classroom. From Pinwheels for Peace, which enables us to engage our students in concepts

of peace and community-building; to Empty Bowls, which brings the difficult topic of hunger to the forefront, projects that engage students in individual works of art that connect to a collective effort demonstrate the opportunity presented by collaborative process.

The Courage to Be a Part

By putting one's own best effort forward with others, we illustrate twenty-first-century skills. We have information at our fingertips in a flash of a second, but how do we choose to use that information? As philosopher Paul Tillich put it, we would hope that each of our students will develop the "courage to be as an individual" and the "courage to be as a part." If we can implement lessons that reflect issues in society and illuminate problems faced by others, we can allow students the opportunity to reflect and act, which is what compassion is about.

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