

WITH EYES TO SEE



PEACE AND JUSTICE CONCEPT: STEWARDSHIP

ideas for
teachers

who want
to
integrate
social
justice
concepts

into what
and how
they teach

February
2001



"May God bless us not with clean air alone,
But the will to keep our air clean.

Many God bless us not with a vision of a healthy planet alone,
But with the will to do all in our power to restore and maintain
our planet's health.



May God bless us not with a change of heart in the great world
leaders alone to save our planet,
But with a change in our own heart to use our own power to save
the planet.

May the blessing of God not bring to us saints alone,
But make of us saints greater than any we imagine."

--Daniel J. McGill

-STEWARDSHIP-

Recognition of the gifts of creation and the responsible use of resources. No human person owns anything absolutely; everything we possess we hold in trust for all, including future generations. The contemporary problems of global scarcity and environmental pollution demand renewed efforts at preservation and conservation.

Though debates over the environment are a constant part of the political landscape both in this country and around the world, environmental policy has received extra attention in recent months: former President Clinton's recent announcement of new protections for 60 million acres of forestland; President Bush's cabinet nominations of "environmental moderates," as they have been called, and the future of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska; the Supreme Court's 5-4 ruling in January which limits the scope of the 1972 Clean Water Act; the "Mad Cow" disease spreading throughout Europe; claims of cancer related to depleted uranium used in weapons in Kosovo; the recent energy crisis here in California; the fast approaching 15-year federally imposed deadline for California to become less dependent on the Colorado river for water. The ramifications of the "solutions" we apply to each of these issues and to the many others facing OUR communities, nation, world and earth, directly affect OUR collective present and future. What do we want the present and future to look like? What part do WE play?

Daniel J. McGill's prayer asks for "a change in our own heart to use our own power to save the planet." All of us have this power. Adults and children have this power. How do we ignite the "will" to use it so that we may pass a healthy planet on to future generations? If we are truly to be stewards of the environment, as the Infusion Methodology's definition of Stewardship suggests, then we and our students must become actors of preservation and conservation. Hopefully, this edition of With Eyes to See will assist teachers and their students in this endeavor.

IDEAS: STEWARDSHIP

"Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress or grievances."
-First Amendment U.S. Constitution 1791

"The power that makes grass grow, fruit open, and guides the bird in flight is in all of us."
-Anzia Yezierska

Jonathan Kozol, in his book *The Night Is Dark and I Am Far From Home: A Bold Inquiry Into the Values and Goals of America's Schools*, describes a teacher he knows who had but one rule in her classroom: "Any idea a student genuinely believes, and feels to be his own, must be enacted, executed or applied within the realm of the real world." (New York: Simon & Schuster. 1990. 210) This means, for example, if a student believes her/his school could do more to recycle its waste, or a group of students is concerned about the causes of the frequent beach closings in the area, then they must act on those beliefs (write letters, make calls, investigate alternatives, visit government offices, etc.). George Wood, a school principal and author of the book *Schools That Work* (Dutton, 1992), states: "I do not believe you can teach for social justice--you must live for social justice...Ultimately, that's what it's all about: giving young people hope that social justice is not simply a slogan or a curriculum package, but something that compels us to treat one another as members of a shared community." (Teaching for Social Justice. Ayers, W., J. A. Hunt, and T. Quinn, eds. New York: Teacher College Press. 1998. 248) In a broader sense, youth who learn to "live for social justice," learn to be informed, active citizens in a participatory democracy: what better mandate for our schools?

Based on this model, the following pages lay out ideas of how to get involved in the environmental issues that affect students' lives and their neighborhoods, and eventually those of the national and global community.

TEN TIPS FOR TAKING SOCIAL ACTION

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| 1. Choose a problem. | 6. Advertise. |
| 2. Do your research. | 7. Raise money. |
| 3. Brainstorm possible solutions. | 8. Carry out your solution. |
| 4. Build coalitions of support. | 9. Evaluate. |
| 5. Identify your opposition. | 10. Don't give up. |
- (Lewis, Barbara A. *The Kid's Guide to Social Action*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing. 1991. 12-13)



THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY

Though rain forest destruction, ozone depletion, or the threat of extinction of tigers are important environmental issues and are caused to a large extent by our life-styles and governmental policies, it is often difficult for us to act upon these issues because they seem far removed from our everyday lives. Therefore, start at the local level. What are the environmental issues that concern students at their school, at home, and in the neighborhood? Begin by having students explore this question, and see where it takes them. Their investigations and actions will inevitably lead them beyond the city limits as they discover the roots of the problems that plague their back yards. Take the following stories as examples:

1. Second-graders in Chicago got frustrated with the unsightliness and danger of a burned-out car blocking the entrance to their school. Determined to do something, they studied the phone-book and began making calls to various government and school district offices. They got the car removed, felt proud to have made a difference in their neighborhood, and learned in the process how to investigate a problem, use the telephone effectively, and maneuver through government bureaucracy (told by William Ayers, Associate Professor of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago).
2. At Jackson Elementary School in Salt Lake City, Utah, a group of 6th graders were concerned about a stock-pile of old barrels located three blocks

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from their school. After informing themselves about the barrels, toxic waste, ground-water contamination, environmental laws, etc., they took action. When many doors were closed in their faces, they went public and effectively used the media and sympathetic politicians to get the barrels removed. The next year, in order to get the soil cleaned-up, they went to the State Legislature and proposed and lobbied for the creation of the Utah State Superfund. It passed. One Senator remarked: "No one has more effectively lobbied us than these young kids, and they didn't even have to buy us dinner." (Lewis, Barbara A. 7-11)

WHAT TO DO?

Brainstorm with students about the environmental issues that concern them. Once common themes emerge, or an issue touches the emotions of the students, follow their lead! The journey might include many of the following actions:

- 1. Contact Local Government Units** when the students' investigations require more information. Students could join them to conduct air quality monitoring, survey toxic sources, study wetlands, obtain copies of laws, etc.. Or, there might be a need for a unit to take action! <<BONUS: civics has never been so motivating.>>
- 2. Get to Know the School** and school district. If the students' concern is school waste disposal, the purchasing of products not respectful of the environment (cleaners, non-recycled paper, etc.), dangerous levels of asbestos or radon, energy usage, etc., then administrators and/or board members could be invited to speak on the issue. Students might attend their first school board meeting to present proposals. <<BONUS: students see the school as theirs to improve, respect and protect.>>
- 3. Interview Community Members** when an issue requires community input. Petitions or door-to-door interviews are often a great first step towards getting the information out and learning how the community feels about an issue. <<BONUS: the community and the school will be closer than ever.>>
- 4. Talk to Local Businesses** for financial backing for a project, or, if their practices are related, to an environmental concern and/or solution. <<BONUS: students become more critical consumers.>>
- 5. Spend Time in the Library.** As soon as students get attached to a problem, they will naturally seek out more information. In the Jackson Elementary School example, 6th graders were reading medical journals and adult-level news magazines, all beyond their "grade-level," because they wanted to know more. <<BONUS: reading more speaks for itself.>>
- 6. Learn the Art of Being Heard** by working with local news agencies, writing letters, making calls, creating petitions, conducting interviews, lobbying, protesting, and the list goes on. <<BONUS: once students begin to take a critical look at media and its influence on themselves and society, their television watching habits will never be the same!>>



"The best way to get a good idea is to get a lot of ideas."
-Linus Pauling
Nobel Prize Winner

"In our every deliberation, we must consider the import of our decisions on the next seven generations."
-Iroquois Confederation
18th century attributed

RECOMMENDED

"Most politicians will not stick their necks out unless they sense grass-roots support... Neither you nor I should expect someone else to take our responsibility."
-Katharine Hepburn

"We don't inherit the land from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children."
-Penn. Dutch Saying

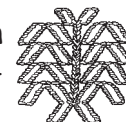
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

1. For Internet users, there is an overwhelming wealth of information available. A great place to start is with the Environmental Education Link. "EELINK" <<www.nceet.snre.umich.edu>> is a project of the North American Association for Environmental Education. The website has many links to classroom ideas, student resources, environmental information and data, an environmental events calendar, funding, resources, and more. A search with the key words "environmental education" will also bring up numerous resources. Add "social action" to the search and find groups like the Student Environmental Action Coalition <<www.seac.org>>.

2. A good book with ideas for **infusing** environmental education into the classroom is Jan Lewis Walters and Lyne Hamilton's Integrating Environmental Education Into the Curriculum...PAINLESSLY. The book is divided into subject areas like Reading, Mathematics, Language Arts, etc., and contains lesson plans of environmental activities for each including an entire section on resources. Though almost ten years old, the information is still relevant--environmental problems haven't changed much in the last decade...unfortunately! (Bloomington, Indiana: National Educational Service. 1992)

A great resource for working with young people was used for much of the information in this newsletter: The Kid's Guide to Social Action by Barbara A. Lewis. The book combines actual stories of children and young adults making a difference through social action with explanations of how to take action. The book explores the multitude of skills needed to make changes in society, including how to telephone, conduct interviews, make speeches, use media coverage, community organization, changing laws, etc. There is also a significant section filled with resource information. The most recent edition was in 1999.

MARK YOUR CALENDERS! Concern America's annual **Walk Out Of Poverty** takes place on April 7. **JOIN US!** Call Janine or Eli at Concern America to get information, walk packets, posters, flyers and/or to schedule a presentation for your group.



CONCERN AMERICA

is an international development and refugee aid organization that sends doctors, nurses, engineers, educators, and nutritionists as volunteers to train and empower the materially poor in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Bolivia, Brazil, Guinea and Mozambique.

In support of these projects, Concern America offers educational services in Orange County which include:

- * the St. Nicholas Project
- * Walk Out of Poverty
- * Infusion Method Workshops for teachers
- * "Training for Transformation" Workshops for adults
- * school and parish consulting for the implementation of the Bishops' Pastoral: "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions" (June, 1998)
- * Lending library for resources of peace and social justice

Information on any of these projects can be obtained by contacting:

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