Molding Minds for Peace: A Curriculum for Early Childhood Educators to Teach Peacebuilding Concepts and Skills

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University of San Francisco

Molding Minds for Peace: A Curriculum for Early Childhood Educators to Teach Peacebuilding Concepts and Skills

A Field Project Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in International and Multicultural Education

by
Marissa Gray
December 2016
Molding Minds for Peace: A Curriculum for Early Childhood Educators to Teach Peacebuilding Concepts and Skills

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

INTERNATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

by Marissa D. Gray

December 2016

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree.

Approved:

Dr. Rosa Jimenez
Instructor/Chairperson

December 16, 2016
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

“Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] Constitution, 1945). This excerpt from the UNESCO constitution perfectly emphasizes the potential strength and resilience of the human mind as a way to combat growing violence. However, is the fight for peace truly best fought in the “minds of men,” or is this job better suited for the strong, imaginative, and still malleable minds of our youth? Because of globalization, exploitation, and ideas of cultural superiority, many individuals of today’s society are experiencing racial hostility, cultural prejudice, and ethnic and religious radicalism (Yusupova, Podgorecki, & Markova, 2015). With growing turbulence and violence that is occurring, it is imperative to examine the ways in which peace can be fostered and manifested in the daily activities of individuals. The use of peace education, as a means to the reduction of conflict, may have the ability to create a sense of understanding and hope within the next generation.

This chapter will provide information about the history and goals of peace education, as well as an examination of the field of multicultural education, including insight from leading scholars of this field. Chapter I will also examine the potential of early childhood education as a space for impacting students’ conceptions of peace which will be followed by a brief description of the project that I hope to complete, and the outcomes and audience that I hope to reach.

Although the development of the peace education field is relatively recent, there are some regions of the world where this type of education has been utilized. As described in detail by
Maria Hantzopolous and Monisha Bajaj (2016) in their book *Peace Education: International Perspectives*, conflict affected areas such as Northern Ireland, Israel, Palestine, and India have begun to adopt methods for implementing peace building as a way to combat ethnic tensions that have resulted or been perpetuated through violence. Nevertheless, outside of this type of environment, where conflict has disrupted everyday lives, the use of peace building in formal education settings has been limited.

While the United States is not technically classified as a conflict affected area, the country is heavily affected by institutional racism, discrimination, and violence. In 1972, Samuel Brodbelt wrote an article discussing how students of color were disadvantaged in American schools due to standardized testing, teacher attitudes, and disproportionate allocation of resources based on race. Unfortunately, over 40 years later, these are all still very real issues for students today (Banks, 2009). Through misinterpreted understandings of the role of race and culture in the traditional classroom settings, many teachers embrace outdated and ineffective methods of educating students. In an attempt to treat all students “equal” and to provide students with the same opportunities for success, many teachers employ the mindset of colorblindness. This type of teacher attitude can lead to a lack of trust, a feeling of unimportance, and a lack of support for students of color (McCoy, Winkle-Wagner, and Ludke, 2015). Other educators unknowingly support a banking-style method of education, where students’ prior lives, experiences, and knowledge are overlooked. Teacher attitudes of inferiority and the denial of cultural and ethnic influences on student learning create an unfair and unhealthy environment for diverse students.

Failing educational programs, such as No Child Left Behind, have widened an already prominent achievement gap along racial and socioeconomic borders (Darling-Hammond, 2007),
amplifying environments where low income and minority students are provided with less resources and less educational opportunities for success (Wald and Losen, 2003). Accordingly, members of these disadvantaged groups have lower academic achievement, graduation, and college attendance rates which continually perpetuates the negative stereotypes that have surrounded people of color since the creation of the United States. The United States is also in the midst of a transitional period where rapidly expanding diversity has caused a ripple effect of anti-immigrant sentiment among predominantly white, middle and upper-class societies. This sentiment is catastrophic when taking into consideration that the fact that over 25% of the nation’s children are immigrants or come from immigrant families. It is also very discouraging to realize that when entering into traditional educational settings, these students are often met with feelings of inferiority, cultural deprivation, and cultural difference (Souto-Manning, 2013). In the midst of this unjust and unfair environment of hate that perpetuates stereotypes and offensive rhetoric, it is important for young students to begin to understand the context of the world that they live in and for these students to be given the tools that they need to think critically and navigate the diversity that they experience in a peaceful manner.

When discussing peace education within this study, I will refer to the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund’s (UNICEF) definition of this term. UNICEF (Fountain, 1999) describes peace education as:

the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level. (p. 1)
According to I. M. Harris (2004), peace education is composed of five different ideas: an explanation of the origin of violence, the provision of alternatives to violence, insight into the different forms of violence, peace in the context of specific environments, and conflict as a widespread and common experience. For the purpose of this project I will focus predominately on the thread of peace education that deals with creating and employing alternatives to violence. I will also invest heavily in the idea of character education, which emphasizes teaching a specific set of values to individuals (Harris, 2004). Character education falls under the umbrella of peace education due to its ability to change individuals’ attitudes and to create behavioral changes that will allow individuals to peacefully address conflict and avoid violence.

One of the many ways in which peace education can manifest itself, is through the implementation of multicultural education. Multicultural education, like character education, is a form of peace education. For the sake of this project, I will refer to multicultural education as “a life-long learning process designed to empower all students to become knowledgeable, caring, and active participants in their communities” (“Multicultural Education”, 2016). In addition to this definition, Banks (1993a), a leading scholar in the field of multicultural education, insists that multicultural education is composed of the following five dimensions: “1) content integration, 2) the knowledge construction process, 3) prejudice reduction, 4) an equity pedagogy, and 5) an empowering school culture and social structure” (p. 25). A truly effective multicultural education cannot be developed or implemented unless all five of these dimensions are accounted for. It is important to emphasize that multicultural education that embodies such characteristics should not be viewed as an additive form of education but should permeate every aspect of educational instruction and curricular development. The application of a curriculum encompassing a culturally inclusive education provides educators and students with opportunities
for peace building. Rather than being a reactionary process that develops out of hostility and hatred, opportunities for peace building should be created and used as a preventative measure that may lead to a reduction of conflict. These opportunities should focus on not only reducing the destructive and inherently violent behaviors that have become engrained in the minds of youth, but also on providing students with the positive competencies and response mechanisms that will allow them to resolve hostile and tense situations peacefully. (Flannery, Vazsonyi, Liau, Guo, Powell, Atha, & Embry, 2003).

While peace education, through the implementation of multicultural education has the possibility to affect change within students in many ways, it is the ability to understand difference, to collaborate, and to employ techniques of conflict resolution that will be most closely examined throughout this project. Peace education has the ability to prevent conflict that is born out of fear and ignorance. It provides a space for students and individuals to discuss ideas such as race, gender, discrimination, violence, and peace in a collaborative way and through a social justice lens.

Much of the existing research in peace and multicultural education has focused on elementary school aged students and above. For example, in order to address the effects of genocide and apartheid in South Africa, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) was implemented in schools in 2003. The curriculum was focused on students in grades 10-12 and was developed to generate a greater understanding of the importance of human rights within students, as well as to allow them to acquire the skills necessary to navigate a violent history and racial divides (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2016). Curricula, such as the one implemented in South Africa are illustrative of the strategy to use formal education as a way of building understanding and normalizing differences. However, by focusing almost exclusively on older students,
researchers, teachers, and administrators may be overlooking the potential of engaging students at a key stage of development, that occurs during the first eight years of a child’s life. Almay and Genishi (1979) discuss young students as not just children but as cultural beings who are able to understand and assess their educational experiences in reference to their social positionality. Yelland and O’Rourke (2008) also indicate that educators must address the students’ sociocultural aspects of learning beginning at a young age if they hope to support them as both students and individuals. Hintz and Stomfay-Stitz (1998) indicate the importance of early childhood students learning peacebuilding and conflict resolution skills as a way to extend peace and healing through communities in the United States.

In contrast to the current practice of employing peace building curricula with older students, the development of these positive character building skills should be focused on students who are still in the process of growing developmentally. Children as early as two years old have the ability to witness and replicate certain actions and beliefs including those that may highlight ethnic and cultural differences such as racism, inequality, and injustice (Chopra, n.d.). Because of this, it is crucial for early childhood students to be given opportunities to learn about and to appreciate differences across cultures, locations, and ethnicities. Out of these opportunities, students may experience growth as an individual that will allow them to better analyze and understand the world around them as they continue to age. Hintz and Stomfay-Stitz (1998) describe the positive citizenry that can develop within students who interact with a peace education curriculum indicating that, “many models of peace education emphasize feelings and emotions in a positive light to help children develop concern for others, healthy social and emotional growth, and responsibility for the community, nation, and fragile planet, Earth” (p. 6). Making investments in children’s formative years can yield significant results in critical thinking
skills while also creating life-long learners that have the ability to impact their communities (Chopra, n.d.).

Numerous research investigations have reported that students who are involved in early childhood intervention/education programs have experienced increases in the outcomes of four different developmental areas: academic, emotional/cognitive, behavioral, health. Children who have participated in some form of early childhood education were found to not only have increased math and reading scores as they proceeded into school-aged education institutions, but were also found to spend a longer period of their lives pursuing education, including higher education (Campbell, Ramey, Pungello, Sparling, & Miller-Johnson, 2002). These students were also more likely to search for and obtain a skilled working position (Campbell, et al., 2002). Students who have experienced schooling in a pre-elementary setting have also been shown to have reduced number of behavioral issues, as well as smaller reported criminal histories (Karoly & Levaux, 1998). Another important positive implication of enrolling students in an early childhood program is their increased likelihood to develop and maintain personal relationships (Karoly & Levaux, 1998), while also being better equipped to handle social adjustment (Campbell, et al., 2002). Amongst many other benefits that can occur, students have a higher likelihood of becoming independent and self-sufficient individuals (Campbell, et al., 2002).

All of the described benefits however, may be dependent on the quality of care and instruction that is provided by early childhood educators. In order for the necessary developmental growth to occur, early childhood educators must ensure that their educational curricula and instruction encompasses the following aspects: “explicit instruction in certain key skills, sensitive and emotionally warm interactions, responsive feedback, verbal
engagement/stimulation, and a classroom environment that is not overly structured or regimented” (Pianta, 2007, p. 1).

Due to the impact that early childhood education has been found to have on both students’ academic and personal lives as they grow, it is essential to begin the application of multicultural curriculum into formal education settings as early as pre-school. The implementation of a multicultural education in early childhood classrooms will allow for peace building opportunities that have the potential to reduce prejudice and inequality that may exist in future generations.

The primary years of a child’s life are a time when significant strides in development and identity building occur. During this time students begin to understand the ways in which humans interact as well as develop their own ideas and beliefs about the world around them. For this reason, it is crucial for early childhood educators to use this special period of time to instill ideas of peace and cooperation within the minds of their students. The use of multicultural education within an early childhood classroom has the potential to limit future prejudices through exposure, inclusion, and the normalization of different cultures.

Purpose of the Project

Unfortunately, there are not many existing curricular examples of culturally inclusive materials available to early childhood educators. The California Preschool Learning foundations, examined closer in Chapter III, was one of only two formal curricula that I was able to find that included specific standards to address diversity, difference, and social and emotional aspects of learning (Abbot, Lundin, and Ong, 2008). The second curriculum that encompassed these crucial aspects of child development was The Creative Curriculum for Preschool developed by the United States Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) (DoDEA, 2003). When
conducting research, I was able to find a number of best practice guides for building culturally inclusive classrooms (such as those provided by NAEYC, NECTAC, and the San Diego Unified School District and Early Childhood Associates), however, there are limited examples of curriculum/lesson plans at developmentally appropriate levels for early childhood that are also culturally relevant. The lack of examples and support available to early childhood educators is a significant indicator of the need for further research and an expansion to this area of study. Without proper illustrations of efficient and developmentally appropriate culturally inclusive education materials, educators risk implementing curriculum that could not only fail to expose their students to diverse ways of living but that, if used improperly, could reinforce stereotypical ways of thinking and prejudice beliefs.

My field project will provide an example of a culturally inclusive curriculum for early childhood educators that aims to equip students with the traits needed, such as conflict-resolution skills, tolerance, acceptance, and understanding, for building environments of peace. My hope is that when provided with an example of culturally inclusive and developmentally appropriate curriculum, early childhood educators will not only begin to affect change within their students, but will also begin to understand the importance of creating and implementing this type of curricular instruction within every aspect of their educational practice. The curriculum will focus on deconstructing the heavily engrained ideas of cultural superiority and racial prejudice and replacing them with traits such as acceptance, tolerance, and respect.

This educational research stems from both my past academic work at the graduate level, as well as my professional experience in the field of early childhood education. While attending graduate school at the University of San Francisco, I was exposed to the concept of peace education. My exposure to this new progressive field of education along with my five years of
experience working in the early childhood education field, in multiple capacities, helped to form the basis of the work that I will be completing. Since my move to the city, I have worked as a preschool teacher at an art and play based preschool that embraces multiculturalism. As a current early childhood educator with a class full of students as diverse as San Francisco itself, I have personally seen the potential for growth, as well as understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity within my own students. The development of this curriculum is not only to assist my own students in the acquisition of peacebuilding skills, but also to support early childhood educators who wish to promote cultural awareness and acceptance within their own classrooms.

**Conceptual Framework**

Throughout the expansion of my research and the development of my curriculum, my work will be based upon the conceptual framework provided by James A. Banks in his five dimensions of multicultural education. Banks (2009) indicates that in order for multicultural education to have the greatest effect on students, it needs to permeate all aspects of educational instruction including the five following dimensions: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure.

Content integration involves a diversification of not only academic content but also classroom and school manipulatives and materials. Banks (1997) indicates that one insufficient practice that has dominated the implementation of multicultural education has been the focus of educators only in this area. Exposing children to a variety of diverse materials without first deconstructing their existing biases will not have as significant of an effect on students’ overall attitudes towards diversity and difference as a more complete and in-depth implementation
process. The materials incorporated into a multicultural classroom may vary from location to location. One reason for this variance, is because teachers should develop their curriculum and choose their manipulatives in a way that will reflect the diversity of the students present in their classrooms. This will help to foster a sense of change and acceptance within the classroom environment.

A second important idea when working with the implementation of a multicultural education, is the idea of knowledge construction. Knowledge construction examines the ways in which a student’s personal experiences influence how the student processes new information as well as how they make sense of previous learning experiences. A teacher who has properly implemented the knowledge construction process within their classroom helps students to understand what learning is and how cultural, socioeconomic, and racial background can influence this process (Banks, 1993a). The most effective form of educating students about knowledge construction is through what Banks (1993b) describes as the transformative approach. In this approach the entire curricular structure is changed to allow students to view and understand the experiences of individuals in other ethnic and cultural groups. If able, teachers can also continue this approach by adding an action component that is geared towards social justice (Banks, 1993a).

Prejudice reduction is an extremely important aspect of a multicultural education. The purpose of this pertinent section of multicultural education is to reduce the preconceived notions of class and race that have been engrained within children’s thoughts and beliefs from a young age, and to instead teach them how to be more fair, understanding, and democratic in their racial attitudes and beliefs (Banks, 1993a). This widening or equaling of assessment allows students to
relate to individuals who may have previously been dehumanized in their minds, therefor establishing a culture of acceptance and understanding within the classroom environment.

Another conception of multicultural education that I will draw upon for my work is the one provided by Jacklyn Blake Clayton. Clayton (2003) describes multiculturalism as more than just a form of education, but as a mindset that fosters respect and acceptance of difference as well as “accepts the inevitability of conflict” and “also envisions possibilities of positive growth through that conflict” (p. 169). My goal in creating this curriculum is not to deny the existence of conflict, but to provide students with alternative ways of handling conflict rather than employing violence.

Some scholars, like Dilys Shoorman and Ira Bogotch (2010), see multicultural education as a platform to promote not only cultural awareness and acceptance, but also social justice. Maurianne Adams and Lee Anne Bell (2016) describe an education that both encompasses cultural awareness and promotes social justice through the identification of oppression. In order to reach this level of understanding, students need to first possess the knowledge and skills to identify and overcome conflict and difference. These are skills and characteristics that can be gained through the implementation of a multicultural education.

The goal of most educators is to help as many of their students succeed as possible. Many traditional forms of education have failed a large majority of students who cannot identify with the largely white-washed curriculum. For this reason it is important that teachers invest in an equity pedagogy that will allow all students an equal opportunity to succeed (Banks, 1993a). While there are multiple theories about how an equity pedagogy can be achieved (cultural depravation theory, cultural difference theory), it is clear that it is the responsibility of the instructor to choose not only a curriculum that promotes equal opportunities within the
classroom, but to also make sure that their teaching is free of any conscious or unconscious biases against students.

For the transformative process of multicultural education to have the greatest effect on students, an environment of cultural awareness and acceptance needs to extend beyond the classroom and into the whole school atmosphere (Banks, 1993a). Schoorman and Bogotch (2010) also stress the importance of extending the influence of a multicultural education past the borders of the classroom to a school-wide and even a school-community environment. The school culture should reflect more than just multicultural practices however; it should also empower students and promote “gender, racial, and social-class equity” (Banks, 2009, p. 23).

Children tend to learn by example and because of this, it is important for them to have the opportunity to see the lessons that they are learning in the classroom on a larger scale. In order for a full scale school reform, each school needs to be examined and analyzed as a social system. Within this social system, there needs to be a certain amount of understanding and participation within each level of the system. This participation would include efforts from students, teachers, administrators, and parents. For a more holistic reform, it is beneficial for individuals from all of these groups to collaborate and agree upon specific goals for the school community and the best way of achieving these goals (Banks, 1993a).

**Significance of Project**

The act of incorporating a multicultural curriculum into an early childhood classroom can benefit both educators and their classroom environments. The curriculum provided will help to support teachers who are seeking to address diversity and to build communities of peace within their classrooms. Through the implementation of a culturally inclusive curriculum, educators will be more likely to meet the needs of all of their students. Students learn in a myriad of different
ways and by providing a space of learning that varies from the traditional manner of schooling, teachers allow their students to be creative in their response to materials, as well as to personalize and direct their own learning processes.

In order for a curriculum to have the greatest effect on students, the materials need to be relevant to the students’ lives. By continually perpetuating the traditionally “white-washed” school curriculums, many education systems have failed to acknowledge minority students and their communities, which, in turn disempowers these individuals and can have negative effects on students’ academic and social performance. The decision to utilize a culturally inclusive curriculum, ensures that educators are validating their students’ diverse backgrounds and cultures, therefor providing an understanding and support that has been missing from traditional curriculums. The incorporation of multiple perspectives and the amplification of traditionally silenced voices, that are included in a successfully developed multicultural curriculum, provide students with not only an understanding that there are an infinite number of histories which may vary depending on their cultural background, but also that all of these perspectives are equally important. The personal relevance of seeing and hearing voices from their own communities can boost students’ engagement in academics while also exposing them to cultural differences.

Through the use of multicultural curricula, teachers can begin providing opportunities for their students to develop peace building skills. These necessary skills not only benefit the students in their day to day and future lives, but can also help to build a more understanding and accepting environment within the classroom. Such an environment will allow students to feel more comfortable while at school and is also likely to decrease the number of behavioral issues that may occur.
This field project has been designed to create improvements in the lives of not only teachers, but their students as well. The peace building skills (effective communication and conflict resolution), and attitudes (tolerance and understanding) that will be woven into the curriculum are traits that will allow students to better navigate ethnic and cultural diversity in their everyday lives. These traits have become a necessity in a world of growing diversity. These characteristics will allow them to learn how to address conflict and difference and how to overcome these obstacles in a peaceful manner. In other words, the curriculum provided in this field project will have the potential to create a lasting impression on students that will, in turn, produce a larger number of global citizens.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Due to the amount of background knowledge that I feel is needed to truly understand what a multicultural early childhood classroom might look like, this literature review is comprised of two topical areas, one of which will include three further sub-categories. The literature review will begin with a brief investigation into the importance of early childhood education as well as early childhood development. Within this section of the literature review I will investigate the known effects of multicultural education as well as how this information informs early childhood education programs. The second section of the literature review will further describe the idea of multicultural education and some ways in which this form of education may manifest itself not only within the physical classroom environment, but also within the pedagogical practices of a culturally responsive teacher. This topic will be broken into three sub-categories as follows: Culturally Responsive Teaching, Culturally Sensitive Classroom Environment, and Multicultural Education as a Tool for Peace.

Early Childhood Development and Education

While the interest and investment in early childhood development has been relatively recent, it has quickly come to be understood as an area of study that is imperative in understanding young children’s developmental growth. According to Biersteker and Dawes (2008), early childhood development is a general term used to describe the growth process of children from birth through mid-childhood as they develop and thrive in all aspects of their lives. In concurrence with this definition, Chopra (n.d.) narrows the scope of early childhood development by describing it as “characterized by rapid developments in: physical health and motor development, cognitive skills, language and literacy abilities, social and emotional
competence, and a sense of identity and belonging” (p. 10). There are differing opinions of what the exact ages are during which this expansion of development occurs, but many of the leading scholars agree that the time between birth and the ages of seven to nine is critical in personally understanding a child’s positionality with their community and larger world.

In their book *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*, Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) describe what they call, the “Core Concepts of Development”. These concepts are composed of ten ideas, two of which include children as active participants in their development, and the influence of early childhood education programs on a child’s development trajectory (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Even more critical than these concepts however, is the importance that the authors place on the possible influence of early childhood development to children’s future academic and social lives. Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) stress the significance of this development stage, identifying early childhood development as the foundation for all other growth and learning extending even into adult life.

When researchers, teachers, and the general public began to understand the critical effects of early childhood development on the future of their children, investments in early childhood education escalated. Early childhood education programs were created and implemented as a way to boost students’ academic, social, and physical achievements. Research was also conducted to track and record the progress of students who were enrolled in such programs in comparison to those who were not (example: the Abecedarian study). It was through these investigations that researchers were able to discover the scope of how early childhood education programs benefit young students.

The proven benefits of early childhood education range from students’ academic success to their ability to socialize and create lasting relationships. In regards to schooling and
educational achievements studies have shown that, students who are enrolled in some form of early childhood education program tend to score higher on both intellectual and academic tests than their peers who are not exposed to this early intervention (Campbell, Ramey, Pungello, Sparling, and Miller-Johnson, 2002). The influence that early childhood education programs have on students can extend into their teenage and even adult lives. The results of the Abecedarian study, which tracked the progress of students from pre-school through the age of 21, found that students who had been enrolled in an early childhood education program were not only less likely to drop out of high school, but were also more likely to attend a four year college and obtain a skilled professional job upon graduation (Campbell et al., 2002). Analysis of results such as these demonstrate that early childhood education programs provide the opportunity to better prepare individuals for the school and labor market (Chopra, n.d.).

Besides purely academic and educational benefits, investments in early childhood education also have the potential to improve the lives of students emotionally and socially. Students who attended an early childhood education program during their early years were found to be more likely to develop healthy relationships with other individuals, in particular their parents. These same students were also identified as having a smaller chance of becoming a teen parent (Campbell et al., 2002). The likelihood of living a healthier lifestyle, including eating well and regularly exercising, also increased for students who were involved with an early childhood education program (Campbell et al., 2002).

Another significant benefit that has been noted in numerous studies, is the ability of early childhood education programs to create a sense of community between educators, students, and parents. For early childhood programs to effectively run, they must rely on collaboration and shared vision with members from multiple communities. The joint effort and responsibility to the
children allows for social cohesion, which in turn, can amplify a sense of community across race/ethnicity, culture, and socioeconomic class (Chopra, n.d.).

Possibly the most significant and valuable attribute that early childhood education programs, in particular those infused with multicultural values, can contribute to the students and surrounding communities is the likelihood for a better and more peaceful future. Early childhood classroom environments, when properly managed and maintained, can become a safe place for both students and educators to work through the issues of isolation, marginalization, racism, and other psychologically damaging influences. With the properly curated space to address these negative influences, children are given the opportunity to learn the characteristics and traits needed to better address their struggles. These skills and traits will allow children to address diversity and violence in a peaceful manner (Chopra, n.d).

Education has often been described as the great equalizer, or a way for students of lower economic status to gain the same experiences and benefits as students of a higher socioeconomic level. This notion has however been contested by many, including Robert Garda (2007), who argues that the formal United States education system is yet another system of oppression that further disadvantages students of color and low income students. Through systems of tracking and unfair disciplinary actions, students of color and students of low economic status are continuously denied the same support and experiences as their peers. As students transition from elementary to middle and high school these disparities become amplified. In addition to the disadvantages that students of color and low socioeconomic status experience within the formal education setting, they are also less likely to receive the care that they need to properly grow and develop from infancy to pre-school age. This can be for many reasons including a lack of time or resources within working class communities (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2002). Shonkoff and
Phillips discuss the benefit of early childhood programs in redressing the disparities and disadvantages that un-proportionately affect students of color and students of lower socio-economic status. They indicate that early childhood education programs have the ability and responsibility to bridge the achievement gaps that’s students may already be experiencing before even entering into school (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2002). In this way, early childhood education programs can be viewed as a way to lessen the extent of disadvantages experienced by students and to better prepare all students for their academic careers.

**Multicultural Education**

While one of the goals of early childhood education is to prepare students for their educational careers, a broader goal is to prepare students for their lives outside of school. In a country of growing diversity, it is imperative for early childhood educators to ensure that their students are equipped to handle this diversity. One way in which educators can begin to prepare their students for the experiences that they will have in a diverse world, is through the implementation of multicultural education. In order for multicultural education to be most effective, it must be authentically and holistically developed. That being said, there is no single way to implement this style of educating and learning. However, the following sections provide some examples and suggestions of ways that teachers can develop a culturally responsive pedagogical approach as well as a culturally inclusive classroom environment.

**Culturally Responsive Teaching**

When creating an effective multicultural classroom it is important for educators to first examine their current pedagogical practices. This can include how they analyze their classroom,
differentiate instruction, address their students, and develop and implement curriculum. Fredrick Erickson (1997), warns teachers against the traditional mainstream focuses of education indicating that by enforcing culturally mainstream ways of thinking, speaking, and writing, teachers may be reinforcing a language and culture of power that invalidates students own backgrounds. Geneva Gay (2000) discusses how this manner of thinking and teaching can allow teachers to develop a “deficit syndrome” in which they view their culturally diverse students as incapable or lacking the characteristics and traits needed to be academically successful. For this reason it is imperative for culturally responsive educators to become knowledgeable about the students that they have present in their classrooms.

Creating a welcoming and culturally inclusive environment is something that must develop out of the specific needs of a classroom and is not something that can be generalized or replicated. Because of this, teachers need to learn as much as possible about all of their students, including hobbies, interests, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds. With knowledge of students’ backgrounds, educators can begin to create a culturally compatible classroom environment in which students’ home culture also contributes to the overall classroom and school environment (Brown, 2007). This cohesion will not only allow students to feel more comfortable in the formal education setting, but will allow students to learn about their fellow classmates while also validating the students’ own cultural backgrounds. Students are not the only individuals who will be afforded the opportunity to learn, however. Erickson (1997) denotes that by creating connections between students’ daily lives outside of school and the materials, curriculum, and the experiences that occur within the classroom, teachers are also creating the opportunity for themselves to learn and appreciate each of their individual students’ cultural background and diversity. By adopting an understanding that students possess specific “funds of
knowledge”, or valid, previous experiential wisdom, teachers also have the opportunity to dismantle previous stereotypes that may exist surrounding their diverse students (Gonzales, Moll, and Amanti, 2006). Brown indicates that culturally responsive teaching can influence the ways in which students think and learn, and because of this, it is the responsibility of a culturally responsive teacher to demonstrate an understanding of and appreciation towards each of their students’ cultural, linguistic, and social characteristics (Brown, 2007). Villegas and Lucas (2002) also support this idea, insisting that maintaining affirming views of students’ diverse backgrounds is one of the critical characteristics of being a culturally responsive educator.

By gaining a better understanding of students’ background, teachers are helping to inform their perceptions of each individual student’s knowledge construction process, and the specific ways in which each student needs to be supported (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This information can help to inform curricular choices and methods of instruction that a teacher may choose to employ to best support the needs of his/her students (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). By acknowledging and accepting students’ cultural backgrounds, teachers can not only overcome their own biases, but can also act as a positive role model of understanding and inclusivity to their students. Villegas and Lucas (2002) state that “teachers who respect cultural differences are more apt to believe that students from nondominant groups are capable learners, even when these children enter school with ways of thinking, talking, and behaving that differ from the dominant cultural norms” (p. 23). This manner of thinking is necessary for teachers to “model cultural sensitivity and [to] have knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity” (Tu, Freeman, & White, 2007, p.18). To set a positive example of acceptance and inclusivity, it is also very important for educators to understand that students’ social location (race/ethnicity, social class, language, etc.) is not neutral, and while it may affect the skills and characteristics that each
student brings to the classroom, it in no way influences the potential that they have to be effective and dedicated learners (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Culturally responsive teaching should permeate every aspect of teacher instruction including their pedagogical practices as well as their expectations of students, the methods in which they choose to teach, their classroom management skills, and ultimately how their students respond to them (Brown, 2007). Geneva Gay, a leading scholar in the field of culturally responsive education, indicates that there are five areas of culturally responsive teaching that educators should actively seek to address. The five areas are as follows: “developing a culturally diverse knowledge base, designing culturally relevant curricula, demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community, building effective cross-cultural communities, and delivering culturally responsive instruction” (Brown, 2007, p. 58). All of these areas of focus must be given specific and focused attention in order for teachers to most effectively implement culturally responsive teaching practices.

One way in which culturally responsive educators can foster an environment of inclusivity is through “candid discussions about topics that, although relevant to the lives of the students, are regularly excluded from classroom conversations” (Villegras & Lucas, 2002, p. 28). Because issues of discrimination are still prevalent in today’s society, students enter the classroom with certain perspectives, ideas, and experiences that revolve around discrimination and hatred. For this reason, Gay (2000) encourages educators to address the issues straight on rather than to shy away from classroom discussions and analysis that may be uncomfortable. Erickson (1997) indicates that when issues of race, sexism, and class privilege go unaddressed, students, particularly minority students, understand the silence as a denial that experiences of oppression exist. This silence further perpetuates unfair and unequal power dynamics within the
school community. Discussions such as those revolving around issues of race, class, and oppression can allow for a construction of knowledge that not only builds on personal experiences, but that also allows pupils to make connections among themselves. According to Tu et al. (2007), “when children fit their previous experiences with their new learning experiences about different cultures, they learn to appreciate all people’s uniqueness and similarities”, therefore reducing personal prejudices (p. 18) Gay (2000) also supports this idea signifying that educators should use elements of students prior knowledge and culture to help them develop the skills that they may need to live an “alternative lifestyle” or a life that is not dictated by the dominant narrative.

A particularly helpful way in which educators can ensure the creation and maintenance of a culturally inclusive classroom is through the consistent use of the following techniques: completing self-assessments that determine how much previous knowledge is known about the cultural backgrounds of self and students, use a variety of culturally responsive methods and materials in the classroom, create a classroom environment that is welcoming and understanding of all students and their cultures, establish interactive classroom learning environments, and use ongoing and culturally aware assessments to map students’ education (Brown, 2007).

While there is no one way in which to be a culturally responsive teacher, Gay (2000) indicates that there are specific characteristics as to what culturally responsive teaching should look like. Gay (2000) believes that critically responsive teaching should be validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory. She defines culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 29). With this definition in mind, she recommends
that educators teach “to and through” the strengths of students, highlighting and affirming their
capabilities while also holding students responsible for their learning as well as the learning of
their peers. Culturally responsive teaching should also be multidimensional and permeate not
only curriculum, but classroom environment, learning context, pedagogical practices,
performance assessments, and relationships as well (Gay, 2000). In order for teaching practices
to be empowering, teachers should allow students to become an integral part of the decision-
making process (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Students should also be given the opportunity to use
their own personal and cultural knowledge to teach their peers and educators (Gay, 2000). By
providing students opportunities to be in control, educators can begin to dismantle the oppressive
structures of power that are often found within a traditional classroom. This deconstruction of
power relationships will not only allow students to feel more valuable, but it will also allow them
to understand that there is not one single version of “truth” but that many outside factors
contribute to the way that individuals think and behave. Along the same vein of empowerment is
the idea of a transformative education. According to Banks, for an education to be considered
transformative, it must help “students to develop the knowledge, skills, and values needed to
become social critics who can make reflective decisions and implement their decisions in
effective personal, social, political, and economic action” (Gay, 2000). As students begin to gain
these skills and characteristics, they will be able to critically analyze the world around them,
therefor not only transforming the way that they think, but in turn allowing them to make
changes within their lives and communities.

*Culturally Sensitive Classroom Environment*

Just as important as a teacher’s ability to make connections, understand knowledge
construction, affirm students’ cultural identities, and offer students opportunities to experience
perspectives other than their own, is the influence that the physical classroom environment has on students’ educational experiences. Stomfay-Stintz and Hintz (1995) emphasize the role of the classroom environment on students learning, stating that a “peaceable classroom has a strong impact upon the development of attitudes about self and others and the skills children can learn for coexistence in groups” (p. 5). Again, there are many ways in which a culturally responsive classroom can be fostered, however there are some common characteristics that most multicultural environments appear to share. It is important for the media and print within a classroom to reflect the demographics of the students in attendance. Consequently, multicultural classrooms should effectively display materials that reflect “a wide variety of age, gender, time, place, social class, and positional diversity within and across ethnic groups” (Gay, 2002, p.108).

Although not as frequently discussed, multicultural education spans not only cultural, linguistic, racial, and ethnic diversity, but it also encompasses difference in age, gender, and ability. The provision of multicultural literature can be used as “a medium to discuss multicultural issues” as well as to “challeng[e] racism in school, and validat[e] diverse students’ cultural experiences” (Sarraj, Bene, Li, & Burley, 2015, p. 41). A culturally sensitive classroom should reflect students’ diversity not only to connect students with their own backgrounds, but also to expose them to an array of perspectives and ways of thinking.

In addition to the provision of culturally sensitive print and media, it is important for multicultural educators to examine their formal curriculum to “determine the multicultural strengths and weaknesses of curriculum designs and instructional materials [in order to] make the changes necessary to improve their overall quality” (Gay, 2002, p.108). Multicultural educators need to ensure that their curriculum is relatable and holds personal relevance to the students (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). Erickson (1997) indicates that multicultural curriculum
should reflect the everyday experiences and cultural practices of the students and teachers in an authentic manner that does not overgeneralize the life choices of others. One way in which to ensure that this generalization does not occur is through the emphasizing of the “variability of culture” and the constant change of culture and social communities (Erickson, 1997, p. 47). When developing relevant curriculum, educators also must be wary of emphasizing only the visible aspects of culture, (holidays, celebrations, cultural icons), and ignoring the less visible and more implicit features (Erickson, 1997).

Through the use of “examples, data, and information from a variety of cultures and groups”, culturally responsive educators can address the content integration discussed by Banks (1993b, p. 25). However, to extend the positive effects of culturally responsive curriculum, Gay (2000) specifies that multicultural curriculum should teach “ethnic identity development, citizenship skills for pluralistic societies, knowledge of ethnic and cultural diversity, and cross-cultural interactional competence” (p. 28). These dimensions of achievement can better prepare students for not only academic success, but for their future experiences in a diverse society.

*Multicultural Education as a Tool for Peace*

The advantages of incorporating multicultural education into the formal education setting are numerous. While most educators acknowledge the larger goal of multicultural education, (to provide all students with the equal opportunity to become a successful learner), the core values and characteristics that develop throughout this learning process are often overlooked. While research does show that socioculturally centered teaching increases academic achievement in students, it can also offer students intellectual and psychological benefits as well (Gay, 2000). Multicultural education provides the opportunity for both students and educators to develop a
certain level of intercultural adeptness through which they may become a more understanding and culturally aware individual (Clayton, 2003). Erickson (1997) discusses multicultural educational as an opportunity to challenge the dominate narrative and to be “counter-hegemonic” (p. 48), therefor allowing students to develop the skills needed to critically analyze and challenge the dominant narrative.

A classroom that infuses multicultural ideals into the curriculum, pedagogy, and classroom environment not only exposes students to the idea that there are multiple perspectives, but also forces them to gain a better understanding of their own culture as well (Clayton, 2003). Education that is routed in multicultural development can also lead students to be active community members invested in concepts and practices of social justice. Gay (2000) suggests that one of the most substantial benefits of culturally pluralistic education is that it produces in students “the creative ability to approach problem-solving activities with a built-in repertoire of bicultural perspectives” (p.27).

The five main postulates of current peace education as described by Harris (2004), (an explanation of the origin of violence, the provision of alternatives to violence, an insight into the different forms of violence, a description of peace that is dependent on specific context, and conflict as a continual presence) encompass fully the essence of not only explaining violence and peace to students, but also providing them with tools to combat this growing and changing force of oppression. Through this form of education, students have the opportunity to learn about the “othering” of individuals who may be different and the harm that this negative positioning can cause (Harris, 2004). It is important that when examining a very relevant topic such as “othering” and violence, that students are provided both the knowledge and the skills needed to combat and navigate instances that they will encounter in their day to day lives. A
comprehensive peace education describes the ways in which violence can appear to and affect individuals as well (racism, discrimination, structural). Just as important as learning about and accepting the differences of others is the ability for students to understand that depending on the individual, the context of his/her life, and differing cultural societies, peace may appear differently to everyone (Harris, 2004). “Peace” cannot be seen as a blanket ideal, but is instead a personalized concept based on beliefs, culture, and prior/current life experiences. Finally, a very important concept of peace education is that conflict is always present and is necessary for growth, change, and development to occur. A proper peace education program teaches this along with the skills and characteristics necessary to peacefully address and overcome this conflict.

Multicultural education has the ability to not only allow students to become more critical thinkers, but also to develop characteristics and traits such as empathy, cultural awareness and understanding, and conflict resolution. Through the acquisition of traits such as these, culturally responsive educators are “promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence” (Fountain, 1999, p. 1). This prepares students to become advocates for peace. It is in this way that multicultural education is a form of peace education. Multicultural education is an imperative part of creating peace within a multicultural community (Mostafazadeh, Keshtiaray, & Ghulizadeh, 2015). The UNICEF definition of peace education refers to the development of tolerance, acceptance, conflict-resolution skills, and other characteristics that help build the environment need for peace (Fountain, 1999). Through the creation of culturally sensitive classroom environments, and the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogical practices and curriculum, multicultural education prepares students to become active global citizens and amplifiers of peace and social justice.
Summary

While implementing culturally responsive curriculum into the classroom is very important, without the proper mindset, pedagogical practices, and understanding of students, teachers will not be able to create a successful and transformative multicultural environment. Just as important as the proper support for teachers and students, are the primary years of a child’s life. This window of time during early childhood development is shown to be influential to both the academic and social future of students. For this reason, it is important for educators to use this crucial time of growth and development to instill values and ideals of peace within their students. I hope to help early childhood educators to accomplish this through the development of a multicultural curriculum that highlights peace building skills.
CHAPTER III
THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENTS

Description of the Project

As a preschool teacher interested in teaching my students how to peacefully navigate diversity, it did not take me long to realize that there are limited materials and lesson plans readily available for early childhood educators on this topic. Because of this, I chose to develop my own curriculum that would be easily accessible for educators and easily implemented in any type of classroom setting. The curriculum that I have created consists of six individual lesson plans that can be used on their own, or as a series to best fit the needs of teachers and their students. Five of the lessons revolve around providing students with the opportunity to acquire and refine peacebuilding skills and characteristics such as cultural awareness and understanding, empathy, identifying and managing emotions, cooperation, and conflict resolution. The final lesson serves as a fun and engaging informal assessment of student comprehension. While the lessons can be used individually to help students work on a specific skill, I feel that it is most productive to use the materials in a specific order, as a series of lessons that will allow each lesson to build upon the progress of the last. I recommend that the lessons plans be implemented in the following order: Homes Around The World, The Very Emotional Day, Help Others To Feel Better, Hands Are Not For Hitting, Box and Ball, and Class Mural. This specific order was chosen in the hopes of optimizing students’ comprehension and application of the peacebuilding skills.

Homes Around The World is a lesson that was created with the objective of developing cultural awareness and understanding within early childhood students. This objective can be reached through exposure to diversity and culturally relevant class discussions. Once students have begun to understand that there are differences in the ways that people live and think, they
may be able to begin to understand that students’ backgrounds can influence their emotional responses to different situations. Because of this, I felt that it would benefit the students to begin learning how to identify and manage their emotions. For this reason, the second lesson in this series is The Very Emotional Day, which uses music and imagery to allow students to begin naming their own emotions, as well as the emotions exhibited by their peers. A secondary goal of this lesson is to provide students with strategies that they can employ to safely, effectively, and peacefully control their emotions. After students have learned to identify and manage their own emotions, the natural progression of development would be for them to begin relating to the feelings of others. The third lesson that I have chosen to create focuses on developing a sense of empathy within students. This lesson, Help Others To Feel Better, requires students to imagine themselves in the experiences of others and to examine the ways in which they can assist their peers who may be experiencing emotional distress. The acquisition of conflict resolution skills cannot occur until students have learned to be empathetic. Empathy is crucial in understanding and controlling a tense and emotionally stressful situation. Because of this, the lesson plan that follows Help Others To Feel Better, not only emphasizes being empathetic towards others, but also allows students to use this skill to begin peacefully resolving conflict. Hands Are Not For Hitting, is a lesson plan that teaches students strategies that they can employ to peacefully resolve conflict. Once students have the ability to work through issues and differences, I believe that they are fully ready to apply their newly developed peacebuilding skills to work towards a common goal. The fifth lesson in this series designed to implement peacebuilding skills, Box and Ball, focuses on developing and refining students’ cooperative skills. Box and Ball, provides students with a fun, interactive way to employ all of the techniques that they have learned to successfully work as one entity. The final lesson plan, Class Mural, allows students to express
themselves in a fun and creative way, while also reaffirming the skills and traits that they have learned throughout the series.

My goal in the development of this curriculum is for students to learn how to navigate diversity and how to address conflict and injustice in a rational and peaceful manner. The peacebuilding skills that I chose to highlight were all skills that I thought could not only be developmentally appropriately learned, but that were also crucial to students understanding of difference, conflict, violence, and peace. These skills and characteristics, cultural awareness and understanding, identifying and managing emotions, empathy, conflict resolution, and cooperation, are all traits that are necessary for students to become global citizens, social justice advocates, and promoters of peace.

**Development of the Project**

The development of this curriculum occurred in three stages: research, creation, and organization. In order to begin developing curriculum, I first had to conduct research into the fields of peace education, multicultural education, early childhood education, and early childhood development. While conducting this research, I was challenged with the task of identifying the skills and traits that I thought were most important for students to learn. This was a difficult task to achieve because I had to modify many abstract ideas into tangible concepts that could be manifested into physical lesson plans. I also had to take age appropriateness into consideration when deciding which traits I thought to be most essential. To ensure that my materials would be age appropriate, I based my decisions upon both the California Preschool Learning Foundations, as well as my own five years of experience working in early childhood education. As I identified skills and characteristics that I thought would benefit young students, I compared them to the California Preschool Learning Foundations to see if they would align with
any of the standards provided. I also examined these peacebuilding characteristics in comparison to previous lessons that I had completed in my own multicultural early childhood classroom.

The second phase in the development of my curriculum, involved creating the individual lesson plans. During this developmental stage, I used research, prior knowledge, and advice from my colleagues to imagine and create interactive and engaging lessons that are also developmentally appropriate as well as designed in such a way that the outcomes and objectives could realistically be reached. Some considerations that I had to take into account while developing my lessons were: the age of the students, the comprehension levels of the students, the attention span of the targeted age group, and the capabilities and understanding of the teachers involved.

When deciding where to start in the development of my lesson plans, I realized that I would first need some way to not only grab students’ attention, but to also gather them and calm their bodies so that they would be attentive and interested in the information that the teacher has to share. From experience, I have found that the best way to do this is through the use of a book. After reviewing the peacebuilding skills and traits that I had chosen to work with, I began a search for an attention-grabbing book (for each specific characteristic) that would not only hook students, but that was also related to the student outcomes. It was after I had chosen the books for each skill or characteristic that I began to expand each lesson individually. Due to my experiences in early childhood education and with curriculum development, developing activities for each lesson plan was something that came relatively easily to me. For each lesson, I spent a small amount of time scouring the internet to see what type of methods or activities other early childhood educators had used before me. I then analyzed the benefits and miss opportunities that each activity provided. Next I had to take into consideration what the students in my target age
range would be able to accomplish. Based on all of these aspects, I finally created a developmentally appropriate, interactive activity that I thought could best meet the needs of early childhood students while also reaching my desired outcomes.

The part of this developmental process that I struggled with the most was identifying and creating effective forms of informal assessment. To ensure that the assessments that I created were appropriate for each lesson, I conducted research to examine the different implementations and types of informal assessments typically used in early childhood classrooms and also consulted with other early childhood educators in my field. With the support and insight of my colleagues, I developed assessments that I believe will provide educators with a clear understanding of their students’ comprehension of the materials.

The final stage of development for this curriculum encompassed an organization of my thoughts, goals, and materials. After identifying and fully developing my lesson plans, I next had to examine how these materials should be implemented. During this organizational stage I had to consider which skills and characteristics required prior knowledge and experiences to understand, and which of the objectives could be achieved on their own. In the end, I created and organized six lesson plans that I thought could build upon one another to extend students’ knowledge and understanding of peacebuilding.

The Project

The rest of Chapter III consists of the curriculum that I developed for early childhood educators with the hopes of instilling peacebuilding skills within students, age three to five.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Title of Lesson:</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homes Around The World</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Lesson Objective/Outcome:</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>- Expose students to cultural diversity and introduce the idea of similarities and differences throughout the human population.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Rationale for Lesson Content</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California Preschool Learning Foundations:</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1 (48 months) Seek to understand people’s feelings and behavior; notice diversity in human characteristics; and are interested in how people are similar and different.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1 (60 months) Begin to comprehend the mental and psychological reasons people act as they do and how they contribute to differences between people.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Lesson Steps and Procedures :</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>- When students come to circle time the teacher should ask them to share about their homes (what their home looks like, who lives in their home with them, what city they live in, etc.)</td>
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<td>- Once students have been given the opportunity to share, the teacher should tell them that they are going to read a book about the different types of homes that people live in around the world. The students should be asked to look for similarities and differences between the homes that they see in the story and their own homes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Read the book <em>Homes Around the World</em> to the students. While reading the book aloud, the teacher should be sure to prompt student participation by pointing out similarities/differences that he/she may see. The teacher should also draw students’ attention to the images of the individuals in the book. This can provide an important teachable moment around diversity and acceptance.</td>
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<td>- Upon finishing the book, the teacher should facilitate a discussion in which the students have the opportunity to describe what they saw in the book. The conversation should also revolve around respect and being accepting of differences.</td>
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<th><strong>Other activities/extensions:</strong></th>
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<td>- Students should be given the opportunity to create their own homes. Methods and materials can vary according to student/teacher preference. One recommendation would be to allow students to build their homes out of popsicle sticks (by gluing them flat against a piece of paper). Students should then be given the opportunity to color/decorate their homes according to their personal experiences. The teacher should also encourage the students to draw their families within/around the home. Teacher assistance may be needed.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Teacher Resources:</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>- <em>Homes Around the World</em> by (Mike Jackson)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Art and Craft supplies: paper, crayons, markers, glue, popsicle sticks</td>
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</table>
**Student Resources:**
- None

**Evaluation/Assessment**
- An informal assessment based on participation and individual student knowledge will be made. The students should be asked to share the homes that they created with the class. As they are describing their home to their peers the teacher should take note of the key phases that the students use, indicating any similarities/differences between the homes that they have developed and the homes of others.
Title of Lesson: The Very Emotional Day

Lesson Objective/Outcome:
- Students should be able to not only identify their emotions, but also to have numerous healthy coping mechanisms to manage them.

Rationale for Lesson Content

California Preschool Learning Foundations:
- 2.1 (48 months) Need adult guidance in managing their attention, feelings, and impulses and show some effort at self-control.
- 2.1 (60 months) Regulate their attention, thoughts, feelings, and impulses more consistently, although adult guidance is sometimes necessary.

Lesson Steps and Procedures:
- Begin the lesson by singing the song “If Your Happy and You Know It” with the students. While singing about each emotion be sure to demonstrate physical actions that may accompany each emotion (ex. happy - smile and clap your hands, angry - stomp your feet, sad - frown, scared - cover your face). Students should be allowed to stand, dance, and move during this activity.
- Upon completion of the song, students should be asked to sit around the teacher for “circle time”. The teacher should introduce the next activity by telling students that they are going to learn about emotions and feelings. The teacher should activate prior knowledge by asking students to share about a time that they felt happy, sad, mad, etc. Students should be reminded of any classroom rules that apply (listening ears, only one person sharing at a time, etc.)
- When students have finished sharing read the book The Way I Feel aloud to the students. While reading the book aloud, the teacher should be sure to prompt student participation by asking them about why the children in the book feel the way that they do. The teacher should also draw students’ attention to the facial expressions of the individuals in the book. This can provide students with a physical depiction of emotions that they may have felt before. It also will help students to understand what the expressions that their peers may have when feeling these specific emotions.
- When finished with the book, the teacher should facilitate a discussion that reflects upon the different emotions presented in the book, and how individuals look when they feel this way. One way to check comprehension would be to ask the students to show their “mad” face (can also be done with the other emotions). Through this visual representation, the teacher can also point out that not everyone has the same visual representations of a specific emotion.

Other activities/extensions:
- The goal of this extension activity is to provide students with healthy, peaceful ways of managing their emotions.
- In this activity the following emotions will be covered: happy, sad, angry, frustrated, scared, and excited.
- Each emotion should be reviewed individually with the students. Once they demonstrate an understanding of the emotion, the teacher should then ask students to describe some things that make them feel that way. If students are very young, it may be helpful for the teacher to provide some examples and to ask students how those scenarios would make them feel (ex. how would you feel if another student took your toy without asking?).
- After identifying instances in which students may experience the specific emotions the teacher should have the class collectively identify ways in which they can handle these emotions. Below are some of the recommendations that I have for each emotion:
  - **HAPPY:** tell a friend, draw a picture, hug a friend (after asking them if its ok), give someone a thumbs up, laugh
  - **SAD:** give yourself some space (take a minute to be by yourself), hug a stuffed animal, read a happy story
  - **EXCITED:** high five a friend (again ask first), draw a picture of what you are excited about, share with a friend, dance
  - **SCARED:** find a friend to sit with, give a stuffed animal a hug, tell a teacher
  - **ANGRY:** give yourself some space, take ten deep breaths, use your words to explain why you are upset, squeeze some playdough
  - **FRUSTRATED:** take a deep breath, ask a friend or the teacher for help, count to 10 and try again
- The teacher should then create a visual chart of these emotional outlets that students can look at to remind themselves of how to handle their emotions.

**Teacher Resources:**
- *How I Feel* by Janan Cain
- Sorting assessment game (provided)
- Glue
- Colored Construction Paper

**Student Resources:**
- None

**Evaluation/Assessment**
- Students should complete the emotions sorting game provided with this lesson plan. The students should be given the opportunity to complete the game with a partner or in a small group to practice. Once the group has completed the game, students should be asked to raise their hands. The teacher should then randomly select an emotion card/image and ask each student (as an individual) to properly match the image to its named emotion. If unsuccessful on the first attempt, the student should be given a new image/card and asked to try again. The teacher should walk around with a checklist of the students’ names to mark off students who completed the task and those who may need further support.
How Do You Feel?

**Teacher Instructions:** Cut out the pictures and emotions (words) below. Designate each emotion a specific color (according to the colored construction paper that you have available). Using glue attach the colored construction paper to the back of the pictures from the matching emotion group leaving a ¼ in. border around each picture. Place the emotion descriptors on a flat surface and spread the pictures out.

A fun alteration of this activity would be to take a picture of your students themselves demonstrating these emotions and replace the pictures provided with those images.

**Student Directions:** Look at each picture and identify the emotion that the person is feeling. Place the pictures into groups by matching them to the emotions that they match. Match the picture to the emotions they describe.
HAPPY
ANGRY
SAD
SCARED
**Title of Lesson:**
Help Others to Feel Better

**Lesson Objective/Outcome:**
- Students will begin to be able to recognize other individuals’ emotions and respond in an empathetic manner.

**Rationale for Lesson Content**
California Preschool Learning Foundations:
- 4.1 (48 months) Demonstrate concern for the needs of others and people in distress.
- 4.1 (60 months) Respond to another’s distress and needs with sympathetic caring and are more likely to assist.

**Lesson Steps and Procedures:**
- The teacher should have the students gather into a group for “circle time”. Introduce the book *Red: A Crayon’s Story* to class by naming the author and the illustrator. Read the book aloud to the students. While reading the book aloud, the teacher should be sure to prompt student participation by asking them why they think that the red crayon can only color in blue and how they think that the crayon feels when the other crayons make specific comments.
- When finished with the book, the teacher should facilitate a discussion that reflects upon the different emotions that the crayon in the book may have felt. The teacher should also specifically point out how the crayon felt when he realized that he could color blue. This topic can allow the teacher to transition into a conversation about how all individuals are different and have their own strengths and weaknesses.

**Other activities/extensions:**
- The teacher should allow the students the opportunity to participate in a role playing activity. This activity will allow the students to practice recognizing a child who is upset and helping the child feel better. Before beginning the activity the teacher should ask the students what makes them feel better when they are sad or upset (the teacher can also provide the group with suggestions such as: receiving a hug, holding a stuffed animal, taking a deep breath, singing a song, etc.). After hearing several suggestions the teacher should ask one student to volunteer to act upset. The teacher should then have the remaining students take turns comforting the upset student using the ideas that the group came up with.
- Throughout the rest of the day/week the teacher should use teachable moments within the regular school day to emphasize being empathetic and helping other students through the techniques practiced.

**Teacher Resources:**
- *Red: A Crayon’s Story* by Michael Hall

**Student Resources:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation/Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Observations of in-class interactions can serve as an informal assessment. The teacher should attempt to record anecdotal evidence of students’ interactions with each other related to “helping others feel better”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Target Group: An early childhood classroom with students ages 3-5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Lesson:</th>
<th>Hands Are Not For Hitting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Objective/Outcome:</td>
<td>Students will learn and practice various skills that will help them navigate conflict in an empathetic and peaceful manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for Lesson Content</td>
<td>California Preschool Learning Foundations:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 2.3 Seek assistance in resolving peer conflict, especially when disagreements have escalated into physical aggression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 2.3 Negotiate with each other, seeking adult assistance when needed, and increasingly use words to respond to conflict. Disagreements may be expressed with verbal taunting in addition to physical aggression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Steps and Procedures:</td>
<td>The teacher should ask the students to sit around the teacher for “circle time”. The teacher should introduce the next activity by telling students that they are going to read a book called <em>Hands Are Not For Hitting</em>. The teacher should activate prior knowledge by asking students what they use their hands for. Students should be reminded of any classroom rules that apply to circle time (listening ears, only one person sharing at a time, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The teacher should then read the book <em>Hands Are Not For Hitting</em> aloud to the students. While reading the book aloud, the teacher should be sure to prompt student participation by asking them questions the events unfolding in the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- When finished with the book, the teacher should facilitate a discussion that reflects upon the ways that students use their bodies. During this discussion the teacher should be sure to emphasize that students should never use their bodies to harm other individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other activities/extensions:</td>
<td>Reflecting on conversations from the previous lessons on identifying and managing emotions, empathy, and cooperation the teacher and the students should generate some ideas of the best way to handle conflict within the classroom. This brainstorming session should include phrases that the students can use to deescalate tense situations and to peacefully resolve conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using small strips of paper (roughly 2”x8”; can be cut from normal construction paper) the teacher should write the ideas that were generated along with some of the following phrases: I need some space, I don’t like it when…, please stop, I need help with…., get a teacher, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | The teacher should review the strips with the students and after every piece of paper, using glue, the students should have the opportunity to glue the links together to create
a chain. It should be emphasized that by adding a piece of paper to the chain, each student is agreeing to try and use these conflict resolution skills within the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Resources:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- <em>Hands Are Not For Hitting</em> by Martine Agassi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Glue (or tape)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Writing utensil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Colored Construction Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Scissors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Resources:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation/Assessment (Include Rubric)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Educators can use the chart provided or a similar record keeping method to keep anecdotal records that demonstrate the students’ emotional responses and their ability to implement the coping mechanisms that they have learned. These actions/instances should be recorded over a week and students should be given a score 1-3 depending on the appropriateness of their use of the emotional strategies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment Chart: Emotions

**Scale:**
3 = excellent  
2 = appropriate/accurate  
1 = inappropriate/inaccurate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of student</th>
<th>Emotional Situation (description)</th>
<th>Demonstrates Understanding of Coping Strategy</th>
<th>Response:</th>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>Sad</th>
<th>Angry</th>
<th>Scared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>Ex. Another child approached Lily and grabbed the doll she was playing with out of her hand.</td>
<td>Lily responded by saying “I was working with that” and offering to share the toy when she was finished.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Ex. Matthew asked another child to share a toy and the child said no.</td>
<td>Matthew then hit the child.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Target Group: An early childhood classroom with students ages 3-5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Lesson:</th>
<th>Box and Ball</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Objective/Outcome:</td>
<td>- Students will begin to learn the importance of working together with their peers to achieve goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rationale for Lesson Content**

California Preschool Learning Foundations:

- 2.1 (48 months) Interact easily with peers in shared activities that occasionally become cooperative efforts.
- 2.1 (60 months) More actively and intentionally cooperate with each other.

**Lesson Steps and Procedures:**

- The teacher should gather the students together for “circle time”. Once students are grouped together, the teacher should introduce the word cooperation (writing it out so that the students can see the word) and ask the students if they know what that word means. After a discussion around the definition of the word the teacher should tell the students that they are going to play a game that will require them to work together.
- The teacher should introduce the game as Box and Ball but should tell the students that before they can play the game they need to go over some guidelines that will keep students happy and safe. The following are the guidelines that the teacher should introduce: No put-downs, No whining, No hurtful words (use encouraging words), No bossing, No quitting
- Once the students all agree to the guidelines the teacher should display the ball and the box to the students and inform them that the purpose of the game to try and keep the ball balanced in the middle of the box. The students will have to work together in order to achieve this goal.
- The teacher should then have the students all stand up and hold a side of the box. The teacher should then roll the ball into the box and begin the activity. After achieving a balanced box and ball three times the teacher should have students return to “circle time” to discuss the activity.
- During the group discussion the teacher should ask the following questions: Did you have fun? What was the hardest part of this activity? What do you think would have made the activity easier? Do you think that you would have been able to complete the activity on your own?

**Other activities/extensions:**

- None

**Teacher Resources:**

- Chart paper with the word cooperation printed on it
- Chart paper with the guidelines written on it
- A large box 5’x 4’x3’’ (or something similar)
- A small rubber blow up ball

**Student Resources:**
- None

**Evaluation/Assessment**
- Observations of the activity can serve as an informal assessment. Teachers should look for and keep track of the following concepts/interactions for each student: participation, expression of needs/wants (including expression of emotions if feeling frustrated, upset, etc.), ability to listen to peer and teacher needs, and attempt to compromise with others in the case of disagreements.
Target Group: An early childhood classroom with students ages 3-5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Lesson:</th>
<th>Class Mural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Objective/Outcome:</td>
<td>Students should work together to create a mural through which they demonstrate a collective understanding of the outcomes of the previous lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for Lesson Content</td>
<td>By this lesson students should be able to understand cultural differences, identify and manage emotions, demonstrate empathy, employ conflict resolution skills, and work collaboratively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Steps and Procedures :</td>
<td>When students come to circle time the teacher should review with them all of the major points of each lesson that they have completed throughout the series.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once a discussion has occurred, the teacher should tell the students that as a class, they are going to create an art project that will represent all of their hard work and all of the learning that took place through the implementation of these lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher should introduce the idea of a mural (if this has not already been done), showing the students examples of other murals that have been created (the teacher can easily google murals for resources). The teacher should then explain to the students that they are going to create a classroom mural using crayons, markers, magazines, other art tools, and their imaginations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher should have a large piece of butcher paper prepared for the students to create their mural on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher should give the students the freedom to draw, paint, or cut out images that represent the emotions that they have learned about, as well as the coping mechanisms that they have mastered.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As students continue adding their pieces to the murals the teacher should continually remind the students that everyone’s work is valid and important and should be respected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When the mural has been completed, students should be given the opportunity to present and explain the pieces of the mural that they contributed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Other activities/extensions: | Once completed this mural can be hung inside the room as a reminder for students of how to peacefully handle their emotions, or it can be displayed in a hallway as a way for the students to share their new knowledge with others. |

| Teacher Resources: | Art and Craft supplies: paper, crayons, markers, paint, glue, scissors, magazines, newspapers, paintbrushes, colored pencils, etc. |
|                   | A large blank piece of butcher paper |

| Student Resources: |
- None

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation/Assessment (Included Rubric)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- This entire mural making activity serves as a class evaluation of students understanding of the skills that they have developed and mastered.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

As part of the society of violence and discrimination that inhabits the United States, it is important for students to be provided with educational experiences that will prepare them to successfully and peacefully navigate the diversity that exists not only within the country, but also on a global scale. It is through the use of multicultural education (a form of peace education) that students can begin to learn the necessary skills and characteristics needed to thrive in a climate of diversity. While peace education has generally been used with older students in conflict affected areas, there is a tremendous amount of untapped potential that lies in the implementation of this form of education within an early childhood setting as a preventative measure against violence and injustice. Research has shown how critical the first six years of a student’s educational experiences are to their overall life experiences educationally, as well as physically, mentally, and emotionally. For this reason, it is important for students to become accustomed to and accepting of diversity and different ways of living and thinking, as early as possible.

I developed this field project with my students and experiences as an early childhood educator in mind. As a preschool teacher of many years, I have come to realize the lack of educational materials available to early childhood educators that incorporate the ideals and concepts of a comprehensive peace and multicultural education. With this in mind, I decided to develop my own curriculum for early childhood educators that is designed to teach young students important peacebuilding skills and characteristics. My goal in creating this curriculum was to not only provide educators with solid, developmentally appropriate materials, but also through implementation, to prepare students to navigate diversity in a peaceful and effective manner. The outcomes of each lesson reflect the traits and characteristics that I feel are necessary
for students to thrive in a country of rapidly growing diversity. Upon implementation of this curriculum, it is my desire that students will have developed a sense of cultural awareness and understanding along with a more empathetic view of the world and the individuals inhabiting this Earth. It is also my wish that students will have gained the skills necessary to identify and manage their emotions, work collaboratively with others, and resolve conflict in an appropriate and peaceful manner.

On a larger scale, I hope that the skills that are developed on an individual level expand and extend beyond the personal to a larger societal and even global scale. The curriculum that I have developed has the potential to widen students’ horizons and expand their frames of reference when it comes to important topics such as race, violence, and peace. This series of lesson plans should be seen as one method of working towards not only a more positive classroom and school environment, but also towards a more understanding, tolerant, and accepting society.

**Recommendations**

Although the curriculum that I have created can be used as stand-alone lessons to meet the needs of specific students, it is my suggestion that this curriculum be used in the order provided, as a series of lessons. Because the lessons build upon one another, implementing this curriculum as a whole unit will increase the likelihood of students’ cognitive development and understanding of peace and peacebuilding.

The materials I have provided can be used in any educational setting, regardless of the racial or ethnic make-up of the community. However, because the goal of many of the lessons is to expose students to difference and diversity, these materials will be most impactful in classrooms where diversity is evident.
Before the implementation of these materials occurs, I recommend that educators work to first develop an environment of cultural inclusivity and acceptance within their classrooms. An appropriate environment for the implementation of multicultural curricula should provide a space for candid and meaningful discussions around difficult topics such as race, discriminations, etc. As described in the literature review, a teacher can create this type of environment through the development of a culturally sensitive classroom environment and through the use of culturally responsive teaching practices.

Considerations/Limitations

While the curriculum provided was created to be developmentally appropriate for students’ age three to five, these materials could be adjusted to meet the developmental needs of older students as well. Students’ individual intellectual and developmental needs should be taken into consideration during the implementation process. It is very important for teachers to understand the learning styles and needs of their students when preparing curriculum for their classroom.

A second consideration to be made is the context of the creation of these materials. I developed this curriculum in the context of the United States, a country that, while affected by institutional racism and class and ethnic discrimination, would not be considered a conflict affected area. It was my hope that these lessons could be used as a preventative measure against violence and injustice, however if these materials are used in a conflict affected area, where tensions are high and the threat of violence is overwhelming, these materials could negatively affect students if not properly adjusted. Again, I stress the importance of educators knowing about their students’ lives outside of the educational setting. This is the only way for educators to properly prepare their lessons to meet the individual needs of their students.
When initiating this project, it was my hope to implement the curriculum into my own personal classroom upon completion. However, due to the time constraints of this project, I was unable to do this. The natural progression of the development of this project would be personal implementation in order to analyze and assess the strengths, weaknesses, and developmentally appropriateness of the materials, with the hopes of revising the curriculum to ensure its effectiveness. Since this was not possible, it should be noted that I have not personally seen the outcomes of the lessons be reached, however, during the development process of my curriculum, I did consult with numerous early childhood educators (some who focus on multicultural education) to ensure that the materials would be as applicable and effective as possible.

A final curricular aspect to consider before implementation is the process by which I identified which peacebuilding skills and characteristics to include within my lessons. After conducting research into the fields of early childhood, multicultural, and peace education, I developed a list of peacebuilding traits and skills that I felt were both appropriate to the developmental growth of early childhood students and critical for an environment of peace and understanding. This list consisted of the skills and characteristic that were presented throughout this paper and that were woven into the curriculum that I developed. It is important to note that while I did have a small check list of specific characteristics that I used to guide my decision of which peace building skills to choose (developmentally appropriate, tangible ideas, beneficial for navigating diversity) the choice was ultimately a personal one. There are many other traits and characteristics of peacebuilding that would be beneficial for students to learn and the five that I presented are a small fraction of all of the possibilities. It is my hope to one day extend this series of lesson plans by drawing on many of the peacebuilding skills and characteristics that I was forced to overlook due to time constraints.
Personal Implications and Future Curricular Development

The process of researching, developing, and organizing my own multicultural curriculum came with both moments of inspiration and moments of challenge. Through my years of experience as an early child educator I have become familiar with curriculum development, however, until now I have not had the opportunity to create a comprehensive multicultural curriculum that would not only address state and national standards, but that would also acknowledge the importance of educating students with skills that they will need to navigate the world outside of the traditional classroom setting. Through this experience I was able to expand my knowledge of multicultural education and peace education. The new ideas and perspectives that I have gained will allow me to improve and diversify my pedagogical teaching practices within the classroom.

In the future, I hope to solidify and further develop lesson plans that encourage the development of peace building skills. Through implementation in my own classroom, I plan to refine the lessons that I have already created. I also expect to develop numerous lessons that will revolve around other important peace building skills such as tolerance, flexibility, and a thorough understanding of the concepts of violence and peace. It is my aspiration to provide early childhood educators with a curriculum that is comprehensive, developmentally appropriate, and culturally inclusive, and I plan to continue working towards the achievement of this goal.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


