

ABOUT CSEE

The Council for Spiritual and Ethical Education supports the moral and spiritual development of young people through offering resources and educational opportunities to elementary, middle, and secondary schools. See more about our work at www.csee.org

Contact us at:

CSEE Phone: 800.298.4599
P. O. Box 19807 Fax: 678.623.5634
Portland, OR 97280 E-mail: info@csee.org

David Streight
Executive Director
503.679.2584 (direct)
ds@csee.org

Jennifer Aanderud
Assistant Director
jenny@csee.org

Beth Sandlin
Business Manager
bethsandlin@csee.org

John Roberts
Editor
johnr@csee.org

IN THIS ISSUE:

Creating Unity: Exploring Interfaith Dialogue	1
Educating for Character	2
Literature in Review	3
Spiritual Directions	5
CSEE Curriculum Spotlight	6
In the Web	6
Religious Holidays and Observances	7
Programs & Services	10
From the Executive Director	11

CREATING UNITY: EXPLORING INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

BY MICHELE ISRAEL

Building community among different faiths is possible, but not always easy. It becomes harder when miscommunication, misunderstanding, and conflict polarize. One way to unite people is through interfaith dialogue, a proven approach to building bridges among varied faith-based groups.

Describing Interfaith Dialogue

Experts agree that at its best, interfaith dialogue gives people of all ages an opportunity to defuse faith-centered conflict in a supportive and non-threatening environment.

“Interfaith dialogue involves people of different faiths coming together to share something about their faith toward the goal of deepened understanding,” says Maggie Herzig, senior associate at the Public Conversations Project in Watertown, MA.

This kind of constructive exchange “opens the mind to a global perspective, allowing compassion for humankind to take root in the heart,” explains Mary Beth Smith, founder of Faith on Wheels and an eighth-grade religion teacher at Queen of Angels Catholic School in Roswell, GA.

“A community of inquiry composed of members across all walks of faith who share and challenge perceptions, ideals, and beliefs through open dialogue”—that is the definition offered by Manuela Adsuar-Pizzi. She is a teacher/facilitator at Hunter High School in New York, where she leads a seventh-grade ethics-based inquiry program.

Interfaith dialogue is not “a debate,” but an opportunity for “generous listening” that allows people to speak across differences, emphasizes Marcia Kannry, founder of The Dialogue Project in Brooklyn, NY.

Elements of Constructive Exchange

Interfaith dialogue takes on various forms, from panel discussions with religious leaders and community-based conversations to interfaith book clubs. No matter the particular format, interfaith dialogue generally consists of basic elements that ensure constructive exchange:

A compelling invitation, one that sets realistic expectations
Herzig says a carefully constructed invitation is imperative, and should be crafted around the goals participants find compelling, coupled with a format they prefer. “One of the challenges of interfaith dialogue,” she explains, “is that people are often motivated to come when there are serious political conflicts associated with religious differences. If they’re not invited in a careful manner, they may think that they’ll have an opportunity to ‘get into it’ on hot issues in a single session.” Ideally, an invitation to a single session should create a sense of trust among participants, so much so that after a “taste of dialogue,” they will be inclined to attend future sessions.

Voluntary participation

People decide not only to engage voluntarily in interfaith dialogue, they also decide how much they want to share of themselves and in what context.

Effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills

These skills enable people to acknowledge others’ perspectives and experiences while discussing conflict. Participants learn to be conscious of assumptions or attributions and to ask genuine questions that clarify and enlighten. They actively listen, remaining focused on what others are saying without interrupting; they thoughtfully reflect, and respectfully respond. They speak from the “I” (from personal perspectives and experiences), and learn to recognize what Kannry calls

TEN POINTS ABOUT DISCIPLINE AND CLASSROOM CLIMATE

BY DAVID STREIGHT

• **The less we use punishment, the more effective it is**

Curiously, schools that increase the amount of punishment they dole out see a corresponding rise in misbehavior. Schools that have decided to take a different tack in response to misbehavior and use less punishment have fewer disciplinary infractions.

• **The most effective teachers use four positives for every negative**

We cannot respond to all the good things that happen in our schools, and it is important that we respond to most of the negative events (at the same time, however, that we allow students to practice their skills in handling some issues). When students receive lots of appropriate praise from us, our criticism carries more weight when we do apply it.

• **Students do not need to be punished every time they do something wrong**

We, ourselves, do not seem to need punishment every time we hurt others or betray trust; why should we expect that students need otherwise?

• **Punishment is most effective when it is administered immediately; when it is administered fairly; when it is accompanied by an explanation/reminder of why it is being administered**

Even though we tend to believe that “they know what they did wrong,” this is not always the case. An explanation ensures clarity. With younger or less skilled children, it is also helpful to offer an example or two of how they might have more appropriately handled the situation that got them into trouble.

• **Adults are more effective in addressing misbehavior when they are close to the student**

Close can refer to the relationship, of course, but it also refers to physical proximity. Criticism, correction, or—if need be—disciplinary sanctions are more effective when delivered standing close to the student than from across the room.

• **When adults become locked in battle with students, they usually win the short-term “battle,” but they take a step toward losing the long-term “war”**

There are many ways to address misbehavior. Some leave children frustrated and angry. Others diminish misbehavior but also retain dignity and reintegrate the misbehaving student into the “society” of the classroom or the school. Our schools

should have disciplinary goals in which the members of the school community agree on and work continually toward long-term objectives. Do we want only to curtail misbehavior in the easiest (for us) manner possible, or do we wish to curtail misbehavior in the manner that best ensures the student will want to be a contributing member of the school, and larger, society?

• **Classroom climate comes to the extent that we meet children’s needs for autonomy, competence, belonging**

This relates to the preceding point. Positive classroom and school climates result in few instances of misbehavior. Our disciplinary policies and other approaches can foster a sense of belongingness, and autonomy and competence, or they can belittle, demean, and alienate the misbehavior. The former is far better, for all of us.

• **Teaching good behavior is more complicated than teaching numeracy or literacy**

Numbers, letters, equations, and words do not change much between the ages of seven and seventeen, but the people we interact with and the societal pressures upon us do evolve during our school years. Instilling the knowledge and skills of good behavior is an ongoing process. We educators must practice the art of looking deeply into our children’s needs, their actions, and their motives.

• **We will always have misbehavior at school**

Misbehavior offers adults valuable opportunities to teach, and children valuable opportunities to learn. Though we abhor engaging with students in disciplinary situations, the root of the word “discipline” does indeed entail teaching. If we can approach disciplinary situations with this in mind, the result may be more positive interactions in the future. The fact nevertheless remains: we will always have misbehavior at school.

• **Some of the art of classroom management and discipline entails giving up our own needs and trusting in the needs, and growth, of students**

Despite our feelings in certain cases, children are not small machines programmed to be selfish, mean, and troublesome. Children want to belong to a group and to interact with the group positively. If we occasionally give up our “need” to make our point, to teach a student “a lesson,” or to treat all infractions in precisely the same manner, our effectiveness in later disciplinary interactions may be increased. ✨

THREE CUPS OF TEA

Greg Mortensen and David Oliver Relin
NEW YORK: PENGUIN, 2006

BY RICHARD BARBIERI

Rarely does writing a book review seem like a moral act. But even before reading in the list of “how to help” at the end of *Three Cups of Tea* that readers should write a book review for Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble, or a blog, it was clear to me that I owed whatever I could to support Greg Mortensen’s mission.

On one level, telling others about this book is, as it should be, inviting them into a terrific reading experience. *Three Cups* literally has it all: death-defying adventure, exotic locales, global issues, human interest, heroes, villains, love and marriage, and even—so far—a happy ending. Greg Mortensen’s nearly fatal attempt to scale K2, and his discovery of a new life mission, to build schools for Muslim villages in northern Pakistan, is told with drama and elegance by Mortensen and his co-author. The descriptions of people and landscapes, and of physical risks and triumphs, would be engrossing even if they were not accompanied by more moving descriptions of moral struggles and human nobility.

But because the story is far more than one of triumph over challenging terrain, it stands as an exemplar of how dedication can overcome seemingly impossible human obstacles, and how people from different faiths and cultures can unite around a common vision.

Mortensen heard what Muslim villagers long for, and persuaded a wide range of people, from fellow mountaineers and high-tech millionaires to Republican congresswomen and readers of *Parade*, to make those villagers’ dreams their own. In fact, this whirlwind of a man (whose mother-in-law says, “He’s just not one of us. He’s his own species”) calls forth the human in everyone he meets. And in doing so he reveals to his American audience the narrowness of our stereotypes.

We could imagine, for example, that an American seeking to educate Muslim children, and especially girls, would be condemned by conservative mullahs. But to learn that not once, but twice, Shariat courts reversed those condemnations, and even fined one of their perpetrators, is to see Islamic justice in a new light. So too, when Mortensen’s Pakistani bodyguard wakes him to the news, “A village called New York has been bombed,” and the widows of the town in which he finds himself “pressed eggs into the Americans’ hands, begging them to carry these tokens of grief to the faraway sisters they longed to comfort themselves,” we glimpse the hope of a world in which the best of our humanity and the highest values of our faiths might someday overcome the seemingly intractable differences of our time.

As Mortensen puts it, “In times of war, you often hear leaders—Christians, Jewish, and Muslim—saying ‘God is on our side.’ But that isn’t true. In war, God is on the side of the widows, refugees, and orphans.” And in all times, God is on the side of the Greg Mortensens, and on the side of those who support and benefit from their efforts. ❄

Richard Barbieri, CSEE’s veteran book reviewer, is Interim Head of School at Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart in Bethesda, MD.

“hot words,” terms that trigger disputes. Participants use eye contact and other non-verbal cues to indicate that they are listening and attentive. Communication skills can be learned, need to be practiced, and may require training to develop and strengthen.

Good questions

Carefully constructed questions are critical to the purpose and flow of a dialogue. If, for example, the dialogue is designed to reduce stereotyping, foster connection, and build trust and understanding, then a good question is one that invites people to speak from experience rather than just reciting facts. “What practices or rituals do you find most meaningful?” is a better question than “What are the basic beliefs for people of your faith?”

Structured dialogue supported by moderation/facilitation

Moderators/facilitators create structures and guidelines for speaking (at timed intervals), listening, and reflecting. Their other responsibilities include collaborating with participants on communication agreements, maintaining participant focus, making sure people feel safe and respected, ensuring the use of appropriate communication skills, encouraging elaboration or a deeper exchange or the introduction of a new idea, and mediating to help people constructively work through a dispute.

Representative balance

Regardless of the type of dialogue, all faith groups are equally represented. No one should feel isolated or outnumbered.

Ongoing dialogue

Many successful interfaith dialogue programs engage participants more than once. Regular interaction provides the time needed for building community and long-term impact.

Any properly structured dialogue “will enable participants to exercise their communication and listening skills, provide them with the opportunity to broaden their perspectives, and learn about and appreciate people from different faiths,” according to Pam Harris, education and training manager for the American Conference on Diversity in New Brunswick, NJ.

Interfaith Dialogue for Young People: A Program Sampling

A variety of replicable and adaptable interfaith dialogue programs exist, many targeting youth in school and community settings. Those discussed here present a variety of approaches to dialogue, demonstrating the range of possibilities in creatively engaging young people in this type of constructive exchange.

Abraham’s Vision works with Muslim, Jewish, Palestinian, and Israeli communities in the U.S. Its Unity Program is a year-long high school course that invites students to examine the relationship between Muslims and Jews as well as the issues in North American Jewish and Muslim communities. Currently, Al Iman High School (Muslim) in Queens and Abraham Joshua Heschel School (Jewish) in Manhattan are participating in the program.

Faith on Wheels introduces eighth-graders to the Western world’s major religions. This project partners three Georgia religious schools: Queen of Angels Catholic School, The Epstein School (Jewish), and the Sister Clara Mohammed School (Muslim).

The Hunter High School ethics-based inquiry, modeled after Montclair University’s Philosophy for Children, engages seventh-graders in twice-weekly sessions that immerse the children in philosophical and ethical content drawn from stories, dialogues, and games. The teacher helps students weave their impressions together in order to foster effective dialogue on meaningful issues.

The Public Conversations Project guides, trains, and inspires individuals, organizations, and communities to constructively address conflicts relating to values and worldviews.

The Dialogue Project seeks to build trust, compassion, and partnerships among people in New York City who experience tension because of the conflict in the Middle East. It works in communities where Palestinians (both Muslim and Christian), Israelis and Jewish Americans,

CONTINUES ON P. 9

THE IMMUNITY DEAL

The older I get, the more aware I am that it is impossible to be an adult in America and not know someone who is dealing with cancer. In my case, it was my mother's successful battle against colon cancer that introduced me to the 24/7 world of people who face and fight cancer every day. I learned it is impossible to articulate all the ways that a person with cancer or a person loving someone with cancer changes and matures during a cancer battle. I will never forget the breathtaking science and the brave society of cancer fighters I met and continue to meet. And I trust that no matter how large or small our school, we all have a face that comes to mind of a person who is right now in the brave battle of his or her life against cancer.

For this column, I will share just one lesson of hundreds that came to me during my mother's bravest season. I was sitting in a waiting room at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Hospital in New York while my mother was with her oncologist. It was one of my first support missions with her and I found myself seated among silent, serious, and seasoned soul mates of loved cancer patients. Each sensitive smile initiated me to a most compassionate club.

I passed over the pile of dated magazines and instead picked up a pamphlet about chemotherapy. I took a deep breath and assigned my fears to learning. For the first time in my life, I read and considered the immune system. I was and remain in holy awe.

At every moment in our lives, this ceaseless system is at work protecting us and preserving our health against billions of threats. This much I knew from my secondary education. But with every word of that potent pamphlet, I was humbled by what the immune system teaches us about how to create and sustain spiritual life.

A major component of the immune system is its production of B-cells, also called memory cells. These are a group of cells that observe disease-causing organisms when they first invade the body. These cells then store a

permanent memory of how the problem was solved in order to ward off future illnesses from past pathogens. B-cells can learn and remember. We would not survive if we had to fight every pathogen as if for the first time. Our health would be compromised if not conquered in such an endless cycle of reactionary response.

So here's the question. Does your school's spiritual life have memory cells? Is the spiritual life of your school healthy enough to have the energy, personnel, and processes to ensure that as your students matriculate and your faculty come and go there is someone, some meaningful ritual, some consistent practice that is building the moral and spiritual memory of your community? Or is yours one of those schools that is perennially exhausted each June from your reactionary response cycles to every act of racist graffiti, incident of bullying, under-age drinking, honor-code violation, gossip, social-class division, or homophobic speech?

B-cells observe. Moreover, they remember. And with their knowledge, they preserve. In this way, they are a model of how to serve both an organ and an organization. Responses that are not merely reactionary can become tried and true teaching tools, reminding the whole community that the mission of the school can navigate challenges to the school's vitality. Immunity requires that someone is listening and learning through the struggles facing the community each day. And immunity requires that those sources of memory be empowered to lead responses to future crises.

In case you diagnose the level of spiritual immunity of your school as weak, keep in mind this last fact. The body's immune system is strengthened through three basic life habits: adequate sleep, good nutrition, and stress reduction. This trinity of timeless truths is a much-needed prescription for all the schools I know. ✨

Patricia Lyons is Director of Service Learning at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School in Alexandria, VA.

CURRICULUM SPOTLIGHT

Approaches to Sacred Texts*by Jeffrey A. Crafton**CSEE, 2004**37 pages**CSEE member schools \$12, others \$15*

Jeffrey Crafton's short work could be used as a class text early in world religions, or as a teacher resource. The author introduces three approaches to reading scripture: simple reading, devotional reading, and analytical reading. Rather than focus only on Bible passages—as is so often the case when these methods are introduced—he offers a number of “practice” passages from a wide variety of traditions: The Qur'an, the *Tao Te Ching*, and the *Bhagavad Gita*, among others; there are several passages from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, of course.

Chapter one is an introduction to the field of “ways” of reading, which Crafton does through a modern parable about six great explorers looking for a lost land; they realize that they each have a map, but the maps differ. Which is the true route to follow? The second chapter introduces the three methods of reading, including an occasional permutation (as in devotional reading, which may be simple devotional, or mystical devotional reading). The third chapter puts the three methods together, and suggests an approach to good reading and explicating of religious texts.

Many religion teachers have covered this material in their preparation, and may not need a text like Crafton's. For those who have not done such work in undergraduate or graduate school—and perhaps even for a few of those who have—*Approaches to Sacred Texts* is a nicely written, clear, and useful introduction. ✨

IN THE WEB

www.voya.com

Voices of Youth Advocates introduces itself as “the library magazine serving those who serve young adults.” A look through the site suggests that “young adults” might include many independent-school upper-elementary students, and certainly middle- and high-schoolers. The site itself is aimed at librarians, counselors, and youth workers who provide services and information to students, as is the case for readers of CSEE's *Connections*.

The site is also an occasional forum for teen writing, but primarily teen writing that will help adults understand how to be more helpful to young people. *Notes from the Teenage Underground*, for example, is touted as an “occasional column [that] reveals secrets of teen culture to the adults who care regarding books, information, entertainment, media, and identity.”

What is in VOYA? The question is one the Web site asks, and answers: columns, articles, editorials, booklists, reviews. We first became aware of VOYA through printed materials passed on by a librarian who knew of CSEE's work helping religion teachers do their jobs better. We thus refer *Connections* readers to the “booklists” section in this month's url, and invite them to scroll down to the “world religions resource lists for teens.” The scroll is worth the second it takes to get there: the resources associated with each of the 11 or 12 traditions presented constitute a real treasure.

<http://www.voya.com/WhatsInVoya/booklists.shtml#booklists> ✨

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

See additional details, including holy days for the first part of April, at www.csee.org



FOUNDED IN 1898

May 1

Feast of the Ascension (Christianity)

According to the book of Acts, Jesus' time on earth came to an end 40 days after his resurrection from the tomb. Acts 1:9-11 tells us that the disciples witnessed Jesus rising up to heaven from the Mount of Olives. The day is celebrated with prayer and special church services, and is often marked with music. It is one of the oldest celebrations of the tradition.

May 1 Sundown

Yom Ha Sho'ah (Judaism)

Yom Ha Sho'ah commemorates the lives of the six million Jews who perished during the Holocaust. It is observed annually on the 27th of Nissan, the anniversary day for the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Synagogue services are held in many Jewish communities, as are special educational programs.

May 2

12th Day of Ridvan (Baha'i)

Beginning on April 21 and concluding on May 2, Baha'is celebrate the period when their founder, Baha'u'llah, resided in a garden in Baghdad. Baha'u'llah called it the Garden of Ridvan, meaning the Garden of Paradise. It was during his time in the garden that Baha'u'llah proclaimed that he was the messenger of God for this age.

May 11

Pentecost (Christianity)

On Pentecost, Christians celebrate the day the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles of Jesus. The word comes from the Greek word for "fiftieth," since the feast day takes place the 50th day after Easter. (Don't count the Sundays.) In the early days of the Christian church courts of law were not held during the week of Pentecost, and manual labor was forbidden; those practices gradually diminished. In Italy, it has been customary to drop rose leaves from the ceilings of churches, to signify

the descent of the spirit. The French have tended to sound trumpets, signifying the sound of the "mighty wind" that is said to have accompanied the Holy Spirit's descent. Pentecost is usually celebrated with a special church service and/or special prayers.

May 15

Matthias the Apostle (Christianity)

Matthias was the apostle chosen to replace Judas Iscariot after his betrayal of Jesus. Little is known of him relative to apostles like Peter and Paul, in part because of his late arrival on the scene. He is said to be remembered for preaching austerity, and for avoiding sensuality. The day is observed with attendance at church services, and perhaps with special prayers.

May 20

Buddha Day/Visakha Puja (Buddhism)

Visakha Puja celebrates three events in the Buddha's life: the day he was born, the day he reached his enlightenment (35 years later), and the day of his death, some 45 years after his enlightenment. Buddhists believe that all three of these events took place on the day in May when the moon is full. It is an important day in the Buddhist tradition, and Buddhists tend to observe it by being generous, because of their gratitude for what the Buddha did, and by listening to speeches about the Buddha. In contrast to many other celebrations, on this day Buddhists tend to dress much more simply than they might otherwise, and they cut down on the amount and kinds of food they eat. Offering flowers, and burning candles and incense to the Buddha are also common practices.

CONTINUES ON P. 8

May 22 Sundown

Lag B'Omer (Judaism)

Lag B'Omer is the 33rd day between the second day of Passover and the holiday of Shavuot. There is altogether a span of 49 days between the two holidays, a time that is traditionally a period of mourning the death of Rabbi Akiba's 24,000 students over 2,000 years ago. By contrast, Lag B'Omer is a break in the mourning period and is therefore a time for celebration. It is the occasion of the end of the plague that killed Rabbi Akiba's students, as well as the day of passing for Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who made it clear that he wanted his death to be celebrated rather than mourned.

May 22 Sundown

Declaration of the Bab (Baha'i)

The Baha'i tradition is considered to have begun on May 23, 1844, which was the day that the individual known as The Bab declared his mission. The world's five million Baha'is have basic principles that include belief in the oneness of the human race, the unity of religions, equality of the sexes, and universal peace. Baha'is are followers of Baha'u'llah, who was born in Persia in 1817. Not unlike the role that John the Baptist played in announcing the coming of Jesus, Baha'u'llah's coming was preceded and announced by Siyyid Ali Muhammad, who referred to himself as the Bab (meaning "the Gate"). The Bab told people that another messenger would be coming after him, and that the power of the revelation of the coming one would far exceed any message previously sent down by God.

May 28 Sundown

Ascension of Baha'u'llah (Baha'i)

This day, which commemorates Baha'u'llah's death and ascension to heaven, is one of nine holy days in the year. Baha'is do not work on their holy days, an abstinence which for many is considered a sacrifice. Celebrations on such days are generally quiet observances. Baha'u'llah's ascension may be celebrated by a picnic, or

a gathering at which prayers are said, or songs are sung from Baha'u'llah's writings.

May 30

Sacred Heart of Christ (Roman Catholicism)

This feast day commemorates Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque's (1647-1690) visions of Jesus and his instruction to her that she serve as the instrument for spreading devotion to his sacred heart. The feast celebrates Jesus' gift of the Eucharist and urges believers to pray for the sins of the world. ✨

other Arab and Muslim citizens, and new immigrants live alongside long-time residents of other ethnicities.

The American Conference on Diversity sponsors a variety of community-based and workplace-based forums as well as school-based education and training. Its Youth Leadership Program helps student leaders understand how stereotypes, bigotry, and bias impact negatively on their schools and provides them with tools to develop their own student-led Action Plans.

Interfaith Action's Youth Leadership Program brings together about 55 Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Unitarian, and Wiccan public and private high school students for youth-led activities. The program includes bi-weekly meetings centered on topics such as values clarification, faith learning, stereotypes, and community action; 12 hours of leadership and dialogue facilitation training; 40 hours of training in communication skills; and community-based workshop facilitation. Through substantive discussions, explains Interfaith Action founder and executive director Janet Penn, students learn how to connect with others "who don't look like them."

Other programs also worth study include *Interfaith Youth Core*, *Seeds of Peace*, *Institute for Interreligious Intercultural Dialogue*, and *Daughters of Abraham Book Club*.

Creating a Youth Initiative

Experts suggest considering the following guidelines when creating initiatives:

- Let young people identify what they hope to achieve and address through interfaith dialogue, as well as select the best program format. Conduct a focus group to find out what they want and gently guide them into a discussion of religion. Young people cannot always pinpoint religious tension or friction in their school or community unless they have experienced it themselves.
- Be sensitive to students who are the sole representatives of their faith. They should not feel isolated or

obligated to speak for the entire religious group. Partner with these students to think of a solution.

- Be flexible in program implementation. Goals and expectations will likely change along the way.
- Assess program impact and student transformation.
- Design programs without an agenda or a particular point of view.
- Engage program leaders/educators who are open, self-effacing, and mindful of personal perspectives and prejudices. Ensure that staff equally represent program participants' religions.
- Consider developing (or using existing) curricula for efforts designed to develop a broad skills and knowledge base.
- Keep groups small to allow for an intimacy that supports heart-felt speaking.
- Let students lead.
- Secure support from principals, if school-based.
- Involve parents.

Interfaith dialogue results in significant pluses: greater awareness and acceptance of others, enhanced relationships, reduction of conflict, appreciation for our multi-faith society, a diverse people bonding together. As Aaron J. Hahn Tapper, Abraham Vision's founder and co-executive director, explains: "It is critical for people, especially young people, to meet with the so-called 'other.' I believe each one of us has various prejudices... towards the 'other'....Gaining a deeper awareness of this part of us can help move us, as individuals and as members of larger communities, forward." ✨

Michele Israel is an independent writer and consultant with expertise in curriculum development. She has produced educational products for clients including PBS, WETA, and Newsweek Education Program, publishing companies, and non-profits. Michele has over 20 years experience in the non-profit education field.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

MAY 2008

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

JUNE 2008

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

JULY 2008

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Spiritual Development in Children and Adolescents

A two-day conference with a focus on engaging with a work of art for spiritual growth, led by a national expert in the field at a museum with one of the nation's great collections of religious art. Other topics include adolescent spiritual development and dealing with the spiritual in American Indian traditions.

With John Grim, Ph.D., Sarah Pike, Ph.D., and Amanda Hughes
April 25-27, 2008
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Community Service/Service Learning "When Disaster Strikes: Your Call to Service"

An up-close look at community recovery efforts and ideas to organize community-service programs, in schools everywhere, to be prepared for such events.

With Mary Pashley and Ann Saylor
April 4-5, 2008
New Orleans, Louisiana

Moral Development and the Ethics of Care

The second of our 2007-08 offerings in "Working with the Best," with one of North America's best-known writers on school climate, for school administrators, teachers, and other staff, all grades.

With Nel Noddings, Ph.D.
April 18-19, 2008
Lawrenceville, New Jersey

Developing Student Leadership: A Symposium of Successful Programs

Help your school make a difference in leadership formation for students. Leadership directors from three schools present and discuss models for developing student leaders.

May 2-4, 2008
Culver, Indiana

2008 Institute on Teaching the World's Religions

University and secondary school colleagues from around the country. This year's special focus will be on teaching Hinduism (the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Gita*) and Judaism.

July 7-12, 2008
Washington, D.C.

Summer Ethics Institute for Adults

Five relaxed and engaging days with school administrators, trustees, and faculty discussing pieces of literature and examining case studies of ethical issues from independent schools.

With Dan Heischman
July 19-24, 2008
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Greening the Curriculum

Environmental activists and curriculum leaders from 40 schools will convene with recognized experts to make important curricular recommendations for schools. If we are convinced that we should take action to protect the environment, we must make improvements in our schools' curricula.

February 20-22, 2009
Miami, Florida ✪

Michele Israel has helped us compile this list of Web links for more information on the programs mentioned in the lead article:

The Public Conversations Project

<http://www.publicconversations.org/pcp/index.php>

One interesting endeavor is the Faith Quilts Project, which brings together quilt makers and faith communities to create collaborative works of art that express central aspects of each faith tradition's religious and cultural heritage.

Faith on Wheels

<http://www.qaschool.org/Documents/Faith%20on%20Wheels/Faith%20On%20Wheels%20QA.pdf>

Participating schools exchange suitcases filled with items representing their respective religions (e.g., a Jewish kiddish cup, a Muslim prayer rug, a book on Catholic saints) and student-made videos describing the contents. The suitcases rotate among the schools and the students then exchange letters reflecting on what they learned about each religion.

Philosophy for Children

<http://cehs.montclair.edu/academic/iapc/whatis.shtml>

Students strengthen their analytical thinking; cognitive skills include creating hypotheses, clarifying terms, asking for and giving good reasons, offering examples and counter examples, questioning assumptions, drawing inferences, and following an inquiry wherever it leads.

The Dialogue Project

<http://www.thedialogueproject.org/>

The three main programs are Mid-East Dialogues, Public Educational Forums and Interfaith Teach Ins, and Speaking Across Differences (a community program that gives Brooklyn natives and newcomers the opportunity to talk together about their lives and neighborhoods).

American Conference on Diversity

<http://www.americanconferenceondiversity.org/>

One program, Interfaith Dialogues, is a series providing regional conversations aimed at promoting understanding among New Jersey residents subscribing to different faiths and belief systems.

Abraham's Vision

<http://www.abrahamsvision.org/>

The Unity Program has several elements: teacher-led classes on issues related to Islam, Judaism, and Muslim-Jewish relations; appearances by Jewish and Muslim guest speakers; inter-school meetings between students in which trained facilitators lead group-dynamics sessions; and field trips that enable students to interact informally.

Interfaith Action's Youth Leadership Program

<http://www.pluralism.org/research/profiles/display.php?profile=73129>

Program participants have become so adept at interfaith dialogue that they now serve as facilitators at special community events, forums, and discussions, as well as facilitating classes at a local middle school.

Interfaith Youth Core

<http://www.ifyc.org/>

Eboo Patel is executive director of the Interfaith Youth Core, which builds mutual respect and pluralism among young people from different religious traditions by empowering them to work together to serve others.

Seeds of Peace

<http://www.seedsofpeace.org/about>

This organization is dedicated to empowering young leaders from regions of conflict with the leadership skills required to advance reconciliation and coexistence.

Institute for Interreligious Intercultural Dialogue

<http://astro.temple.edu/~dialogue/>

The institute has programs promoting dialogue among individuals and groups from different religions and cultures.

Daughters of Abraham Book Club

<http://www.daughtersofabraham.info/>

This group of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim women has been meeting monthly since 2002 to explore their religious faiths through books—a concept that could be adapted for student groups. ✨

David Streight