



# PeaceRelease

## October 2008

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or if your browser is unable to view this document.

### **In This Issue:**

[Vision of Peace Activities](#)

[PeaceBuilder in History](#)

[Peaceful Quotations](#)

[The POPometer](#)

[PeaceBuilder Website  
Banners](#)

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### **Quick Links:**

[PeaceBuilders Website](#)

[PeaceRelease Archives](#)

[Check it Out!](#)

[PeaceBuilder of the  
Month](#)

### **Dear Partners,**

Maintaining your peaceful environment requires a regular recommitment to your goals. In order to make building peace the foundation of your site's culture, implementation must remain steadfast. When you first began practicing PeaceBuilders, you had a vision of the peaceful environment you wanted to achieve. That vision likely needs to be revisited and cultivated. A few simple actions will help realize your vision and ensure your site's continued PeaceBuilding success.

- Say the PeaceBuilders Pledge daily and use the common PeaceBuilders language therein to coach and support youth and as part of your discipline plan.
- Adults model the PeaceBuilders Principles and consistently encourage young people to follow their lead.
- Be generous with PraiseNotes and display them on PraiseBoards to provide youth and staff the positive encouragement we all need to grow and flourish.
- Establish a PeaceBuilders leadership team each year to develop an implementation plan for your staff. Consider including young people on the team in order to strengthen your program and their dedication to building peace.
- Provide PeaceBuilders visual cues throughout your site in the form of behavior cues, posters, student artwork and academic work that includes PeaceBuilders messages.
- Greet young people (and staff) by name as a sign of respect and to show you value them.
- Conduct PeaceBuilders lessons and activities with small groups of young people and as a whole site to strengthen everyone's commitment to building peace.

Along with these PeaceBuilding actions, especially if you are on a traditional school year schedule, we urge you to consider conducting "Vision of Peace" activities in order to create a sense of unity and belonging at your site. Please read the activities section of this newsletter for related activity ideas. If you are beginning your year, remember to review each of the PeaceBuilders Principles to ensure the concepts are understood so that your staff and youth can work proactively toward their goal of creating the peaceful culture you all envision.

### **Vision of Peace Activities**

**Child: Vision of Peace Puzzle** (materials: poster board, markers, other decorative items)

Cut poster board into enough puzzle-shaped pieces for all the children in your group to have their own piece to decorate. Ask children to think about what peace means to them. Give them some suggestions to help start the discussion and write their ideas on the whiteboard. Now ask the children to decorate their puzzle piece to show their personal vision of peace. After the pieces are decorated, put them all back together to form the Peace Puzzle and display it somewhere for all the children and their parents to enjoy.

### **Teen: Vision of Peace Challenge**

Ask youth to take a minute to think about their own individual visions of peace for your site. To start the discussion, you may want to give them some ideas, (for instance, "My vision of peace is a place where no one is bullied."). Ask them to write their vision in just a couple sentences.

- After a couple minutes, ask youth to pair up with one other person and share their visions with a partner. Give the pair a couple minutes to combine their visions into one shared vision. Ask them to keep it short, just a few sentences.
- Now ask two pairs to work together (four people) to combine their two visions into one shared vision (give them just a couple minutes).
- Once they've accomplished the task, bring two groups of four people together to form a group of eight and ask them to turn their two visions into one (give them just a couple minutes).
- Continue until everyone is working together to create one shared vision for the entire group.

This challenge provides an effective way to initiate team-work and compromise. Be sure to post your group's vision in a common space where it can serve as a reminder of the goal everyone is working toward.

### **Staff: Vision of Peace Commitment**

Ask staff to work in small groups (they can group by grade level, by job type, or whatever else makes sense). Their task is to discuss ways they can work with young people to increase peace at your site. They should brainstorm as many ways to build peace as they can think of (i.e.: greet every child by name everyday; start using a more positive tone of voice, make one good news phone call home to parents/guardians each day). Give them five to ten minutes to create a long list, and then ask them each to individually choose three things they will commit to doing this year to increase peace at your site (the group does not have to choose the same three things, each person chooses individually). At future staff meetings, check in to find out how they are doing in terms of keeping their commitments and reinforce the necessity to keep trying. Allow people to share their successes.

### **PeaceBuilder in History: Jim Henson (1936-1990)**

Many of us spent happy hours visiting *Sesame Street* and all the Muppets who live there, either as young learners or as parents spending quality time with our children. We all owe a debt of gratitude to the visionary who created the Muppets that made *Sesame Street* such a huge success: Jim Henson, also known as the voice of Kermit the Frog.

Mr. Henson started creating puppets in high school and although at times he doubted whether being a puppeteer was really a good decision or a viable career choice, he had a vision to create more life-like puppets that sent a message of inclusion.

His career started long before *Sesame Street* aired and although he remained involved with the popular Public Broadcasting television show until his death, he was also very successful as the creator of *The Muppet Show* and *Fraggle Rock* and several films, such as *The Dark Crystal*. This versatile artist also worked on the popular TV show *Saturday Night Live* and helped create the character Yoda for the *Star Wars* films.

It is easy to understand why such a man would be selected as our PeaceBuilder in History - Jim Henson is someone you can hold up as a model and an inspiration to the young people at your site. Just to make the choice clearer, however, Jim Henson was posthumously awarded the Courage of Conscience Award in 1992 for being a "Humanitarian, puppeteer, producer and director of films for children that encourage tolerance, interracial values, equality and fair play."

### **Peaceful Quotations:**

*"It is a terrible thing to see and have no vision."*

**- Helen Keller**

*"I think there is something, more important than believing: Action! The world is full of dreamers, there aren't enough who will move ahead and begin to take concrete steps to actualize their vision."*

**- W. Clement Stone**

*"Effective leaders help others to understand the necessity of change and to accept a common vision of the desired outcome."*

**- John Kotter**

*"We are limited, not by our abilities, but by our vision."*

**- Anonymous**

### **The POPometer: A New PeaceBuilders Implementation Tool**

[POPometers](#) are reproducibles created for use with [Pieces of Peace Implementation Tags \(POPs\)](#). There are eight different designs to match the eight POP designs. As



youth earn POPs by meeting a PeaceBuilders challenge, they color in the appropriate amount of lines on the meter and could earn a reward when they complete it.

In case you haven't heard, POPs are plastic dog tags young people and adults earn through PeaceBuilding behaviors. They can be worn around the neck or attached to backpacks. A different POP for each PeaceBuilders Principle along with one for PeaceBuilder of the Month and one for PeaceCoach are available. They serve as a fun way to motivate youth to build peace and are a great visual reminder of all the PeaceBuilding going on at your site. Visit our [website](#) to order your POPs and your [POPometers](#) and to view all our exciting implementation tools.



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