

**2015 Greenfield Peace Writing Scholarship Second Prize Winner
(Everett Somers, Springfield Academy of Arts and Academics)**

One of the simplest interpretations of “Peace,” is that it is, exclusively, the absence of war. Although they are generally accepted as distinct opposites, many activists, scholars, philosophers, and educators argue peace to be a multi-faceted phenomenon, a harmony among humankind that goes beyond simple nonviolence. Johan Galtung, a Norwegian sociologist and mathematician who contributed to the establishment of peace research, was one of the first to analyze and introduce the notion of peace as a multidimensional concept. In 1964, he introduced his idea of the components of peace, categorized by “Negative peace,” or simply the absence of overt violence, and “Positive peace,” – involving the presence of moral values such as harmony, equality, justice, and the “integration of society.”

Dr. Maria Montessori, widely recognized for her establishment of the “Montessori method,” was one of the first to propose the concept of “Peace Education.” In her writings including *Education & Peace*, she communicated her belief in education as means for creating peace, by incorporating core values such as global citizenship, personal responsibility, and respect for diversity, as crucial components of educational curriculum. “Peace is a goal that can only be obtained through common accord, and the means to achieve this unity for peace are twofold: first, an immediate effort to resolve conflicts without recourse to violence [...] and second, a long-term effort to establish a lasting peace among men.” Montessori’s theories on peace education suggest that incorporating these values, along with peaceful solution tactics, must be done through explicit instruction, as well as consistent model behavior.

The ideologies surrounding peace, as well as peace education, vary throughout the world, and appear to be continually evolving. Since Montessori’s introduction, peace education has grown in worldwide recognition and been adopted by many educators. Although focusing on a wide range of topics and educational tactics, the core objective of peace education programs appears to be consistent with enforcing the notion that schools hold the capability and responsibility to provide an environment that promotes the same values emphasized in the teachings of Montessori. This supports the idea that the role of education in creating and sustaining a peaceful world involves the existence of a community cultivated upon respect for one another; the vital aspects of which include cooperation, tolerance, and understanding, which are most easily accessible through socialization in the classroom.

To some, peace remains an indefinable and elusive concept – an enigmatic and unrealistic ideal. The UNICEF 1996 State of the World’s Children: Anti War Agenda states, “Disputes may be inevitable, but violence is not. To prevent continued cycles of conflict, education must seek to promote peace and tolerance, not fuel hatred and suspicion.” In order to be successful in building and maintaining a peaceful world, we must look first at what we are teaching the youngest generations. Raising a community built upon mutual and universal trust is the first step towards achieving a more just world. By encouraging forgiveness and unconditional respect, rather than promoting fear and intolerance, we are investing hope in the children of the future and paving a path to perpetual peace.

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