Peace Literacy Curriculum:
Navigating Crisis, Uncertainty, and Technology in a Global Pandemic

This series of three lessons is designed to help middle school teachers and parents address many of the new and immediate needs of students in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, presented in a format conducive to distance learning.
Peace Literacy Curriculum:
Navigating Crisis, Uncertainty, and Technology

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This unit contains 3 lessons
1. Navigating Through the Storm
2. Navigating Uncharted Waters
3. Navigating the Fog of the Digital World

Content
This series of three lessons is designed to help middle school teachers and parents address many of the new and immediate needs of students in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, presented in a format conducive to distance learning.

These three lessons are short presentations (about 30 minutes each) that provide frameworks we have found helpful for discussing this crisis, and on which you can build meaningful discussions leading to positive and constructive responses to the challenges facing students, families, and communities.

Accessibility
Each of the three lessons in this unit is conveyed through a richly illustrated set of PowerPoint slides (available for free download at peace.literacy.org/curriculum). The combination of visual and textual elements, as well as the ease with which the many evocative metaphors can be imagined by students, increases the accessibility of the presentation for students with visual or hearing impairments.

Fair use
We are pleased to share this curriculum at no cost and ask only that you cite us, as below, when you use direct quotes or paraphrased passages from this lesson plan in your own publications:


And please send us copies of any materials you produce that are based on this curriculum so we can put them up on the Peace Literacy website as models for others. Peace Literacy is meant to be shared!

Thank you for embarking on this journey with us!
Peace Literacy Curriculum: Navigating Crisis, Uncertainty, and Technology

Introduction

The three lessons address:

- the effects of change, uncertainty, and digital technology on ourselves, our families, and our communities;
- how to identify non-physical needs that become even more important in the midst of crisis, uncertainty, and rapidly evolving digital technology;
- how to address those needs in positive, constructive ways;
- how to embrace struggle and cultivate strengths through the challenges it presents;
- how to navigate the digital world with awareness and discernment; and
- the responsibilities we have as a school community, as we navigate through this storm together.

Lesson 1

Navigating Through the Storm uses the metaphor of a storm to frame the COVID-19 pandemic. Lesson 1 also uses the allegory of a ship on a journey to give students an opportunity to orient themselves within this crisis. We distinguish between the outer world (the people, places, and things that we encounter as we move through our experiences) and our inner world (our thoughts and emotions). How is this storm affecting both the outer world and our inner world, and in what ways do these two worlds overlap? This is an opportunity for students to discuss, express, and share experiences, which can help alleviate anxiety and build connections in our current state of physical distancing, distance learning, and a wide variety of other challenges.

Lesson 2

Navigating Uncharted Waters continues with the allegory of a ship in a storm, and builds on the theme of the outer world and our inner world. Lesson 2 introduces uncharted waters as a metaphor for new kinds of uncertainties that the storm of COVID-19 has pushed us into as individuals, as a school community, and as a society. Lesson 2 then discusses empathy and attention as metaphorical nutrients that are essential to the health of our inner world, similar to how Vitamin C is essential to the health of our body. Empathy, attention, and the trust they generate are nutrients necessary to feed our non-physical need for nurturing relationships—one of our non-physical needs that is discussed extensively in our other Peace Literacy curricula. When a storm has pushed us
into uncharted waters, how can we increase nutrients such as empathy and attention, which are needed to maintain healthy relationships and communities, and which become even more important during the storms of life? This lesson gives students an opportunity to discuss how we can provide essential nutrients needed to nourish our inner world, especially during our current journey through crisis, uncertainty, and as we will discuss in Lesson 3, our rapidly evolving digital technology.

Lesson 3

Navigating the Fog of the Digital World examines the intersection of the outer world, our inner world, and the digital world, allowing students to explore how these three worlds overlap and affect each other. COVID-19 has made us even more reliant on digital technology, thereby increasing the overlap between these three worlds in ways that require greater awareness and discernment, especially when navigating the digital world. Lesson 3 then introduces a term called mechanical distance, which we represent as a metaphorical fog. Mechanical distance is a term used in the military (coined by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman), which describes how technology can make it more difficult to see each other’s humanity. Lesson 3 continues the discussion of empathy and attention by examining them in the context of the digital world and exploring why they are needed to see through the fog of mechanical distance. Our actions matter, and by nourishing each other with empathy and attention, especially when we are interacting online, we can make a positive difference and begin to navigate the digital world in ways that lead toward a more peaceful and just society.

Directions for Teachers

- Prior to the lessons, read through the PowerPoint slides that accompany each lesson to familiarize yourself with the contents (the slides are available for free download at http://peaceliteracy.org/curriculum). The lessons take about 30 minutes each depending on the level of student engagement.
- Most of the slides contain dynamic GIFs. We recommend letting the GIFs play for several cycles, and then pausing them so that students are not distracted by the moving images during the discussion. You can pause the GIFs on the PowerPoint slides at any time by pressing any one of the number keys on your keyboard.
- Prepare a means for students to share ideas during and after the lesson through an online interactive work site such as one of these (all of these are free): https://padlet.com; https://popplet.com/; https://mural.co/; https://nowcomment.com/; or https://www.mindmeister.com/
Peace Literacy Curriculum:
Navigating Crisis, Uncertainty, and Technology
Lesson 1: Navigating Through the Storm

Enduring Understandings

- Difficult circumstances can be like storms that pose a variety of risks. We can learn to navigate these storms more skillfully when we are equipped with greater understanding.
- These storms can affect both the outer world and our inner world.
- We can learn to navigate storms in ways that lead toward, rather than away from, a more peaceful and just world.

Note: The metaphor of a storm can be used to describe challenges that are mild, moderate, or severe. Countless sailors have died during severe storms, and for many students the severe storm of COVID-19 has increased the danger they are exposed to, not just in terms of their physical health and the health of their family and friends, but also in terms of economic struggles, domestic violence, and other potentially traumatic events.

Directions for Teachers

1. Read or have students read the slides as you present them. Allow for comments as you proceed, but let students know that there will be time set aside for discussion at the end of the slideshow.
2. Re: the question “How is this storm affecting the outer world?” (from Slide #8), student responses could range from “lack of toilet paper” and “long lines,” to more severe problems such as the death of a close family member or parents losing their jobs. Some students may be experiencing extreme stress during this crisis, especially if they were living in at-risk situations prior to the pandemic’s onset. The public nature of the classroom setting, compounded with the mechanical distance of the online setting, makes discussions of these more personal and severe problems extremely difficult—both for the students and for teachers. If a student offers one of these more severe and/or highly personal responses, it is best to acknowledge their response with empathy and attention, let them know there are people who can help them through this difficult time, and tell them you will connect them to the right resources after the class. Students with a high level of need should always be referred to a suitable professional within the school system, who can then gauge if outside help is warranted.
3. Re: the second question on Slide #8: “How is this storm affecting your inner world?” Students are likely to respond with negative examples such as anxiety, boredom, loneliness, or, fear. But some students might list positive examples as well, such as feeling increased empathy or appreciation.
4. On Slide #14, elicit responses to the question posed by the How Can You Help? prompt and allow students to post their answers to the interactive work site.
Peace Literacy Curriculum:
Navigating Crisis, Uncertainty, and Technology
Lesson 2: Navigating Uncharted Waters

Enduring Understandings

• As we move through situations that are new, disruptive, and/or potentially dangerous—like sailors moving through uncharted waters—we need to fortify ourselves with empathy and attention, which are metaphorical nutrients that can strengthen us and our communities.
• Empathy and attention are nutrients that become even more important in the midst of crisis, uncertainty, and rapidly evolving digital technology.

Note: For many reasons, humanity will move even deeper into uncharted waters throughout the 2020s and beyond. In terms of rapidly evolving digital technology, Apple and Facebook are both researching and developing augmented reality glasses that they plan to roll out during the 2020s, with the intention of replacing smartphones. Augmented reality, virtual reality, and other disruptive technologies will push humanity into even deeper uncharted waters, which we must learn to navigate with awareness and discernment.

Directions for Teachers

1. Read or have students read the slides as you present them. Allow for comments as you proceed, but let students know that there will be time set aside for discussion at the end of the slideshow.
2. Allow students to post answers on your interactive work site for the following questions from the slides listed below. You can also add your own questions.
   • Slide #4: What are some of the ways that these uncharted waters are affecting your inner world? Possible responses: feelings of isolation, feeling insignificant or unnoticed, uncertainty about the future, boredom, being worried, etc. Some students might mention feeling like they are experiencing something significant in history.
   • Slide #8, Qs #1 and #2: How do you feel when someone relates to what you are going through? When they care about your well-being and experiences? When they share your joy and pain? Possible responses: appreciated, valued, cherished, connected, loved, trust, a sense of belonging, etc.
   • Slide #8, Q #3: What kinds of words and actions can you use to express empathy? Possible responses: listen carefully to what they are saying, express care and concern through words and/or actions, show kindness and
appreciation, describe back to them in your own words what they told you about themselves, etc.

Note: This lesson depicts empathy and attention as nutrients, and by doing so it allows us to better understand how we can use empathy and attention to make a positive difference. We can give these nutrients to others, and to ourselves (by having empathy for ourselves through self-compassion and giving ourselves attention through introspection, self-reflection, etc.). We can also receive these nutrients from others, and we can grow these nutrients within ourselves by strengthening our capacity to express empathy and attention.

- **Slide #10**: How do you feel when someone really pays attention to you and gives you their full consideration and concentration? Possible responses: appreciated, valued, cherished, connected, loved, trust, a sense of belonging, etc.

- **Slide #11**: What kinds of words and actions can you use to show that you are paying attention? Possible responses: maintain eye contact, respond appropriately to what they are saying, express interest verbally or non-verbally, engage in dialogue, etc.

- **Slide #20**: Elicit responses to the question posed by the How Can You Help? prompt and allow students to post their answers to the interactive work site.
Peace Literacy Curriculum:
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Lesson 3: Navigating the Fog of the Digital World

Enduring Understandings

- Not only must we learn to navigate the outer world and our inner world, we must also learn to navigate the digital world, which overlaps in significant ways with these two other worlds.
- We must use empathy and attention to see through the mechanical distance—the fog—of the digital world.
- We can learn to navigate the digital world in ways that lead us toward, rather than away from, a more peaceful and just society.

Directions for Teachers

1. Read or have students read the slides as you present them. Allow for comments as you proceed, but let students know that there will be time set aside for discussion at the end of the slideshow.
2. Allow students to post answers on your interactive work site for the following questions from the slides listed below. You can also add your own questions.
3. **Slide #19**: How do you think the fog of mechanical distance can affect our ability to give and receive the important nutrient of empathy? Possible responses: When we type on a smartphone or laptop, we cannot see people’s facial expressions, hear their voice, or see their body language in real-time. We can forget that there is another human at the other end of the device.
4. **Slide #20**: How do you think the fog of mechanical distance can affect our ability to give and receive the important nutrient of attention? Possible responses: We can become distracted by the devices we are using and have difficulty focusing and giving others our attention, etc. We can become overly involved in the apps and attractions of the device we are using and prioritize this over giving people our attention.
5. **Slide #22**: What elements of the digital world can make it difficult to build trust in our relationships? Possible responses: can’t see what the other person is doing, online culture of putting people down and calling people names, can’t read people’s facial expressions, etc.
6. **Slides #27 and #28**: Elicit responses to the question posed by the How Can You Help? prompt and allow students to post their answers to the interactive work site.

End of lesson
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Epilogue And Next Steps

During an era when humanity has the technological capacity to destroy itself, Peace Literacy is survival literacy. During an era of growing turbulence, confusion, and uncertainty, Peace Literacy is also life literacy. Peace Literacy is about how we live together, how we live within ourselves, and how we make a world in which each and every person is equipped with the skills needed to thrive and create more peaceful and just societies. This is the foundation of peace that is realistic, resilient, and sustainable.

We are here to support your teaching of Peace Literacy in a number of ways. You can contact our Peace Literacy Coordinator Jo Ann Deck (jdeck@napf.org).

We also have put together a new discussion series in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The series shows how attention to our 9 non-physical needs can help people navigate crisis and uncertainty. There is an entry for each non-physical need along with an activity relevant to COVID-19. The entries are designed as prompts for communities to discuss online. We encourage teachers to browse this series as background for some of the concepts introduced in Lesson 2. You can reach the series by following this link: https://www.wagingpeace.org/navigating-struggle/

Also on our website, you will find many more lessons to explore that will allow you to expand and broaden your journey into Peace Literacy with your students: https://www.peaceliteracy.org/curriculum

May you be safe; may you be healthy; may you have courage; may you work for peace.

Respectfully,

Peace Literacy Team

Please Share Your Experience!

If you used Peace Literacy Curriculum: Navigating Crisis, Uncertainty, and Technology in your class, please send a quick email to our curriculum coordinator, Sharyn.clough@oregonstate.edu, and let us know:

* the name of your school or school district
* how many students were in your class
* what parts worked best
* any suggestions you have for improvement

Thank you! 😊