

Highlights of the 2015-2016 Peace Teachers Program

About the Peace Teachers Program

The Peace Teachers Program is a year-long professional development opportunity for middle and high school educators in the United States. Launched in 2015 by the Global Peacebuilding Center at the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), it offers a select group of educators the opportunity to work closely with USIP and with each other over the course of a school year as they incorporate global peacebuilding themes and skills into their classrooms. For more information about the Peace Teachers Program, visit www.buildingpeace.org/peace-teachers.

The 2015-2016 Peace Teachers cohort consisted of three middle school and three high school teachers from 4 U.S. states and Washington, DC, representing a variety of disciplines:

- **Andy Blair**, St. Mary's Academy, Englewood, CO (World History)
- **Laura Keldorf**, Riverdale High School, Portland, OR (English, History, and Writing)
- **Michael Martini**, Alice Deal Middle School, Washington, DC (World Geography and Cultures)
- **Timothy McMahon**, Atlanta International School, Atlanta, GA (IB Economics, History, and Theory of Knowledge)
- **Monica Shah**, Brightwood Education Campus, Washington, DC (U.S. History, Human Rights, Peace Classes)
- **Amanda Terwillegar**, Champlain Valley Union High School, Hinesburg, VT (Making of the Modern World, Holocaust and Human Behavior, and Global Literature)

Combined, they worked with almost **200 students** during the school year.

Program Elements

During this program, the teachers created individual action plans, received virtual training and guidance from USIP, met monthly online to check in with each other, engaged their students in learning and action, and created resources for use by other educators.

Highlights of the year included:

- A kick-off program in July 2015, which featured special guest Dr. Maya Soetoro-Ng from the Matsunaga Institute for Conflict Resolution and Peace at the University of Hawaii, who was a USIP Visiting Scholar
- Class visits to USIP by Amanda Terwillegar, Timothy McMahon, and Monica Shah, and a Skype session for Laura Keldorf's students with one of USIP's experts
- Participation in USIP's Peace Day Challenge in honor of the **International Day of Peace** on September 21, through action including a school-wide Peace Week, school artwork, the creation of a Peace Quilt, student-made paper cranes that were sent to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, and a social media campaign standing in solidarity with people affected by conflict

“As a Peace Teacher, I learned that peacebuilding is a skill: the ability to manage conflict and navigate to a peaceful outcome, not just in their personal lives, but for the sake of our communities.”

– Andy Blair

“I think this program is important because its goal is to normalize peacebuilding. If we want students to be able to actually put their actions into practice, it needs to become an everyday part of their learning in the classroom.”

– Amanda Terwillegar



- Each educator’s own initiatives with their students, including:
 - Amanda Terwillegar’s students took their learning outside the classroom and developed their own independent peacebuilding projects.
 - Michael Martini incorporated peacebuilding concepts and skills into a United Nations simulation that will be used by all 6th grade classrooms in Washington, DC public schools.
 - Monica Shah’s class explored nonviolence as a strategy and tool to confront oppression for their participation in last year’s National History Day contest.
 - After developing their mediation skills, Timothy McMahon’s students used the art of puppetry to try to mediate the historic conflict between the Loyalists and Patriots.
 - Andy Blair’s students used USIP resources to research and write letters to their U.S. Senator on peacebuilding solutions to global issues of conflict and peace.
 - One of Laura Keldorf’s students was so inspired by her class on empathy that he decided to dedicate his regular column in the local newspaper to the subject.
- A special closing program at USIP to reflect upon their experiences and celebrate their achievements

Program Impact

The Global Peacebuilding Center at USIP constantly strives to learn from and improve its work with students and educators. The inaugural 2015-2016 Peace Teachers participated in monitoring and evaluation designed by the Global Peacebuilding Center and USIP’s Planning, Learning and Evaluation program to measure the effectiveness of the program, including pre- and post-surveys for teachers and students, a mid-year evaluation of the program, and reflective articles and video interviews on their experiences teaching global peacebuilding.

Highlights of the program’s impact include:

- By the end of the school year, **students** showed a greater understanding of the concepts of conflict and peace. Many more students saw peace as attainable and saw themselves as peacebuilders than before.
- The Peace Teachers designed creative and subject-specific **educator resources** to integrate global peacebuilding concepts and skills into classrooms, which the Global Peacebuilding Center will make available online.
- The Peace Teachers reported that they discovered new ways to teach about conflict and peace and to connect peacebuilding themes to their content. They highly valued the opportunity to develop new curricula based on peacebuilding, to learn more about USIP resources for educators and students, and to trade teaching practices and build connections with likeminded peers. Outside the classroom, they served as informal ambassadors for teaching global peacebuilding in their schools and broader communities. As Laura Keldorf concluded, “[**The Global Peacebuilding Center’s**] willingness to work with each of us to ensure that we have what we need and dream about is unprecedented, and I couldn’t be more grateful for what you’ve contributed to my professional world.”

“My understanding of peace changed a lot. Originally I thought of peace as something as simple as not fighting, but now I realize how complicated it is.” – High school student

“I believe that if people learn about conflict and peace, they might be able to offer some peaceful solutions to any problem that may arise, with all that is going on in this world.” – Middle school student

“I am a peacebuilder because I take it upon myself to spread the message of peace to my peers and community as a whole!” – Middle school student

