

**Title of Project: Bridging Divides Through Peace Education and Art Integration**

**Country: China**

**Project Leader: Yuxi “Jocelyn” Liu, International House New York**

**Project Date Range: June - August 2022**

### **Summary**

The project, in partnership with Yu Miao School, aims to provide peace education through art integration to children in the city of Wuhan (the original outbreak of the pandemic) and empower them with conflict resolution skills and peaceful values that will lead them to a constructive process of peacebuilding in their own communities, and to a sustainable society of resilience, empathy, and positive transformation.

### **Project description**

▪ How did you decide what issue(s) you wanted to address and what approach(es) or strategies you chose to implement in your project?

While I was living in New York, I came across a lot of sad stories of hate crimes against the Asian community due to the coronavirus. Peace awareness is needed more than ever now when the world is still experiencing an unprecedented pandemic. I figured out that children are the most vulnerable groups and I realized we need to protect them and teach them peacebuilding and conflict resolution skillsets from a nascent age. When we create a peaceful childhood for children, we grow children who will create a peaceful world in the future. The approaches I chose to implement are through training and workshops, speaker series, and book discussions with art integration, such as writing, drawing, singing, dancing, acting, and storytelling.

▪ Why did you choose your host site? In what ways did local relationships support you or contribute to the project?

I chose Yu Miao School as my host site for two reasons. First, Yu Miao School is a pioneer school in China integrating “Positive Education” into their classrooms. They are rooted in the conviction that students’ character building and well-being are more important than the students’ grades and achievements. The teachers are very open-minded and dedicated to their missions, and they are very supportive of my project ideas; Second, they’re located in the city of Wuhan, where the children experienced first-hand stories since the outbreak of the pandemic. From what I heard from many of my relatives, the struggles and challenges of children’s social life and emotional well-being have been impacted more than we could imagine. I’d like to go back to where everything begins. Yu Miao School provided the classroom, teaching equipment, facilities, and especially the volunteer teachers and facilitator for the whole time while the project was being conducted.

▪ What changes or adjustments did you make to your original plans, and why?

I led the project virtually due to travel restrictions and my team conducted the program on-site in Wuhan, China, where I was supposed to be there. And the timelines have been postponed for one month due to the program design, instructor training, and events planning. I'm deeply grateful for the remote collaboration opportunity and inspired by the volunteer teachers and facilitators' tremendous support and devotion to making this project happen. Because of the time difference, it was difficult to schedule a time for everyone to attend the training or manage our workload between the project and other obligations, but we tried our best to communicate seamlessly through video conferences, phone calls, and Wechat, discussing the ideas, topics, and themes and bringing the best quality of delivery.

- *Did other fundraising efforts contribute to your project? What were they?*

No. Projects for Peace was the primary and only funding for this project. Yu Miao School is willing to fund to achieve the sustainable goals if the program continues with all the resources ready.

- *Are there opportunities for continuing your work on this issue? If so, please describe.*

Since we've already designed the curriculum, and purchased books and other teaching materials, we can continue to reach out to more students through workshops, virtual learnings, and topic discussions, so that the peacebuilding curricula will become an integral part of peace education in future classes. In the long run, the project will keep going forward with the team members' support from the pilot group. Some sustainable ideas such as building a mini library to share books in the conflict resolution field and opening an art gallery to exhibit students' peace artworks on the school bulletin board.

### **Reflection**

- *How do you define peace?*

For me, peace is the tranquillity that comes from within and resonates with harmony on the outside. It means valuing each other's opinions and appreciating diversity and inclusion. Peace is in a connection made through reconciliation. It promotes unity and harmony and is a relationship of living well together.

- *In what ways might your project contribute to peace? What changes occurred? Short-term? Long-term?*

The project contributes to peace by providing peace education to the young minds who will be future leaders. It helps children to learn emotional regulation, teamwork, character and values, non-violent communication skills, and a way to express emotions in an artistic way. In the short term, these individuals learned a healthier way of dealing with conflict and emotions, had their perspectives changed, and became more compassionate towards others. In the long run, these young minds will become the agents of peace in their communities and shape the world with more respect, integrity, collaboration, and compassion.

- What did you learn about the dilemmas, challenges, or conflicts that underlie the targeted issues or utilized approaches/strategies?

The biggest challenge we encountered during the project was program design with peace themes that all instructors agreed upon and customized to the cultural context. There were different forms of approaches and we tried to work on the methods that were easy for children to understand and apply to their daily lives. We had to rearrange multiple times before coming up with a winning proposal. The other challenge is the event planning because we want to mobilize as many students as we can that we chose the outdoor performances, which need a lot of preparation and organization, and I'm beyond thankful for my team members who made it all happen in a collaborative effort.

- Has your project changed the way you think about the world? How has the project changed, challenged, or inspired you?

The project helped me see the world through children's eyes and hearts. It brings me back to purity and humanity. Seeing smiles on children's faces was the most heart-warming moment. For kids, everyone is a possible friend. Reconciliation happens more naturally than in the adult world where people always hold grudges and resentments. Throughout the art expression, it taught me that creativity is in our hearts if we are open to ourselves and embrace the essence of who we are. In the end, we are all connected. The project has inspired me to connect with myself in the core and rethink what inner peace means in this chaotic world. We are all born with the gift of creating possible new solutions in dealing with conflicts and challenges in daily life.

### **Personal Statement**

- A brief statement, suitable for use as a quotation, addressing the value of this project and what you have learned. Indicate the student's name (yours or your teammates') for quote attribution.

"Establishing lasting peace is the work of education;  
creativity is the pathway to the peace land" ----- Yuxi Liu