



# INTRODUCTION

## About the Peacebuilding Toolkit for Educators

### To the Educator: A Letter of Welcome

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) is an independent, nonpartisan institution established by Congress to increase the nation's capacity to manage international conflict without violence. We do this, in part, by providing others with the knowledge, skills, and resources to engage effectively in conflict management. Educating the public, and particularly younger audiences, about the challenges and importance of peacebuilding is part of our core mission.

This *Peacebuilding Toolkit for Educators* is designed to support the work of educators as peacebuilders. We believe that young people have tremendous capacity, as individuals and as a community, to learn about and contribute to international conflict management, and that educators can channel students' energy and enthusiasm in positive ways. We also wish to provide you with guidance and materials about the complex nature of peacebuilding. We have created this toolkit and dedicated a section on our Global Peacebuilding Center website to providing materials and lessons for middle school and high school students, interactive exercises, and a discussion forum where you can gain input on the difficult questions that arise in your classroom.

The focus of this toolkit is on peacebuilding because we know that peacebuilding must be developed, fostered, and supported. Our goal is to help in the development of young people as peacebuilders and to raise the visibility of positive examples of nonviolent conflict management.

The purpose of this toolkit is not to tell students what to think; rather, we want to encourage students to think critically about the world around them and their place in it. It is our belief that the skills of peacebuilding presented in this toolkit are applicable at multiple levels. The tools that peer mediators use in middle school and high school conflict resolution programs are in many ways similar to some of the tools used by diplomats and heads of state in international peace negotiations. While international conflicts are often far more complex, the core skills of active listening, relationship building, and working cooperatively to find mutually agreeable solutions among parties apply at all levels.

As you explore this toolkit and experiment with the lessons in your classroom, please consider providing us with feedback via the survey at the end of the toolkit or online. As a community of educators, we can continue to develop and improve upon our lessons based on your practical experience in the classroom.

## Organizing Principles: What are the assumptions on which the toolkit is based?

This toolkit is organized around a few basic ideas within the field of international conflict management.

1. **Conflict is an inherent part of the human condition.**  
Conflict is natural, and as such, it cannot be eliminated from society. Conflict is a normal part of everyday life and it is part of living in a thriving, pluralistic democracy. What makes a democratic society successful is its ability to deal with conflict, to allow and manage disagreement and dissent among people.
2. **Violent conflict can be prevented.**  
Conflict becomes problematic when it escalates to violence. But violent conflict can be prevented. We can teach our students to assert their opinion while being respectful and open to the ideas of others; to listen with care and attentiveness; and to act responsibly when faced with conflict. Conflict need not cross the line to violence. Whether on a personal or an international level, managing conflict is possible when parties in conflict with one another use peacebuilding tools to manage their disagreement.
3. **There are many ways to be a peacebuilder.**  
Peacebuilding is based on knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can be learned. As such, everyone can be a peacebuilder. But it is a conscious choice that involves making decisions and taking actions that require effort.

## Audience: Who is the toolkit's intended audience?

The toolkit is designed for a general audience of students in grades 6–8. The content can be modified for older students and some of the content can be modified for younger students. Engaging young audiences in conversations about peace and conflict is important. It is our hope that young students will engage in these topics and continue to reflect on them as they progress through high school and move into the world. The lessons have been developed with great detail to be useful for educators who are new to the methods employed that engage students in experiential learning and critical thinking. The lessons are intended for traditional and alternative education settings.

## Using the Toolkit: What do you need to know before you start?

### Overview of Lessons

The lessons in the toolkit are interactive and encourage students to work collaboratively to understand concepts and solve problems. The lessons are designed to be detailed enough for a new teacher or a teacher unfamiliar with interactive or experiential methods to pick them up and use them as intended. The middle school lessons include teacher direction, guided practice, and independent practice. The lessons are structured this way to meet the developmental needs

of middle school students. At the middle school level, students benefit from a personal connection in order to develop context for concepts. By modeling and then providing students with opportunities to experiment with the content on their own, teachers can assess who understands the material and who does not. Students in middle school are learning to take risks. They are learning what it is like to be in a group and disagree. They are learning to navigate social dynamics, and modeling by the teacher is crucial in helping them to figure out those dynamics. There is a developmental shift in middle school, during which students begin to challenge their own values and norms. Developing independent thinking and action is critical during this time. Giving students the opportunity to practice independently and in a group setting, but also with the help of a teacher, builds those skills. The exit passes and assessment strategies in the middle school lessons provide students with opportunities to test themselves in a safe environment and also provide teachers with valuable information about whether students have met the objectives and answered the essential questions with accuracy. Each lesson in the toolkit includes the following components:

*Rationale:* Why use this lesson? This is a statement that identifies the purpose of the lesson and the relevance of the topics discussed.

*Objectives:* What does this lesson hope to achieve? The objectives address what outcomes can be expected as a result of the lesson.

*Standards:* How does the lesson align with standards? The standards present themes from the National Council of Social Studies, which have been identified as core concepts in social studies teaching.

*Materials:* What do I need to use this lesson? This area highlights the handouts and additional resources educators will need to gather, as well as any pre-lesson preparation (e.g., cutting a handout into strips) that needs to occur.

*Time:* How long will the lesson take? The lessons are developed around a 45-minute class period. The times are for core lesson components, exclusive of extension activities.

*Procedures:* How do I put the lesson into practice? The procedures include the step-by-step process for completing the lessons. In certain lessons, an alternate strategy may appear which gives a different approach to completing the process. Special considerations or ideas/concepts to address or highlight are indicated in the sidebar of each lesson.

*Assessment:* How can I informally assess student learning? Ideas for assessment are included, but these are subjective and must reflect the teachers' requirements (see p. 10 for a description of how assessment is approached in the toolkit).

*Extension activities:* What other ways can I engage students on this topic? Each lesson includes one or more extension activities which provide opportunities to further explore the topic of the lesson.

## Standards: How do the lessons align with standards?

Standards are used to ensure a level of consistency in learning concepts across classrooms throughout the United States dealing with the same subject matter. While standards can seem restrictive, the standards outlined by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) are flexible enough to allow teachers and schools room to be creative in how they teach content.

The lessons in the toolkit are aligned with the ten themes outlined by NCSS:

1. Culture
2. Time, Continuity, and Change
3. People, Places, and Environments
4. Individual Development and Identity
5. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
6. Power, Authority, and Governance
7. Production, Distribution, and Consumption
8. Science, Technology, and Society
9. Global Connections
10. Civic Ideals and Practices

Standards apply specifically to education in the United States but the standards outlined above can be applied to an international education context. For more explanation about each standard, visit <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands>.

## Assessment: How do you assess lessons on peacebuilding and conflict?

The lessons in this guide do not allow for traditional forms of test-like assessment. Conversations that involve personal reflection and understanding multiple perspectives are difficult to assess using quantitative measures. Assessment often takes a more subjective form, for example, through a teacher's observation of a student's participation in activities, small group, and whole class discussions, as well as individual growth. Each lesson offers ideas for assessment, but the decision about how best to assess what students have learned rests with the individual teacher. In the appendices, you will find a sample Participation Rubric which may help in assessing students' level of engagement.

## Guidelines for Teaching about Global Peacebuilding

### Why teach global peacebuilding?

Teaching global peacebuilding is about educating and engaging global citizens who understand the interconnectedness between their lives and the lives of people around the world, and who are committed to managing conflict at all levels. By teaching global peacebuilding, we can communicate to our students effective strategies for practicing civic engagement and empower them with skills and an understanding that they have a voice and that even one voice can make a difference in the world.

### Considerations for teaching about global peacebuilding.

While there is no one way to teach peacebuilding, there are a few things to consider when integrating such complex topics into your curriculum. Many of these considerations will be familiar as good practices in education, but they bear reiterating within the context of conflict management.

### ***Bridge the local and the global. Make connections to students' lives.***

Teaching any international issue can be difficult as it may seem very remote to students. They may think, "How does this relate to me?" or "Why should I care?" By making connections to students' own lives, their current lived realities, we can unearth the inherent connections between what happens locally and what happens globally. When we build such bridges and connections for our students, international issues take on a new significance and a greater resonance.

### ***Emphasize multiple perspectives.***

Conversations on difficult topics allow us to experience and learn different perspectives. It is, therefore, important for our students to develop the capacity to listen to one another and truly hear what each other has to say.

In the process of conversation, disagreement may occur but this provides students with an opportunity to clarify their own perspectives and consider how other people's views can inform opinions. Disagreement is natural and should be considered a healthy part of conversation. Learning to manage conflict is often about effectively dealing with disagreement before it escalates to violence.

### ***Teach dialogue skills.***

Debate is a useful educational exercise and has a place in the classroom when discussing complex topics. However, the process of dialogue can contribute significantly to the classroom climate, encouraging an open mind and developing active listening skills. Unlike debate, which concludes with a winner and involves a process of listening for holes in the opponent's arguments, dialogue assumes there is no winner or loser. In the process of dialogue, listening is for the purpose of enhancing one's understanding of a topic.

### ***Encourage critical thinking.***

We should strive to ensure that all students receive an education that is academically rigorous, personalized, relevant, and engaging. Critical thinking is just one of the skills that allows students to:

- ◆ use inductive and deductive reasoning for various situations;
- ◆ analyze how parts of a whole interact to produce overall outcomes;
- ◆ effectively analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, claims, and beliefs;
- ◆ analyze and evaluate major alternative points of view;
- ◆ synthesize and make connections between information and arguments;
- ◆ interpret information and draw conclusions based on the best information; and
- ◆ reflect critically on learning experiences and processes.

Today's changing world needs critical thinkers, and students must be given a variety of opportunities to truly engage in lessons, problem solve, and interact with their peers.

### ***Engage students in interactive lessons using creativity.***

The methods used to teach international conflict management focus on interaction between learners. Thus, the lessons in this toolkit use a range of methods

including role-play, small group work, experiential activities, and large group discussion. The toolkit aims to vary instruction to meet a range of student needs but also to keep students focused and engaged. By using interactive strategies, we seek to move from the abstract to the concrete, encouraging students to make decisions about how they will act when faced with conflict and what can be done to address international conflicts.

### ***Focus on individuals. Translate statistics into people.***

Statistics can be very powerful, but when talking about issues that seem incredibly remote to students, we want to get beyond the numbers, humanize the topic, make it personal and, therefore, more real. For example, when a source estimates that there are 300,000 child soldiers in thirty countries around the world (Council on Foreign Relations <http://www.cfr.org/human-rights/child-soldiers-around-world/p9331>), we can become overwhelmed by the numbers and feel that nothing can be done. But when we learn about the experience of individual child soldiers in Sierra Leone trying to find their families after the war, we can begin to understand their plight and learn about ways to help (UN What's Going on? Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone [http://www.un.org/works/goingon/soldiers/goingon\\_soldiers.html](http://www.un.org/works/goingon/soldiers/goingon_soldiers.html)).

### ***Share real stories.***

One of the ways we can present statistics with a human face is by sharing real stories. It is important that students hear the voices of people whose lives have been affected by conflict and that they move beyond the abstract to the concrete. It is also important that students hear stories about what USIP does and how it engages with the military and civilians in resolving international conflicts. Stories can create bonds by illustrating shared experiences. A student in a school in the United States might be surprised to hear the hobbies and interests of a young person in a conflict zone—surprised because their interests are so similar. Suddenly, the world becomes smaller. That other person seems less foreign, less remote. Stories can also help clarify concepts that may otherwise seem elusive, making the abstract real. At a deeper level, real stories bring home the impact of international conflict on individual lives by tapping into students' empathy. With stories, the answer to the question, "Why should I care?" becomes more evident. Sharing stories alone will not solve a major international conflict but it is enough to engage people—one tool in the toolbox of understanding international conflict.

### ***Leave students feeling empowered.***

Difficult topics like international conflict, which involve human suffering, can be overwhelming for any individual. Often when students learn about a new topic, such as an outbreak of unrest in the Middle East or a refugee crisis in Africa, they receive a wealth of information that leaves them feeling a sense of despair, that the situation is so much bigger than them, and nothing can be done to ameliorate the problem. Educators must think carefully about how to assure students that people around the world care about international issues and are taking action, and pursuing solutions. These concrete and positive examples can alleviate the feeling of despair. But, more important, educators must work with students to leave them feeling empowered, knowing that they, too, can take action as an individual or as a community of young people, and they can make a difference.

## About USIP

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) is an independent, nonpartisan, national institution established and funded by Congress. Its goals are to help:

- ◆ prevent and resolve violent international conflicts;
- ◆ promote postconflict stability and development;
- ◆ increase conflict management capacity, tools, and intellectual capital worldwide.

The Institute accomplishes this by empowering others with knowledge, skills, and resources, as well as by directly engaging in peacebuilding efforts around the globe.

## Institute Activities

The Institute approaches its work through four main ways—Think, Act, Teach, Train.

**Think:** We generate research and applied analysis of international conflicts and we identify best practices and develop international conflict management strategies.

**Act:** We use decades of experience working in conflict zones to prevent conflict, manage it where it occurs, and assist in the transition from war to peace by using tools and approaches on the ground.

**Teach:** We engage with students and teachers to think critically about international issues and to develop conflict management skills. We introduce a broad public audience to the challenges and importance of peacebuilding.

**Train:** We train practitioners in the U.S. and individuals in conflict zones, ranging from civil society leaders to U.N. peacekeepers, on how to use tools and approaches to prevent and manage international conflict.

## About USIP's Global Peacebuilding Center

The Global Peacebuilding Center encompasses an exhibit space and education center at the headquarters of the United States Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., as well as a virtual destination at a dedicated website. Through the exhibits and educational programs offered onsite, and the resources and activities available online, the Global Peacebuilding Center introduces visitors to core concepts in peacebuilding, enhancing their understanding of international conflicts and nonviolent approaches to manage and resolve them. With a particular focus on students and educators, the Global Peacebuilding Center contributes to the development of the next generation of peacebuilders.