“A BARRIER HAS FALLEN”: Transformative Peace Education in Rural Colombia

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AGENDA

- Peace Games Overview
- Citizenship Education in Colombia
- Juegos de Paz in Colombia
- Transformative Peace Education & Teacher Training
- Four Lessons
Mission

Juegos de Paz empowers children with the knowledge, attitudes, skills, relationships and opportunities they need to be peacemakers and live as constructive citizens in a democratic society, by building positive school climates and integrating socio-emotional learning into the schools’ curriculum and culture.
In 2006, key components of the model included:

- Skills-based and project-based curriculum
- Professional development for teachers
- Classes co-taught by college-aged volunteers
- All overseen by PG staff
Juegos de Paz Curriculum

- K-5
- 20-24 lessons
- Developmentally appropriate
- First Semester: Skill-based lessons
- Second Semester: Service learning Projects
Core Competencies of Peacemaking

Skills
Knowledge
Relationships
Opportunities
Colombia’s long-running internal armed conflict began more than 60 years ago and has become increasingly widespread, violent, and indiscriminate.

Several interrelated, overlapping actors:
- Left-wing guerilla groups, including FARC
- Right-wing paramilitary groups, officially disarmed under a 2005 law
- Drug dealers and *narcotraficantes*
- Government armed forces

The result: a widespread culture of violence...
• In 2003, Humans Rights Watch estimated that there were more than 11,000 child soldiers active in the guerrillas and paramilitaries.

• In 2006, UNICEF reported more than 35,000 children were victims of violence at home (and 70% of cases are not reported).

• In 2008, Colombia reported its lowest total number of violent deaths in two decades with 16,140. However, this still ranked among the highest rates in the Western Hemisphere.
National Program of Citizenship Competencies

- Adoption of National Citizenship Standards
  - Living together in peace
  - Participation and Democratic Responsibility
  - Plurality, Identity, and Respect for Differences

- National *Saber* Test for Citizenship Competencies

- National Forum for Citizenship Competencies

- Portfolio of Best Practices
Juegos de Paz So Far

2006: Pilot Project (Norte de Santander)
- 17 schools
- 45 teachers
- funded by World Bank, MEN

2007: Peace Labs (Norte de Santander)
- 6 schools
- 90 teachers
- funded by European Union

2010: Alliance with CED
- Independent from but affiliated with Peace Games USA

2010: Juegos de Paz: Putumayo
- 12 schools
- 71 teachers
- funded by World Bank, MEN
Where We Are Working

68 Escuela Nueva and traditional schools in Norte de Santander and Putumayo
10 municipalities
168 teachers
5500 students
High risk, rural populations
Curriculum: Cooperative Games
Curriculum: Dramatic Play
Curriculum: Children’s Literature
On-Site Coaching
Juegos de Paz Evaluation

- Quasi-experimental pre-post design, with control groups
- Surveys, interviews, and focus groups
- Individual and school-level outcomes
Juegos de Paz: Many Possible Stories

- Teacher Training
- Citizenship Education
- Conflict and Post-Conflict Education
- Service Learning
- Program Evaluation
- Human Rights Education
- Interdisciplinary approach
- Rural Education

Interdisciplinary approach
Teacher Training Framework

● The Cycle of a Peace Games Training

Professional development sessions most likely to support teachers’ development contain significant measure of each of these three elements:

• Theory
  The presentation of new ideas in a format that is well organized and purposefully structured.

• Application
  The opportunity to practice the new ideas – and the opportunity to consider what adaptations may be needed for a particular context.

• Reflection
  Small group or individual reflection which will integrate new learning into existing practice and help each participant consider how to teach it to others.

1. Theory
  We present the ideology underlying the training content.

2. Application
  We put theory into practice, using hands-on activities.

3. Reflection
  We consider how what we have learned can be used in other contexts.

(And then use it to teach others.)

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1 Thanks to Lisa Graustein for helping to articulate this model. Also, see Birman, et. al. (2000); Adalbjarnardóttir (2002); Guskey & Yoon (2009)
Transformative Peace Education

- Peace education teaches the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to live in peace.

- *Transformative* peace education is designed to affect one’s dispositions toward peacemaking in a way that cannot easily be undone.
Transformative Peace Education and Teachers

- Four key lessons:
  - Transformative change requires a *holistic approach*, beyond curriculum
  - A holistic approach requires *democratic and experiential pedagogy*
  - Effective experiential pedagogy is rooted in *supportive relationships*
  - All of these are created and sustained through a *community* extending into the classroom, school, and neighborhood
Lesson 1: A Holistic Approach

- An expansive view of training that went beyond additive change to incorporate experiences outside the classroom:

  - The way I see my students has changed... I used to pay all my attention to their behavior and discipline, so I never realized that sometimes their need to express themselves – what I would often see as lack of discipline – was actually an indication of their enormous...potential as leaders.

- Escuela Nueva Teacher, Toldeo
Learning experiences that encourage democratic teaching and shared power:

- Before Juegos de Paz what I had always done was to tell them, “Take out your notebook; today we are going to do this.” But with Juegos de Paz... I have had to modify what I plan to give them some power and to have them choose, too.

  - Escuela Nueva Teacher, El Zulia
Lesson 3: Relationships

- Teaching and learning are acts of risk and vulnerability, so we must model confidence and trust, even mistake-making:

  - Juegos de Paz has encouraged me to create new ways to look at conflicts... It has helped me to reflect and to want to be better. For example, if a kid hurts someone else with his words, what...am I going to say? I can’t stay quiet because the kids will learn from that, but I also need to be careful of the way I speak and the choices I make.

  - 4th grade teacher, Sardinata
Lesson 4: Community

- Creating what bell hooks (2003) called “communities of resistance... where our passion to connect and to learn is fulfilled” (p. xvi), through substantive, ongoing community-based coaching:

  - Juegos de Paz has helped me in my daily role as a teacher, but also has a mother and friend. I feel like I have been developing the ability to understand my students better, but also people who are not part of the project. ...[A] barrier that did not allow me to get close to others and express my ideas in conversation has fallen. I feel more sure of myself, I put myself in the shoes of others, and I’m better able to create a positive change in a society that seeks peace.

- Escuela Nueva Teacher
Implications

• Moving forward, we expect to:

  o Document changes and adaptations in new contexts – and then integrate adaptations into new projects

  o Cultivate a network of experienced teachers as trainers

  o Help local leaders create sustainable, indigenous support structures

  o Create alliances with local universities, as a way to extend communities of support

  o Evaluate the impact of Juegos de Paz on teachers’ practice
Thank you!
Loose Ends & Lingering Questions

**Stance.** Although we hope to be rigorous in our implementation and evaluation of the program, we come to this work not as detached, objective researchers.

**Power.** Throughout the work, we were aware of the many intersections of power and privilege: north-south, west-nonwest, urban-rural. Also, we came to this work through the government and funded by non-local sources.

**Agency.** Whose agency? What did it mean to be empowered? Empowered to do what?