



## EDUCATOR PROJECTS AND IDEAS

## Part 2: Sharing of *The Peace Project* at Herbert Mills STEM Elementary in Reynoldsburg, OH

Listening to birds chirp. Stargazing. Bowser Junior (a popular video game character) meditating. These are all things that bring peace to students in grades K-4 at Herbert Mills STEM Elementary.

On a warm day in Spring before lunch, students gathered in the school's community garden for *The Peace Project Reveal* to show off the smooth stones they painted with symbols and artwork that resembled what peace means to them. The Reveal marked the final step—*share* in the Herbert Mills Elementary Engineering Design Process. The project launched three weeks prior at Morning Roar, the school-wide meeting that begins each school day.

### The Share

Principal Brian Coffey launched the event by greeting the students and introducing the event as the culmination of the three-week transdisciplinary project. He reminded students of the learning they had accomplished through considering the meaning of peace globally, peace within their local community, and peace

in their own lives. "You designed these stepping stones to reflect what peace means to you and that's a great thing," praised Mr. Coffey to the students.

Mr. Coffey also spoke to the legacy element of the students' demonstrations of learning. "We want this to be a space out here in our garden area where many kids in the future can come check out, learn, and also remember who came before them... and you get to be part of that legacy," he noted.

Beginning with Kindergarten and progressing chronologically through the grades, a handful of students from each teacher's classroom shared their



Source: PAST Foundation



stones. The students briefly described their artwork and read poems or statements they had written about peace. Students, teachers, and parents gathered on the lawn before them to listen and applauded after each share.

When the students finished sharing their painted stones, Alexa Barbati, a lead teacher of the project read an excerpt from a children's story about Peace. She then invited students to peacefully place their stones within the sandy area in the garden, dug and constructed by the 4th grade class one week earlier.

Students thoughtfully placed their stones by grade level, taking extra care to find a special and visible location to leave their legacy. "As you place your stones, think about what peace means to you, and make a wish," instructed Mr. Coffey. "Once the peace stones have been placed, we're not going to touch them after today. We're going to spray something on them to make sure they keep during the weather...you're welcome to come over during recess to observe them, but we



Source: PAST Foundation

will not pick them up and move them after today."

### Evaluation and Modification

When asked about their thoughts on the project's implementation, lead teachers Alexa Barbati and Angela Forino agreed that the project went better than they had expected. "They were engaged. At first I was worried that they weren't taking away the things at Roar about the quotes and colors...but that's what they all put on their stones," exclaimed Ms. Barbati. Ms. Forino agreed, "Many of the symbols were abstract, but even the Kindergarteners and 1<sup>st</sup> Graders... when they were explaining what they know, they understood peace."

"I think the project went well overall, and it was pretty easy to do," commented another teacher, Isabel Bozada. "I went to the [neighboring] High School's art fair, and they have a community art piece: *What does Reynoldsburg City Schools mean to you?* Our kids wrote on little colorful notecards to answer the questions, and a lot of them after this project wrote that school is a peaceful place to them. It was really nice."

If you want to learn more about Herbert Mills STEM Elementary School, check out:  
[http://www.reyn.org/herbertmillselementary\\_ho me.aspx](http://www.reyn.org/herbertmillselementary_ho me.aspx)



Source: PAST Foundation