

# "It Takes a Village..."

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Inspired by a curriculum integrated project at Lincolnwood School in Evanston

Keywords: diversity, cross generational, mentor, disparity, inclusion, understanding, respect, awareness

**Participants – 18**

**Artist Mars Caulton:**

Mars works deeply, not wide; she uses a lot of language activities in the classroom, asks kids what art forms they want to use. She believes in making art fit the person; not making a person fit the art.

**Community Leader Beth Sagett-Flores, Principal at Lincolnwood**

**Information:**

The Shanti Foundation Peace is working with Lincolnwood Elementary School in Evanston, to teach/facilitate the use of peacekeeping methods. Shanti is oriented towards identification/embrace of diversity; help with problem-solving and conflict resolution. Everything is rooted in the creative process – not about product.

Purpose of workshop – to provide a "taste" of what the Evanston project residency will involve (15 weeks, 1 day/wk). "How we get there matters" (nonviolent, respectful methods).

**Background:**

Issue in Evanston – school is located in a particular socioeconomic neighborhood that is not reflective of economic/racial background of many of its students. Children know each other in classroom setting, but don't know each other's lives, what happens when they go home. "Help children unpack what's in their pockets" – understand what they have within, include the things that make them who they are. Help kids learn how to define themselves – allowing them to present these in a multitude of ways, know each other and create communities, form meaningful relationships.

## Process

- (1) “getting to know you” activities
- (2) kids will be asked to talk about something they learned about someone else
- (3) kids will be asked to identify a mentor in their life (someone who inspires, provides leadership – could be prominent person, or “unsung hero”); share info about mentors with other kids in classroom
- (4) match up kids with other kids’ mentors – document what they’ve learned about someone else’s mentor, and share that – and document the journey from who they are, to getting to know someone who may be very different from them.

This process will also encourage formation of inter-generational relationships (across neighborhood, racial, class, age lines).

## Group participation activity (all)

### Group introductions

Group exercise – think about one of the activities you engage in during the day, that reflects who you are – specific and concrete. Use mime/pantomime to communicate this to the rest of the group. Results, as generated by group members: garden work; playing with puppy/granddaughter; playing saxophone; playing guitar; over-imbibing to celebrate a happy occasion; lots on my mind/processing new information; driving and picking up daughter; running; conducting music; knitting; swimming.

## Continuation of background discussion (Mars Caulton)

Participants in Evanston project gathered in small groups, got to know each other (how do you go from what you know, to a new experience, how do you feel during the process? What do you see/think about goals for school?). Ability to function as a group, effective leadership skills/equal levels; assess where each individual child is at (“what do you have in your pockets?”); realize that everyone has something of value, we don’t all bring the same

talents; “a place has a story” – make the effort to find out the story; ask kids about the 10 most important things that have happened in their lives – as this info is put together collectively, stories emerge.

Some immigrant populations demonstrate stronger sense of self than minorities. Need re-evaluating/valuing of where you come from first. (Some students identify traditional mentors, some non-traditional – need to compare on equal ground.) Research project about “someone who looks like you” and “someone who doesn’t” – so kids aren’t only looking up to only one type of person.

### Group participation activity (all)

Participants self-selected into smaller groups, based on identification with a preference for/interest in one of the following:

Newspaper – if I can imagine it, I can build it

Crayons – visual person/drawing/exploration of shape and color

Pen – writing, speaking, articulation

Tube – musical tendencies

Shell – sense of touch, tactile sensations

Squares in circles – problem-solver, organizer of information

Cloth – story-teller, natural-born actor

Instructions: first be facilitators, then be students, then do it (using materials and supplies provided at each “creative station”)

Group creations:

**Drum circle** (Mars - work with people’s impulses/value them; improvising is the nature of our lives, it is a teachable art)

**Crown, made of natural materials** – each participant identified different words to describe the natural world (memories, restoration, getting dirty). They wrote down these words, put various materials together (including the written words), and arranged them in the form of a crown

**Pocket** – each participant wrote down ideas/secrets, placed it in a pocket they created. (Mars – microcosm of community – “everything in one pocket”)

Quilt of pockets

**“Umbrella”** circle of diversity, created by a linkage of different types of rubber bands, with other types of materials incorporated and affixed

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