



MAKING SHALOM: AN EMERGENT CURRICULUM EXPERIENCE

Submitted by: REBECCA SWARTZ

Subject Area: Values, Jewish Living and Identity, Prayer

Multi-lesson unit

Target Age Group: Early Childhood

Lesson Objective(s): At the Boulder Jewish Day School, the preschool children have been learning all year about the value of Shalom, focusing on Shalom Beyn Adam L'Chavero- Peace between a person and his or her friend. Our exploration began as we were working with creating with boxes in our block area. As teachers, we considered how the children were building in the block area, and decided to add some large cardboard boxes to give the children an opportunity to engage in an open ended creation. We began by using the boxes as skyscrapers to build around, but eventually, the children asked for a door. After we cut out a door, the teachers were surprised that instead of putting things in the houses, they decided to go inside! Closing and opening the door of the box allowed the younger children in the classroom to experiment with the theme of separation and reunion - when they close the door and say "Shalom, Lehitraot!" (Goodbye, see you later!) and then open it and say "Shalom!" they are "practicing" separation and reunion. This helps them to develop confidence in their abilities to separate as well as share their emotions surrounding the theme.

The older children had to work out their conflicts over sharing the boxes. Because there was only space for two children, they devised a role for a third child who opened and closed the boxes. We introduced the concept of "making shalom" and "shalom bayit (peace in the home)" through this experience. We have been talking about the feeling of Shalom, or peace as the way we feel when we have solved problems with our friends. Belonging to a group, a friendship, or a family all involve being able to solve problems and share emotions.

As teachers, we helped the children to decorate and put the photos of the children in the class on the boxes to show who "belonged". I have attached a PDF document of the book I created to help document the children's experience and help them to reflect on their experience for reference.

This unit of study for Early Childhood Educators is a model of how to make a Jewish Value come alive in the context of young children's play. Following this unit, the children will meet the objectives of:

1. Understand the multiple meanings for the word "Shalom" and use the word Shalom in conversation and play.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the concept of "Making Shalom" through classroom dialogue and conflict resolution in play.



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3. Share experiences and anecdotes of their feelings related to Shalom Bayit, when they feel there is peace in their home or classroom, and describe experiences when they were able to “make Shalom” with their friends.

4. Children will learn songs with the word “Shalom” including Sim Shalom, Oseh Shalom, and Shalom Chaverim. They will be able to describe the mood of the songs, and how singing about Shalom makes them feel.

Materials:

1. Moving boxes
2. Markers, paper, tape, scissors
3. Photos of each child and teacher in the class
4. Digital Camera and Prints of the Photos you take

Directions:

This unit was done in using an emergent curriculum approach. These directions are meant to serve as guidelines and not as strict direction which must be followed exactly.

1. Place the boxes in the block area.
2. Encourage the children to think of ways to turn the boxes into play houses.
3. Decorate the boxes with photos, children’s art, and signs the children create.
4. As you create the play houses, encourage the children to talk about how they will share the houses. Use the phrase, “Make Shalom” to talk about how the children will get along in the houses. “Shlom Bayit” means peace in our homes. Talk about sharing the houses as “Shlom Bayit”.
5. You can extend this concept by making signs about Shlom Bayit to place in the housekeeping center of your dramatic play area. Asking children, “How can you make Shalom?” when they are engaged in a conflict is a way to begin a Jewish conversation about a value that we can strive to have in our relationships. The solutions that children can create in conflict situations are “Shalom”.
6. In your circle time, you can sing the songs, Shalom Chaverim, Oseh Shalom, and Sim Shalom. After you create the book about your play houses, you can also read that book at circle time. You can also encourage children to dictate their memories of times they



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made Shalom with friends and their ideas about the meaning of Shalom. (Please see the attached PDF of the book that we created at BJDS)

7. The dialogue about Shalom can continue beyond the time that you have the playhouses in your classroom by allowing the children to read the book about their experience you create and continuing to use the question, “How can you make Shalom?” when conflicts arise in your classroom.