

American School Peace League and the First Peace Studies Curriculum

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Founded in 1907 by former schoolteacher Fannie Fern Andrews, the American School Peace League published the first comprehensive peace education curriculum in 1914. The league and its curriculum won the recognition and support of the national Education Association. The curriculum presented vivid ways lessons of peace and international understanding were communicated to school-age children from grades 1 through 8.

Former public school teacher and Radcliffe graduate Fannie Fern Andrews founded the American School Peace League in 1907 in Boston and was formally organized in 1908. Serving as its executive director and operating out of her home Andrews enlisted the support of some wealthy and prominent benefactors, including Mrs. Malcolm J. Forbes. The league reflected the optimistic international outlook in social reform characteristic of the pre-World War I progressive era in the United States. The league was also motivated by growing concerns over increasing militarism and the rise of industrialized states. Deeply moved by the first and second international peace conferences at The Hague in 1899 and 1907, Andrews proclaimed: "Surely, it seemed to me, the day of better things was dawning, and I coveted the opportunity to enter the field." (Andrews, *Memory*, 31).

From the start, she considered the league to be an organization by and for teachers as a means of bearing "cogent testimony to the power of education to guide the forces of progress" (Andrews, 28). League membership was extended to all schoolteachers throughout the country as well as students in secondary schools, normal schools, and colleges as well as anyone else interested in the general work of peace education. By 1914, the league had 45 state branches, including those in Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico, New York, Arkansas, Illinois, Oklahoma, and California. Andrews' organization sponsored "a high school debate and two student essay contests on topics such as 'How should the world be organized so as to prevent wars in the future?'" (Zeiger, "Teaching Peace," 54). As part of her mission, Andrews conducted a nationwide campaign for the official adoption of "Peace Day" in public schools; the selected date was May 18 to commemorate the opening of the first Hague Peace Conference in 1899. By 1914, the league's guide for celebrating "Peace Day" sold some 65,000 copies despite only 15,000 high schools in the United States.

Before World War I, Andrews made the league the most recognizable peace education force in both the United States and Europe. Andrews traveled all over the United States speaking to educational organizations and seeking the support of the educational presses. In Europe, French teachers formed an organization. After her visit to England the School Peace League of Great Britain and Ireland was created. German teachers and ministers of education also promised their cooperation. Based on her untiring efforts, she and her group received the financial backing of Edward Ginn's World Peace Foundation, the endorsement of the National Schools of Superintendents, and the accolades of the United States Commissioner of Education, Philander P. Claxton, who aided in the organization's distribution of literature and support for its Peace Days in the public schools.

The league's most ambitious endeavor in the field of peace education, however, was its attempt to transform the school curriculum from a war orientation to a peace setting. Along with Andrews, a group of Boston-area peace educators—Ella Lyman Cabot, author of *Everyday Ethics*; Mabel Hill, co-author of *The Study of History in the Elementary Schools* commissioned by the American Historical Association in 1909; Fannie Coe, a children's book author; Mary McSkimmon,

a Brookline, Massachusetts, grade school principal; and Mabel Hill, dean of the Mitchell Military Boys' School in Billerica, Massachusetts—began working in 1910 on a four-hundred-page curriculum guide, *A Course in Citizenship*. Cabot was the lead editor and the publication appeared in print in 1914. Capturing “the widespread interest among educators in new approaches to the social sciences,” the new peace education curriculum was tailored to reform civics and social studies by “transforming ‘citizenship education’ from a national to an international perspective.” (Zeiger, 55). Its guiding motif was the training of elementary school children and junior high students in the ideals of good citizenship and international understanding.

The curriculum was designed to provide for a comprehensive program in the areas of moral, social, and intellectual development. According to the syllabus: “The time has come when we can advance on a new crusade. Let all the teachers of our land unite to spur their pupils on to drive back evil, disease, and sin. Let them form with one another the unbreakable bonds of a common loyalty embodied in service to the national and good will to men.” (Quoted in Patterson, *Toward a Warless World*, 137). *A Course in Citizenship* was written for elementary and junior high school educators and contained comprehensive monthly lesson plans for grades 1 through 8. In first grade the curriculum contained a unit entitled, “Avoiding Quarrels and Making Peace.” It was designed as a conflict resolution program aimed at learning how to manage one’s anger. Second Grade had a unit called “Peace Among Children” and “The Golden Rule.” Grade Three had a broader community perspective, “Peace Among Neighbors.” Throughout all grade levels was the study and promotion of “peace heroes”—an idea first proposed by steel magnate Andrew Carnegie prior to the establishment of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Peace heroes singled out came from all occupations such as medicine and science, education, and social reform. They were “patriots in higher spheres with higher tools than the man with the gun.” (Cabot, ed., *A Course in Citizenship*, 271). Throughout the text, the names of Clara Barton, Louis Pasteur, Samuel Gridley Howe, and Florence Nightingale were mentioned as shining examples of universal humanity and dignity.

The curriculum, however, did not confine itself solely to the most famous. Stories of lesser-known, even obscure, ordinary people and children were introduced into the text as examples of courageous acts of mercy to others. Doctors and nurses working in epidemics or wars and firefighters were highlighted. In keeping with the spirit of Harvard philosopher William James’ famous 1910 essay, “The Moral Equivalent of War,” the writers of *A Course in Citizenship* sought to bring out the excitement and heroics of peace action. These individuals were the real soldiers of peace. Additionally, the curriculum addressed the roles of women and minorities who had distinguished themselves as educators, community leaders, and charity workers. In grade 2, for instance, students studied the “Childhood of Great Men” such as King Arthur, Moses, Horace Mann, Ben Franklin, and Booker T. Washington who struggled “to educate and uplift his race.” (Cabot, 271). Interestingly, included in the list of “Great Men” were “Louisa May Alcott making others happy in her childhood....Queen Victoria studying harder than other children that she might know how to rule....Joan of Arc...dreaming of saving her country.” (Zeigler, 57). The inclusion of females was done purposely to serve as an educational antidote to the cultural and political values supporting the grand notion of male militarism. One of Andrews’ most active league members was Nathan Schaffer. In a 1907 speech to the National Education Association, he stated: “As soon as the girl takes up the study of history, she begins to wish that she had been born a boy. Her textbook magnifies the achievements of men and devotes very little space to the deeds of women.” Then he forcefully proclaimed that over time she believes “that life is not worth living unless one can attain military glory, and that her greatest misfortune is to have been born a girl.” (Schaffer, 58-59). *A Course in Citizenship* sought to advance the very importance and necessity of political justice for women as an extension of its goal for world peace.

The curriculum was largely based on the progressive education theories of John Dewey. The authors of *Course* valued child-centered experiences and ardently believed that the purpose of education was to foster self-reflection and critical thinking as a means to growth. In this context, moreover, the curriculum contained lessons on tolerance and diversity. There were numerous stories and poems from non-Western cultures such as Jataka tales from India and the teachings of Confucius as a way of sharing information about different races and cultures. Younger students used dolls from different nations and studied the homes and children's lives from other parts of the world as a way of emphasizing similarities rather than differences. More advanced grade school students were exposed to the lives of successful immigrants like the Russian-Jewish writer Mary Antin and the German-born senator and industrialist Carl Schurz. In contrast to the traditional educational program of Americanization and assimilation, the league's *Course* took pride in noting that "American life is made rich and fruitful by the gifts and service of many nationalities" and that young students "can learn to recognize the rights and feelings of the Chinese laundryman, the Italian fruit-dealer, the Jewish tailor." (Cabot, 87).

One of the more compelling lessons of tolerance with respect to immigrants was the fourth grade story, "Little Athens's Message" in which a Greek child with broken English is encouraged by his American teacher to explain the ancient culture of his own land. In later grades, respect and tolerance were extended to international relations. Students in Grade 8 were asked to read Rabbi Stephen S. Wise's "human brotherhood" in which he states that "all of us learning that other nations are not barbarians, that other races are not inferior, that other faiths are not Godless." (Cabot, 319-320). The eighth grade curriculum also included a topic on the "World Family" and asked students to question whether war can secure any positive results among the world's civilized peoples.

The league's first edition of the peace curriculum also addressed three other aspects. First, in terms of the environment children were taught respect for animals, natural resources, and the earth as another component of peace culture. Second, the curriculum endorsed the league's support for the principles of international law—an important strand of the organized peace movement's efforts prior to 1914. The pre-World War I peace movement had witnessed the establishment of forty-five new peace organizations. Many were created as specialized agencies whose purpose was to transmit the peace leadership's knowledge to the populace and to encourage conciliatory gestures among governments. The development of an international mind was considered an important educational objective on the part of Andrews and the league. In one of the league's pamphlets for secondary schools Andrews wrote that "The opening of the First Hague Peace Conference...was...the beginning of a new epoch for international law....The hope of civilization lies in the progressive effort which has given the family of nations...an international lawmaking body. Law is the only substitute for war." (Zeigler, 61). Andrews wrote the chapters on the topic of international law for *Course* and it was the capstone of the peace curriculum. It was introduced in the seventh and eighth grades. Primary emphasis focused on the Hague conferences as well as the Permanent Court of Arbitration. Third, in 1916, Andrews and the League supported the grassroots efforts of teacher-activists opposed to military training in the public schools. Prior to American intervention beginning in April 1917, the league waged a massive campaign to convince the National Education Association—the nation's largest teacher organization—to oppose the program. It was difficult for enlightened educators to support martial virtues when such indoctrination could seriously undermine the very notion of educational freedom in a democratic society.

When the United States entered World War I Andrews like many other intellectuals such as Dewey, Columbia University president Nicholas Murray Butler, and Cornell University historian Carl Becker believed that the United States stood on the side of peace and international understanding. In 1918, a second edition was reissued and entitled *A Course in Citizenship and Patriotism*. Only this edition was designed to support President Wilson's call to arms and the

rightness of the special moral mission of the United States. The revised curriculum was very different from the 1914 edition and reflected the changing views of Andrews and the league once the United States went to war. Even the league's name was changed to the American School Citizenship League to reflect its support for America's national leaders and its cause.

However, the first edition remains a remarkable achievement in the annals of peace education and international studies. The emphasis of the first edition's curriculum on "responsibility," "faithfulness," "obedience," "fair play," "cheerfulness," "service," and "self-control" suggests that teaching of genteel citizenship was a worthwhile component of genuine internationalism. In the view of noted peace educator Ian Harris, *A Course in Civilization* was the first attempt to promote and define the real meaning of peace: "Peace through justice implies that peace may be attained by eliminating social oppression and economic exploitation. Peace through justice is concerned with the elimination of poverty, disease, starvation, human misery, and with the preservation of human rights." (Harris, 19). The historical roots of peace education as a school reform movement were evident in Andrews' American School Peace League and its imaginative and bold peace studies curriculum. The league and the first edition of the curriculum were shining examples in the promotion of global citizen education, respect for international relations, and the importance of lasting peace. Current peace studies programs for young children have modeled many of their curricula materials and practices on *A Course in Civilization*.

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