



# Youth Experience in Inclusive PeaceJam Program

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## Abstract

This study examined the impact of participation in a weekly after school program for middle school youth with and without disabilities. The program, organized around the PeaceJam Leaders Curriculum and dubbed Inclusive PeaceJam, included learning activities facilitated by preservice teachers, focused on empowering youth to identify ways to address problems in their communities, and encouraged identity development that includes civic awareness and participation through study of the Nobel Peace Laureates. The learning activities over the 9 week program culminated in a youth designed and implemented service project in the community. Effectiveness of the program as a service-learning experience for preservice teachers will also be investigated.

## Research Questions

1. Do middle school participants express increased awareness and understanding of the broader context of the world and cultural diversity?
2. Do middle school participants demonstrate an increased knowledge of peacemaking and non-violent conflict resolution strategies?
3. Do college and middle school participants report an increase in a sense of agency and ability to effect positive change to address real world problems and plan to engage in civic participation, service, and advocacy?
4. What is the impact of inclusion on after school programming and exposure to ideas of social change?
5. Does application of strategies to adapt curriculum and experience with peace education increase preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy related to teaching in inclusive settings and employing a peace education framework?

## Methods

- Partnership between Elizabethtown College and Elizabethtown Area Middle School
- 7-8 week afterschool program hosted on campus
- Use of the PeaceJam Leaders Curriculum
- Weekly activities on Nobel Laureates, current issues, and peacebuilding and identity development
- Integrated into a college course or supported by the student chapter of Council for Exceptional Children
- Focus groups with participants and college student mentors at the conclusion of the semester



## Conclusions

PeaceJam can provide a structure for an inclusive program that brings together preservice teachers and middle school students. Such a program can lead to increased opportunities for preservice teachers to work with middle school students and to adapt lessons for individual needs and interests. The middle school students reported increased opportunities for social interaction, developing new perspectives on current events and their communities, and a growing knowledge of people who actively work to build peace. K-12 participants also reported feeling more empowered and a growth in the belief that they can create change in their communities.

## References

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## Results

### THEME: Change agents.

"Now I see myself as a person who actually makes an effort to make a difference."  
 "I can change the world around me."

### THEME: Social opportunities.

"We get to work with others."  
 "I learned that a group of people is better than alone.... It's better to have someone by your side."

### THEME: New perspective.

"It has given me a new perspective."  
 "It gave me a new perspective on people and how everybody is different."  
 "...be more open to ideas ..."  
 "It brought a new perspective on the world."

### THEME: Knowledge about peacebuilders.

"It has given me a new perspective."  
 "It gave me a new perspective on people and how everybody is different."  
 "...be more open to ideas ..."  
 "It brought a new perspective on the world."

### THEME: Experience with middle school.

"Middle schoolers have a whole different energy."  
 "I am less scared of middle schoolers."



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