

People of Culture and Wisdom
Building an Oasis of Hope, Trust and Friendship in Society
SGI-USA Culture Department

Selected Encouragement to the Educators Division
from SGI President Daisaku Ikeda



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ENCOURAGEMENT TO EDUCATORS DIVISION

Ties of Trust

The New Human Revolution, *Volume 20, chapter 3*, World Tribune 6/13/ 2008, p. B

The construction of lasting world peace; cooperation between peoples; reciprocity and equality between nations; and the creation of a society in which all people can live lives of true dignity- all of these endeavors rest on the foundation of education. I firmly believe that education is the wellspring of human culture that enriches society with fresh vitality and energy for dynamic progress.

Teacher's Art

http://www.sgi.org/english/sgi_president/works/essays/TEACHER.html

I believe that education is what remains long after the content of each specific lesson we were taught has been forgotten. The essence of education is character formation, teaching young people how to live in society and encouraging them to think independently. Study is much more than simply absorbing existing knowledge and techniques, and the ability to memorize and reason is nothing compared to the wisdom, emotional richness and creativity within every human being.

I believe that the genuine goal of education must be the life-long happiness of those who learn. Education should never be subordinated to the demands of national ego, or corporations searching for profit-generating employees. Human beings, human happiness, must always be the goal and objective.

The relationship between teacher and pupil can be a vital link through which new horizons are opened up and life develops. To me, the essence of education is this process of one person's character inspiring another. When teachers become partners in the process of discovery, burning with a passion for truth, the desire to learn will naturally be ignited in their students' hearts. And once children feel that their teachers are genuinely concerned for their individual welfare, they will begin to trust and open up to them.

Teachers who do not understand and care for their students, giving stereotyped answers, cannot possibly satisfy children's curious and sensitive minds. It must never be forgotten that the most important people in a school are its students.

I once heard about a Japanese elementary school teacher who was irritated by a girl in his class who was unable to keep up. He gave up trying to help her after a fellow teacher told him, "Human beings are just like fruit; twenty to thirty percent is always worthless and there's nothing you can do about it." Then, one day during a break, he noticed her playing with a puzzle, trying to put plastic pieces together so

they fit into a box. Finally she succeeded and yelled, "I got it!" her face sparkling with delight he had never seen before. The teacher suddenly felt remorse. How dare he give up on her! Wasn't it his job to make sure that each child walked out of his classroom with the confidence that they could do anything if they really tried?

He discovered that the girl's parents, both graduates of leading universities, were constantly calling her "stupid." The teacher resolved to praise her every day, for every little accomplishment, to wash away the stain of criticism from her heart.

After a year, the girl was transformed. Proceeding at her own pace, she came to experience the joy of learning. The key was her realization that if she made an effort to achieve something, she could do it.

This story shows how the smallest failure can destroy a child's confidence, and the smallest catalyst can trigger growth. It is vital that teachers believe in every child's potential and care about their happiness as human beings.

The Treasure of Life Shines Equally in All People

World Tribune 02/28/03, p.2

The French educator Jean-Henri Fabre, renowned for his studies of the insect world recorded in his 10-volume work *Souvenirs entomologiques*, was inspired in his efforts by a profound love of humankind. Teaching science in junior, middle and high schools for some 30 years, he dedicated himself to the spiritual struggle that is education. The classes he conducted were vibrant and inspired; he drew the hearts and interests of the students like a magnet.



The idea that the will to learn, the joy of learning, could be dulled and extinguished by lifeless textbooks designed only for the cramming of facts was, for Fabre, completely intolerable. "Science is a garden," he writes in one letter, "surrounded by formidable walls, the tops of which are strewn with shards of broken bottles. For the sake of the children, I wish to break down these walls and hurl those shards back at the demons. This I will without fail do!" Let us tear down the walls put up by misguided approaches to education!

Fabre's heartfelt appeal parallels the conviction and belief that moved Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the father of Soka education, the pedagogy of value creation. Makiguchi expressed these sentiments in his work *The System of Value-Creation Pedagogy*. "I am driven," he writes, "by the intense desire to prevent

the present deplorable situation—of 10 million of our children and students forced to endure the agonies of cutthroat competition, the difficulty of getting into good schools, ‘examination hell’ and the struggle for jobs after graduation—from afflicting the next generation.” The refusal to accept education as something defined by authority, the determination to unleash children’s inherent capacity to realize happiness—these intense desires drove Makiguchi’s quest. Therein is the font from which Soka education flows, therein the spiritual legacy to which we are heirs. It is the succession of this spirit that binds us, making us inseparable.

Here also is the mission and challenge of Soka education: to tap the boundless potential inherent in each person, to help move humanity in the direction of goodness and harmony. Through dialogue with a wide range of thinkers and scholars, I have sought to establish a global network of education and friendship. These efforts are rooted in my conviction that education for global citizenship—education based on an authentic humanism—represents the vital foundation for a culture of peace for all humanity.

The Times Call for Education

World Tribune 06/06/03, p.2

Teachers and students should join in the pursuit of truth and in creating value. Doing so, they will form strong ties of mutual trust and respect as companions in learning—ties that surpass even those of parent and child. This is the starting point of education and learning. Education, naturally, is the foundation for human development. It is the basis of happiness and peace. I am determined once again to stir a fresh wave of education, to forge an even stronger network of educational and academic cooperation and exchange around the world, in order to build a new age in which respect for the sanctity of life takes center stage.

We cannot win in life on our own. We cannot grow on our own. That is why we have schools — that is why we have friends. Human beings only fully exist in their relations with others.

Teachers and students are equals. Neither is above or below the other. In the pursuit of learning, it is vital that we engage in earnest dialogue as fellow human beings, for the sake of peace, happiness and good—discussing at length, asking each other’s opinions and respecting each other’s ideas. This, I believe, is the true path of learning.

Thoughts on Education for Global Citizenship

Delivered at Teachers College, Columbia University, June 13, 1996

<http://www.daisakuikedada.org/index.php?mid=resources&sub=works&sub2=lect&qid=3>

It is my abiding conviction that it is the teacher dedicated to serving students, and not the inanimate facility, that makes a school... Students' lives are not changed by lectures, but by people. For this reason, interactions between students and teachers are of the greatest importance. We learn from people and it is for this reason that the humanity of the teacher represents the core of the educational experience."

Nature as an Excellent Teacher-Rousseau's Emile

Living Buddhism, 7/1/2006, p. 106

I do not remember the details of our conversation at that time, but he (Toda) once told me that his mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, liked to read Rousseau as well. In his lifework *Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei* (Value-creating Educational Theory), Mr. Makiguchi often referred to Rousseau. For example, in discussing ways to reform education, he writes, "This clinging to outmoded, wasteful educational policies and practices can be observed in both East and West, and it is only thanks to the insistence of such revolutionary educators as Rousseau, Comenius, and Pestalozzi that youth today have a lighter sentence to serve in the prison of meaningless studies. In his work, Mr. Makiguchi condemns a type of education that overemphasizes intellectual knowledge as the "prison of meaningless studies."

School and the Study of Children Are Treasures of the Future

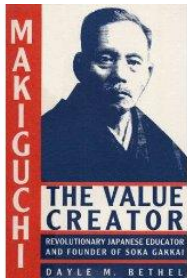
The following are excerpts from Daisaku Ikeda's three-volume series on parenting Dialogues on Mother and Child in the Twenty-first Century (Niju-isseiki heno haha to ko o kataru), Daisanbunmeisha, Tokyo, 1999-2000. 8/1/00 World Tribune, p.4.

Overcoming Problems at School

The school environment is just as important for children's development as their home environment, especially since, as children grow older, they spend more time at school. Teachers should provide the kind of learning that children do not receive at home. Also, rather than placing blame when children cause problems at school, the school system and the teachers should work together with the parents to nurture and raise children.

At school, children encounter many experiences that help them become stronger. It is important that they spend time with other children so they can learn to function in group situations. When interacting with different personalities, there may be unavoidable conflicts, but these enable students to

develop as human beings. Associating with children from different backgrounds is a necessary rite of passage. Sometimes, what might be considered negative from an adult's perspective actually contributes to a child's development. Children may misbehave or use objectionable language; they may even sound like juvenile delinquents. Nevertheless, for some children, this is a part of growing up; most of the time such behavior will eventually turn itself around and serve as a positive foundation for young lives.



Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first Soka Gakkai president, held the conviction that the responsibility for education in his day needed to be wrested from government and politicians who had seized control and influenced children toward fanatical patriotism, and instead given to the teachers and parents. He believed that those who had the greatest desire to make children happy should coordinate their efforts to improve the educational system.

Nothing positive results when parents and teachers are at odds, placing blame on one another. Teachers should care for their students as if they were their own children, raising them with dedication and conviction. Parents, on the other hand, should not leave the raising of their children up to the schools. I believe that it is best to establish a cooperative relationship in which the welfare of the children is the main focus of everyone involved.

Obtaining good grades has little to do with one's greatness as a human being. Academic accomplishment and human integrity are two separate issues. Desiring to learn is a noble pursuit, and by studying earnestly, children can polish and elevate their lives. It is important to impart to children the desire to learn for its own sake and the eagerness to improve oneself.

But if good grades and one's greatness as a human being have nothing to do with each other, then why study? Because knowledge is power! We study to become capable; we learn in order to win in life. Without study, we cannot realize our potential, especially during future crucial moments. We won't be able to realize our dreams. Individuals cannot become great without studying and exerting much effort.

"Endurance is strength." In no pursuit do we suddenly mature without having faced and persevered through challenges. To think otherwise is an illusion. Avoiding hardships while trying to reach goals is indicative of laziness and the tendency to be manipulative. Also, if we give up on our goals thinking, "I'd never make it anyway," it shows that we lack strength. Certainly, at times we feel defeated or just want to give up. We may even experience setbacks. Even if we falter a little along the way, however, we just have to renew our determination once again and persist. The ability to do so is proof of real inner strength. Mothers must patiently encourage their children so that they can bring forth their resolve to move forward. When the children advance even a step, praise them warmly with, "You did a great job" or "I knew you could do it."

Begin by Polishing Yourself

SIG Newsletter No. 5660 (8/1/03), Title: "Students Will Shine When Teachers Provide Light"

The eminent French scientist Louis Pasteur received an honorary title from Moscow State University, one of Russia's most respected academic institutions. *[President Ikeda has received both an honorary doctorate and an honorary professorship from this Russian university.]*

Pasteur was also a superb educator. Regarding the role of teachers, he once wrote: "I would hope that when teachers enter the classroom they will quietly ask themselves: Today, how will I elevate the hearts and minds of my students to be higher than they were yesterday?" He had not an iota of the arrogant attitude by which some teachers merely impose knowledge on students. Elevating hearts and minds— education is truly the art of fostering human beings. Pasteur also said: "Young people become animated and are inspired by the light of the teachers who guide them. To pass on the sacred flame to youth, it is necessary to be filled by it oneself."



It is vital that teachers, first of all, begin by polishing themselves. They must burn the flame of passion and intellect in their own hearts. There is nothing more regrettable than to give students a lecture that lacks appeal. I want you to be excellent educators who possess not only in-depth academic knowledge but also consideration for others and a shining character.

Winning Gives Our Lives Meaning

World Tribune 02/22/02, p.2.

SGI President Ikeda's speech to alumni of Soka University and other Soka Schools at Soka University in Tokyo, Nov. 4, 2001.

Both Kant and President Makiguchi resolutely challenged arrogant people, whether they were politicians, clerics or scholars. Both men believed that politicians were at the service of the people and educators at the service of students. They therefore could not forgive those who would forget their duty and put on airs, as if they were better than others.

Peace and Education Proposals

2000 Peace Proposal, A Time to Talk – Thoughts on a Culture of Peace

Living Buddhism, 05/01/2000, p.16

I would like to reemphasize the global challenge that faces us: the creation of a human society that serves the essential needs of education. When defined as those activities that foster the talents and character of human beings, “education” is in no way limited to classrooms but is a mission that must be undertaken and realized by human society as a whole. We must now go back to the original purpose of education—children’s lifelong happiness—and reflect upon the state of our respective societies and our ways of living.

What kind of world should we build for our children to inherit? At the threshold of a new century, we have a great opportunity to seriously face these issues—and it is an opportunity we must seize.

Instead of the powerless deriving from despair, helplessness, defeatism, self-doubt, pessimism, indifference, cynicism, and apathy, we need to engage in vital, volitional, proactive, and energetic efforts—in Spinoza’s words, “virtue that springs from force of character.”

2001 Education Proposal, The Brilliance of the Inner Spirit

Living Buddhism, 07/01/2001, p.22.

The turmoil in education and the consequent darkness enveloping the lives of children point to an eroded ability to educate on the part of society as a whole and its constituent elements—not only those institutions with formal responsibility for educational and religious matters but including the family and the community.

Above all, we need courage if we are to end violence in schools--the kind of courage that will allow us neither to yield when confronted by evil nor to remain idle witnesses in the face of evil. When we muster up this kind of courage, bullying as well as all other forms of violence will inevitably be

rejected.

People controlled by this state of life can grow immune to emotions of love or hatred, suffering or joy, and can retreat into a barren, makeshift world of alienation. Indifference toward evil implies indifference toward good. It makes for a bleak state of life and a semantic space estranged from the vital drama of the struggle between good and evil.

We cannot continue merely treating the symptoms of this malaise. I am not alone in believing we have reached the point at which we must opt for a comprehensive strategy. Maslow aptly raised the question of whether a “value-free education” is at all desirable. Perhaps it is time to choose a response that resonates with the spirituality and faith in the depths of the human heart.

2002 Peace Proposal, The Humanism of the Middle Way: Dawn of a Global Civilization

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In this connection, I would like to make several proposals related to the UN Special Session on Children to be held this May. The purpose of this meeting is to review progress toward the goals agreed upon at the 1990 World Summit for Children. Originally scheduled for last September, its postponement was forced by the terror attacks in the United States.

When societies break down, it is always children whose lives, health and best interests are sacrificed. There are some 2.1 billion children under the age of eighteen on Earth today. Of these, however, fewer than one in ten live in countries where their health and growth is afforded adequate protection. In the decade since the holding of the World Summit for Children, we have seen definite progress. It has been possible to reduce the number of children dying from preventable diseases and to increase the number able to receive basic education (UNICEF Bellamy).

Despite such advances, and perhaps because the plan of action adopted by the 1990 Summit was not given sufficient international attention, progress has been checkered. UNICEF has responded by initiating a global movement for children, calling for participation from governments, NGOs, educational institutions and the media. The Special Session on Children is being held within this context, and, as UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy has stated, its purpose is to clarify the link between healthy children today and a healthy world tomorrow.

2003 Peace Proposal, Toward a Life-Sized Paradigm for Our Age

Living Buddhism, 04/01/2003 p.4.

Along with disarmament and development, the third challenge for human security is that of creating a global society in which all people have access to education. Education not only enables us to live fulfilled lives; it is also the bedrock foundation of any effort to build a culture of peace. In

entrenched, multigenerational conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian problem, the only viable hope for solution lies in a sustained program of education for the young.

2004 Peace Proposal, Inter-transformation: Creating a Global Groundswell for Peace

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As I have stressed on many occasions, including the earlier part of this proposal, I believe that education must be the focus of efforts to extend human security. In the world today 860 million adults are said to be illiterate, and 121 million children have no access to school

The Education for All campaign, spearheaded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), aims to realize universal basic education with concrete benchmarks for achievement. Last year was also the start of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012). Literacy opens the door to knowledge, empowering people to develop their innate abilities and fulfill their potential. Raising literacy rates among women, who account for two-thirds of the illiterate, and providing girls with greater access to primary education would undoubtedly prove powerful in improving the lives not only of women but also of their families and communities. *The State of the World's Children 2004*, released by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in December 2003, warns that none of the world's development objectives can be achieved without progress in girls' education, and calls for urgent reform of international development efforts. Lack of funding has caused many countries to fall behind in the drive for universal primary cooperation. According to estimates by the UN and the World Bank, the target of realizing primary education for all by the year 2015 could be achieved if just four days' worth of the world's annual military expenditure were diverted to education every year (*Human Security* 117-8). Universal primary education is one of the UN's eight Millennium Development Goals (UNDP). To help us move closer to it, I believe there is a definite role for a "global primary education fund" as a focus for greater international funding cooperation. Like these initiatives to ensure a basic education for all, human rights education is a cornerstone of the drive to build a world without war.

2005 Peace Proposal, Humanism Explored

Living Buddhism, 05/01/2005 p.10

When properly implemented (when it is not, that is, merely a tool for social control as was the case in pre-1945 militarist Japan), education is a powerful force for the positive transformation of individuals and society as a whole. Education for global citizenship can help transform humankind's long-standing culture of war into a culture of peace. It challenges us to fulfill our genuine potential as users of language (Latin *Homo loquens*). The United Nations can serve as a powerful coordinating focus for such efforts.

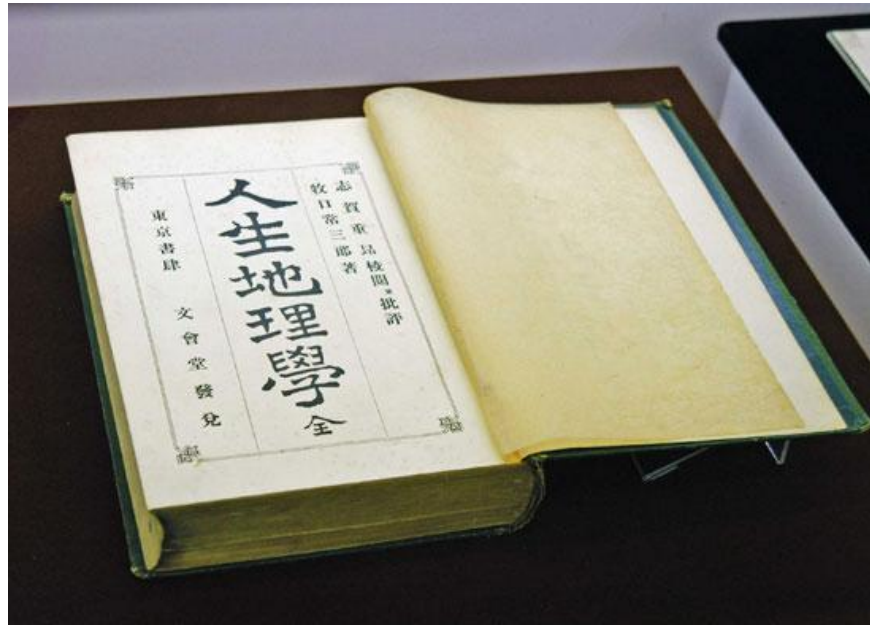
2006 Peace Proposal, A New Era of the People: Forging a Global Network of Robust Individuals

www.sgi.org



UNIDR Director Patricia Lewis (3rd from right) at opening of "Building a Culture of Peace for the Children of the World" exhibition at the UN European Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland

Peace is not simply the absence of war. A truly peaceful society is one in which everyone can maximize their potential and build fulfilling lives free from threats to their dignity. As a practical initiative, I believe we must fully integrate disarmament education, in this expanded sense I have described, into the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001–10), and develop activities to this end throughout civil society. The basis for these initiatives must be a shift in our frame of reference from national to human sovereignty. Disarmament education needs to be a grassroots movement that helps to raise world citizens who are firmly committed to the interests of humankind and the planet, and to strengthen the solidarity among them. In this sense, disseminating knowledge and information about disarmament should not be an end in itself: Our greatest priority should be changing people's mindset and behavior so that they are grounded in a culture of peace. For our part, the SGI has sponsored exhibitions such as "Building a Culture of Peace for the Children of the World," and last year we opened Culture of Peace Resource Centers within our SGI-USA centers in New York and Los Angeles to support this effort. Next year, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the call made by Josei Toda (1900–58), second president of the Soka Gakkai, for the abolition of nuclear weapons, we will promote peace activities at the community level throughout the world as we seek to transform the global culture from one of war to one of peace.



Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's *The Geography of Human Life*

The broad underpinnings of the SGI's movement for peace are to be found in the humanistic philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism. As mentioned, we draw specific inspiration from Josei Toda's declaration for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and, looking back over one hundred years, from the book *Jinsei chirigaku* (The Geography of Human Life) authored by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944), the founding president of the Soka Gakkai. The culminating vision of this work is of a transition from the kind of ruthless competition in which the strong prey upon the weak in pursuit of material prosperity to "humanitarian competition" where states benefit themselves by benefiting others through active engagement with the international community. When *Jinsei chirigaku* was published in 1903, imperialism and colonialism were the dominant forces in the world. But Makiguchi stressed the need to create mutually enhancing, not mutually destructive, relations among peoples: "[O]ur lives rely on the world, our home is the world, and the world is our sphere of activity." Characterizing Japan as one storefront on "Pacific Avenue," he also spoke against the policies of military expansionism that Japan was pursuing in the Korean Peninsula and China. In later years, his devoted efforts, along with those of his disciple Josei Toda, would come to fruition in his major work *Soka kyoikugaku taikei* (The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy). In this work, he elaborated a philosophy of education dedicated to the realization of happiness for oneself and others—in other words, of bringing about a new era of humanitarian competition through the power of education.