

## **What is Peace Club Anyway?**

Peace Club, Peace Class, Peace Team.... it can be a little bit confusing to know what your child is talking about sometimes but these are all pieces of Lafayette's unique Teaching Peace program. Today I want to answer some of your questions about Peace Club. Peace Club meets three times a week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) from 12-1pm in the LAP room. Peace Club offers kids an alternative to the regular lunch and recess set-up. It is a mixed age group that is generally 25-50 kids. Everyone who comes to Peace Club makes a promise to treat everyone else with kindness and respect and to make sure that conflicts are worked out peacefully and everyone is included. I have recruited some 4th and 5th graders to be my special helpers. These are kids who make an extra commitment to seek out those who have a harder time jumping in and include them in games, who help others work out conflicts peacefully and who help lead the big clean-up routine. Because Peace Club is so popular I have assigned certain days to certain grades. Monday is the day for second graders. Each teacher can send up to six or seven children who would like to come. In addition to those 30 or so children, we usually have 5-10 4th and 5th graders to help out. Wednesday is the day for third graders and Fridays are open to 4th and 5th graders.

If you were to drop by Peace Club you would probably be surprised by how noisy it is. It is not "peaceful" on the surface. But there is so much going on that is contributing to making Lafayette a more peaceful place. The children eat lunch together at small tables getting to know new people and children in other grades. After lunch they have lots of options. All of the games and toys at Peace Club are chosen to encourage cooperation and social interactions. Some children choose to make the wonderful, colorful peace posters that I'm sure you have seen around Lafayette. Lots of the children choose to join together to make fantastic structures using the Magna-Tiles. Some children play board games or guessing games such as HeadBanz. Twister and hop-scotch are quite popular new additions. Sometimes we join together to play circle games. The LAP room has a foosball game and so, even though foosball is really, really noisy, I've found that it gives the kids many chances to work out conflicts, to make sure that people are included and to find ways to communicate gently when someone forgets to follow the rules. Peace Club has also provided a chance for the children to help others by making food for the Bethesda Cares homeless shelter once a month.

Kids come to Peace Club for a variety of reasons. Some kids who have a hard time navigating the social maze of lunch and recess come to Peace Club because it is a smaller, more manageable environment. Some kids come to Peace Club when they are having a bit of trouble fitting in. Some kids just come because it's fun. Some kids come because I've asked them to be my helpers. One second grade regular told me that he loves everything about Peace Club but the best thing is having more time to eat his lunch! I'm not always sure why everyone is there, but for whatever reason, Peace Club seems to be a place where many children are finding a community-within-a-community at Lafayette. I'm so happy to spend these noisy, joyful hours with so many kids every week. Feel free to come and join us. Please let me know if you have any questions or comments about Peace Club. Thanks! Linda Ryden