

Hands Across the Sea: Children Supporting Children

To All Educators Parents and Children,

Here is a list of suggestions for successful fulfillment of the community project Hands Across the Sea, mostly DOs and a couple of Don'ts." They are suggestions based on our experience presenting to children from Montessori to Waldorf schools, from public to private, from children aged 3-13 years. We offer them as aids only, with one caveat. We ask that our children do not make statements about peace or politics in a general way or draw images of war or war materiel, even if they want to cross these out to show they don't approve. Instead help your children see how they could be friends, supporters, compassionate citizens of the world. This time is directed toward the Iraqi children. Next time it could be Americans traumatized by a natural event like a storm. Children are wonderful and have great ideas for art and compassion if they are helped to find them!

DO help your students learn some interesting facts about Iraq. How its name means "land of two rivers" (Tigris and Euphrates) and how it is considered by many archeologists to be the "cradle of civilization." The world's oldest story, written in clay tablets, came from there. There is a wonderful book based on it: Lugalbanda, the Boy Who Got Caught Up In A War by Kathy Henderson. We found that older children children liked hearing the story read to them while they were drawing their cards.

Children are fascinated by the ziggurats, tall towers built in spiral or rectangular form. They love to see and draw the Iraqi flag. Help them learn that Iraqi children are much like themselves: they have school, love soccer (the national sensation) and sweets! Family is paramount in importance, as is local kinship. They are fiercely proud of their ancient history and culture.

DO help your students learn some Arabic. We will provide on our website, www.studiocartouche.com, some examples of Arabic calligraphy that can be downloaded and printed for your students to copy or paste into the cards they draw. The language component is very important since we believe that learning another's language shows respect and a sincere desire to communicate. We also have on the site a list of Arabic expressions that can be taught to your class, such as "Ismi _____" (My name is __).

DO spend time with your class generating appropriate comments, for example: I'd like to play soccer with you; I'd like to visit you one day; I like your ziggurats; I like ice cream: what is your favorite food; I am sorry that things are hard for you. It is helpful to write these on the board so children can refer to them when making cards.

DO help your students to discover what Design is. Islamic art, found in religious places, does not show images of people or animals. When Mohammed was teaching, he wanted to honor the Second Commandment which forbids the worship of idols. He was trying to lead his people away from their system of gods and goddesses so in the mosques, no animistic art is allowed. We have found that the children, when given a few examples of designs, have done incredible artwork and the outsides of the cards are as beautiful as the messages inside. Flowers, geometry, rainbows- all lend themselves to lovely designs. DO encourage creativity!

DO have lots of fun! Get parents involved. Contact us if you need further help. After the cards are completed, they will be sent to Iraq and delivered by soldiers working with Operation Iraqi Children. Their website is www.operationiraqichildren.org. Send your package of cards to:

Operation Iraqi Children
c/o Fast Pace Distribution
6200 E. St. John, Kansas City, MO 64109

Thank you for your participation in this project, for giving children a chance to be "tiny diplomats."
Jennifer McConochie and Sisy Anderson