

Teacher Testimonials

“The Essence of Acceptance brought my students a larger awareness of the rest of the world. Even though many have come from difficult circumstances themselves, they’re able to see that there are many people in the world with very little freedom and ability to determine their own present and future.

As a result of the program, we are now in the process of creating class rights. My students are learning and defining what’s important to them as individuals and members of society.

The program has given them a focus they can maintain throughout the school year. Through this lens they can reexamine and reanalyze what they’ve learned and experienced.”

~Linda Ward, Sonoma County Court, Community and Alternative Schools, Adera Teen Parent Program.

“The students now have a more personal view of what other people have gone through. The materials are new and fresh; they provide a bridge from the past to the present. Most students realize that what they learn is applicable to the world they live in. They now have a better understanding of what’s going on in the world today.

The specific curricular structures are easy to build on and integrate into the year’s program. We are now teaching and talking so much more about human rights in the classroom. This theme has given us a bigger picture in which to frame our social studies lessons. The students are not only learning about human rights, they’re learning compassion.”

~Terri Ignaitis, Sequoia High School, Redwood City, 11th grade Social Studies Teacher.

“Our students had a very positive experience learning interactive interviewing skills that enabled them to take oral histories. They developed new skills in thinking through their questions and creating follow-up questions.

The life stories students heard were rather eye opening, particularly those about immigration. Getting here can be difficult, challenging and dangerous. Students learned what its like to deal with things like language and cultural barriers when they’re new to this country. They shared in the experience of being immersed in a new society. If the interviewee has a real life experience to tell the students, that’s what gets their attention. There’s an authenticity of learning that happens when you have an encounter with a real person.”

"The idea of the program is to really help them explore the concept of human rights and how and when those kinds of things have been compromised at different points in

history. We can provide them with all the rich text and films and materials. But when they actually get to interact with real people and hear about their experience and their story, it hits them at a deeper level. When they listened to the Holocaust survivor, they were absolutely riveted."

~Dorothy Patch-Kennedy, Maria Carillo High School 9th Grade Teacher.

"The distinction between civil rights and human rights comes up in the news all the time, so there is continual discussion about the subject matter raised in The Essence of Acceptance. This is very much a part of my students' daily lives. As a result the students have done a lot of generating of their own concepts of human rights and responsibilities. It's a conversation that needs to go on. It applies to what's actually happening in our world. It provides students an opportunity to take action.

"The project's curriculum is great, especially for the disenfranchised youth. Following the Essence of Acceptance manual, we look at current events and discuss which rights are being threatened. When Lillian Judd (a Shoah/Holocaust survivor) was interviewed by my class at the [Sonoma County Juvenile Detention] Hall, my students were transformed! One young man, who we hadn't been able to reach for seven months told me, hearing Lillian's story, 'It makes me realize maybe what I've been through isn't as bad – I'm amazed at how she can still look forward and have a full life!'"

~Gail Alioto, Court, Community and Alternative School, Los Guillicos Youth Detention Center.

"This is a living history of real people. It brings a new face and reality to my students. To understand that other people suffer and survive expands their sense of the world and helps them learn empathy.

Just hearing someone else's point of view, other than their own, is invaluable. Having an opportunity to talk with an adult in school who they don't usually get to talk with gives them a new perspective.

The curriculum fits in really well with the four areas of the world we study as well as what they read in literature and social studies text books. It enhances the existing curriculum."

~Ken Emery, Maria Carillo High School, 9th Grade Social Studies Teacher.

"The Essence of Acceptance is very beneficial for my students. They are able to meet people from different backgrounds, talk with them and get a different perspective on a great variety of issues. Students really bond with their interviewees.

This program makes history so much more meaningful by dealing with it on a personal level rather than from text books. It's so easy to talk about issues in abstract terms, this puts a face of the issues and the news of the day.

The materials were excellent for integrating human rights issues into the classroom. The challenge is to pick out from among the vast curriculum offered the appropriate exercises for your classroom. If you have the opportunity, definitely participate in this program. It will enrich you and your students' learning experience. It's the kind of activity that makes teaching and learning fun."

~Bruce Yingling, Rio Lindo Adventist Academy, 11th Grade Social Studies Teacher.

"I just wanted to give you feedback on what an absolutely incredible day we had here at the junior high school when Vera [Korkus, a Holocaust survivor] came last Thursday to speak with our students! She was able to speak to every one of our 8th grade classes in a small intimate setting. These students' lives have been changed. I just want to be able to share this with you and the Project and let you know how deeply moved, not only our students, but our staff and faculty are. We also had community members come and sit in. She was just an incredible speaker and obviously is an incredible human being."

~Pat Sabo, Healdsburg Middle School, 8th Grade Social Studies Teacher.

"The curriculum and materials are excellent. They are thorough and allow students to investigate issues that are still a concern today, as well as to form a connection with the community."

~Shana Hellman, Casa Grande High School Teacher, Petaluma