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Bill Schlotter

UCSB Scholars Create Website to Help Children Cope with September 11 Attack and War on Terrorism

UC Santa Barbara scholars in the Center for Teaching for Social Justice were deeply affected by the September 11 attacks on the United States and the ensuing war on terrorism.

But they have turned their concern and compassion into creative energy, constructing a web site to assist schoolteachers and community members in helping school children cope and take informed action.

The web site, www.education.ucsb.edu/socialjustice, is the work of Judith Green, Carol Dixon, and Hsiu-Zu Ho, professors in UCSB's Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, Sheridan Blau, a professor of English, and others.

It includes resources and web sites with information and suggestions that can be helpful to young students trying to understand and deal with the recent sudden changes in their world.

"We're not advocating a particular point of view," said Green.

"But we want children to have access to appropriate information."

More than 30 web sites are listed, with new additions made almost daily. The site is arranged by topics, which include "Teaching," "News," "History and Analysis," "Arabs and Islam," "Resources," "Statements," and "Taking Action." Contributors include academic and professional organizations, such as the New York Educators for Social Responsibility; ethnic advocacy groups, such as the Anti-Defamation League and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee; and myriad academics, writers, journalists, and others.

Hits on the web site are coming from all around the world.

Like many educators, Green and Dixon and their colleagues in the Center for Teaching for Social Justice responded to the horror of September 11 by searching for ways to help.

"We began to think about how teachers would help students understand what was happening," said Green, "what resources were available to help students understand and meet the new challenges facing them both at school and at home, and how we might help."

One of the goals of the UCSB center is to share research on methods for creating socially just classrooms and engaging students in learning about social justice through a process that values knowledge acquisition and understanding while also emphasizing action. The scholars decided to make the center's resources available in order to help students, teachers, and community members take informed action.

Green, Dixon, Ho and Blau see their new center as a place where teachers, students and community members can work together.

And they are reaching an appreciative audience.

"We've been getting comments nationally and internationally," Green said. "People are saying that the resources have been helpful and informative."

Although September 11 and terrorism were the issues on which the site originally focused, current requests for information include how to address issues of racism, tolerance, diversity, and cultural understanding with K-12 students and their families.

A new feature soon will be added to the site that will enable teachers and researchers to share successful approaches.

Since 9-11, teachers across the country have developed new resources to use with students, have encouraged their students to write responses to what occurred, and have engaged students in learning about issues of race, identity, culture and diversity, both in the United States and across national boundaries.

The Center for Teaching for Social Justice is now developing a new section on the web site entitled Voices, which will make available the work and responses of teachers, students and community members.

Information about the center's work and its web site can be obtained from Judith Green (green@education.ucsb.edu), Carol Dixon (dixon@education.ucsb.edu) or Hsiu-Zu Ho (Ho@education.ucsb.edu).

About UC Santa Barbara

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