

Open a Window for Peace

Introduction

As the Students' Council of our school one of our main priorities is embracing diversity. For our school's 'Peace and Harmony' exhibition we decided to create a fun interactive game related to the theme. This game is called 'Open a Window for Peace'.

Our main aims were to promote peace and encourage students to interact with the exhibits. We also wanted to show that games and video games in particular can be used to promote peace instead of war. Hence through this activity we also introduced our peers to educational video games like *Global Conflicts Palestine* and *Global Conflicts: Child Soldiers*.



Figure 1 Our board with the Windows of War and Peace.

The Game Story

In this game, two neighbouring countries called Maltland and Gozino are in conflict with each other. Over the past years a Religious conflict has led Maltland to claim Gozino's main water supplies. As a result, Gozino's harvests and grazing lands are suffering. The people of Gozino are in danger of famine. Many people are fleeing from Gozino to other neighbouring countries, creating a refugee problem between Gozino and these countries.

The competitors need to answer questions that will win them the right to close Windows to War and open Windows to Peace.

Game Play

Students are split into 3 groups and after they are all aware of the game rules they are given a sheet of 30 question which they must seek the answer to in 10 minutes. The answers to the questions can be retrieved from the exhibits themselves. This will make students pay more attention to the detail of the content in the exhibition.

After the time is up the students are called back by John Lennon’s song ‘Imagine’. Each team is randomly asked 10 questions from the original 30 questions. With each correct answer a team is able to open a Peace Window or close a War Window.

Closing a War Window is worth 10 points each while opening a Peace Window is worth 5 points. However if a team opens all five Peace Windows, they get 30 bonus points. Some windows also give bonus points to create a small element of randomness in the game that adds to its excitement.

The team with the most points wins.



Figure 2 The Windows

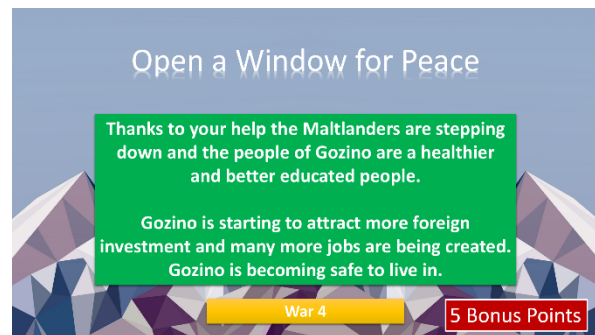


Figure 4 Message obtained when closing one of the War Windows



Figure 4 The Final Questions for the Red Team



Figure 5 Congratulations message for the winners

The Peace Process

As the players open the five Peace Windows the following messages will be displayed:

Peace 1

You have helped Maltland and Gozino meet in a summit discussing the beliefs behind this conflict. So now you are one step closer to ending the conflict peacefully.

Peace 2

You have managed to determine the facts behind this conflict. Maltland and Gozino are now better informed about their rights to the water supplies. You are one step closer to ending this conflict peacefully.

Peace 3

You have helped Maltland and Gozino break the conflict into small issues. It will be easier for them to agree on several small issues than to agree on a big one. Congratulations. You are one step closer to ending this conflict peacefully.

Peace 4

You have led one side to make concessions on some issues and can now look forward to concessions from the other side. Looks like you will manage to resolve this conflict very soon.

Peace 5

You have managed to end this conflict and both communities can now proceed in peace. Peace is precious and fragile...If both countries have a sufficiently diversified economy that will help keep the peace.

As the players close the War Windows the following messages will be displayed, highlighting key steps in establishing peace:

War 1

You have convinced Gozino to cut its defence budget and used the money to invest in the infrastructure that uses water from the water table and reverse osmosis. You are one step closer to ending the conflict!

War 2

You have helped Gozino further cut its defence budget and invest in better health services: providing free health services for all. This will improve the health of the general population and may help lead less people to flee the country. You are one step closer to ending the refugee crisis!

War 3

Both countries have further reduced their defence budget and you have convinced them to invest better in education. Both Maltland and Gozino are launching programs to educate people to use water more wisely. The next generation of Maltlanders and Gozinians will have better prospects.

War 4

Thanks to your help the Maltlanders are stepping down and the people of Gozino are a healthier and better educated people. Gozino is starting to attract more foreign investment and many more jobs are being created. Gozino is becoming safe to live in.

War 5

The water and refugee crisis are resolved. You have managed to end this conflict and both communities will proceed in peace. Peace will be kept only as long as the parties find it in their interests and wills to do so. Peace is precious and fragile...so people like YOU are all important!

To encourage participants to reflect on these steps leading to the end of a conflict, the quiz ends with two Final Questions for each team which involve close-ended questions about them.

Conclusion

This exercise helped us as a council build on our team work and group organisational skills as it involved various aspects that needed to be tackled within a very limited time window.

We also grew to better appreciate the many and various elements that contribute towards the escalation of a conflict or the establishment of peace. We came to see that peace is not established as one big decision but it is in fact a precious and fragile contract that is achieved in baby steps.

And that was only the starting point, because then we set about getting this message across to our peers...

We also looked at games, including the kind of games we love to play in our free time in a new way. We have realised that gaming is fun, but it may also be our first step to opening a window for peace.

Students involved

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