

The War in Ukraine and the Role of Afterschool Programs

A Briefing Paper



By Sam Piha and Samantha Fasen

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

AUTHORS

Sam Piha has served as founder and president of Temescal Associates since 2007. Sam began his career in 1974 as an afterschool worker, an experience that led to 13 years of classroom teaching and work as a child and family counselor and school social worker. Between 1989 and 2006, Sam managed school-based youth programs at the regional and national levels. He later founded Temescal Associates and The How Kids Learn Foundation, both dedicated to improving the quality of afterschool programs. Sam served as editor and contributing author of several important practice guides and journal articles on afterschool programming. Sam holds a master's degree in Social Welfare.

Samantha Fasen joined Temescal Associates and the How Kids Learn Foundation in 2019 and has fully embraced her work with the afterschool field. She helps to coordinate and develop marketing campaigns and multimedia elements to reach a wider audience and share with people the importance of out-of-school time and youth development.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS

Temescal Associates is dedicated to building the capacity of leaders and organizations in education and youth development who organizations, and policy makers. The How Kids Learn Foundation (HKL) is a 501(c)(3) organization. It is dedicated to improving the effectiveness of settings that support the education and healthy development of youth. This includes schools and out-of-school time programs.

The HKL Foundation provides educational and training activities that promote the capacity of organizations that support the education and healthy development of youth. Examples of activities include conferences, speaker forums, screenings of relevant films, training sessions, coaching sessions, the awarding of digital badges to acknowledge exemplar programs and the learning that happens within these settings. Activities also include the development and distribution of educational materials (papers, self-assessment tools, videos, program guides, etc.).

CREDITS: COVER PHOTO- www.30seconds.com

INTRODUCTION

The coverage of the Russian invasion of Ukraine has dominated TV and social media, resulting in horrific images of buildings exploding in fire, families bloodied and injured from missile attacks, and fearful children and parents attempting to flee to safety. This is being viewed by children and teenagers as well as adults.



Source: www.globalyouthandnewsmediaprize.net

Foundational to every afterschool program is promoting a sense of emotional safety and reliable information. We believe this includes how to talk to kids about war and how to decipher real vs. fake news. In this paper we offer some thoughts and resources to assist afterschool leaders.

SPEAKING WITH KIDS ABOUT THE UKRAINE WAR

Below are some tips on how to discuss the Ukraine war:

- First and foremost, educate yourself on Ukraine's history and the war itself (there are good articles and videos on the internet- be sure they are reliable) and process your emotions first.
- Consider the developmental and age levels of your youth.
- Ask what your children have heard already? How did that make them feel?
- Where did they get this info?
- Validate feelings while stressing safety.
- Ask them if they have any questions about what is going on.
- Respond with honest reassurance & don't discount fears.
- Encourage youth to feel a sense of agency about how they can make a difference.
- Avoid exposure to graphic images & repetitive media coverage.

- Recognize that some children may be at greater risk of distress (especially true of youth who have experienced trauma or a family history of fleeing danger).



Source: www.kidshurttoo.org

Additional Resources:

(Note: Some of these resources are written for family members and would serve as a good handout for adult family members.)

- [Resilience in a time of war: Tips for parents and teachers of teens](#)
- [Teaching Resources to Help Students Make Sense of the War in Ukraine](#)
- [How to Talk to Kids About the War in Ukraine: 4 Answers & Tools Parents Need, From a Parenting Educator](#)
- [How to Talk to Kids About Ukraine](#)
- [How to Talk With Your Child About the War in Ukraine](#)
- [I teach high school history. It's my job to help teens understand the war in Ukraine](#)
- [Teachers can offer a safe space for students to talk about the war in Ukraine and help them take action](#)
- [Tips for helping young people cope with news about Ukraine and Russia](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has also brought with it a deluge of disinformation and misinformation, and fabricated news, images, and video, via social media platforms.

My students' TikTok feeds are flooded with the latest news out of Ukraine.

“One big difference with the war in Ukraine is how prominent TikTok has suddenly become in spreading information via video—both real and fake. TikTok is a major source for news for teens and young adults.” - [Eisha Buch, Common Sense Media](#)



Source: [NY Times](#)

ADDRESSING DISINFORMATION

“If the Russia-Ukraine conflict is the world’s first TikTok war, then your youth may be unwittingly taking in a lot of mis- and disinformation. This article, [“TikTok Is Gripped by the Violence and Misinformation of Ukraine War,”](#) might be a useful starting point for raising the topic with them, perhaps after first asking students to share some of what they know — or think they know — about the war from their social media feeds.” - [New York Times](#)



Abigail Gewirtz, author of [How to Talk with Kids About Scary News](#), advises, “You start by talking about social media. In times of war and threat, social media can be an incredibly valuable tool for people who don’t have access to regular news, like those in Ukraine, to be able to communicate with others. However, as we all know, social media can be a very dangerous source of misinformation, and our kids are vulnerable to that misinformation because they don’t know what’s fact and what’s fiction...and sometimes we don’t either. It’s really important for parents of kids of all ages to help children understand that there is fact and there is hearsay—and for them always to come to you to check the facts.”

Additional Resources:

- [Combating disinformation about the war in Ukraine](#)
- [Help for teachers and families to talk to pupils about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and how to help them avoid misinformation](#)
- [Helping Students Find the Truth in Social Media](#)
- [How to Prevent the Spread of Disinformation About Russia’s War on Ukraine: A Tip Sheet](#)
- [TikTok Is Feeding My Students Fake News About Ukraine. How Can Truth Win?](#)
- [TikTok Is Giving America’s Kids a Real-Time Look at War Through the Eyes of Ukrainians](#)
- [TikTok sees a surge of misleading videos that claim to show the invasion of Ukraine](#)

PROMOTING A SENSE OF CONTROL AND AGENCY

One way to support kids to help them feel part of the solution is by offering opportunities to express support or actually help in some way. Obviously, any activities should be aligned with the age of the participants.



Source: www.globalyouthandnewsmediaprize.net

For example, youth could:

- Create pictures or posters to express support or educate others.
- Look for age-appropriate information together.
- Do projects to raise money for charities supporting Ukraine.
- Send pictures or letters to refugee families.
- Middle- and high-schoolers might participate in a peaceful demonstration of support for Ukraine.
- Families can also join together to attend a local Ukrainian vigil or send money to charitable organizations.



Source: www.theconversation.com

“A lot of children want to help—and it’s important to provide ways for them to do so in an age-appropriate way...Turn the problems into ‘what can I do?’ The healthiest thing that helps people cope is action.”- [Mary Alvord, PhD, Founder of Resilience Across Borders](#)



Source: www.globalyouthandnewsmediaprize.net

Additional Resources:

- [Talking to kids about the war in Ukraine](#)
- [#KidsDrawPeace4Ukraine](#)
- [Here's how kids can help support the people of Ukraine](#)

CREATE A MESSAGE OF PEACE

Do you want to send a message of hope and peace to people in Ukraine and other victims of war? If so, send us your drawing or your poem. Children's newspapers around the world will collect these messages and distribute them.

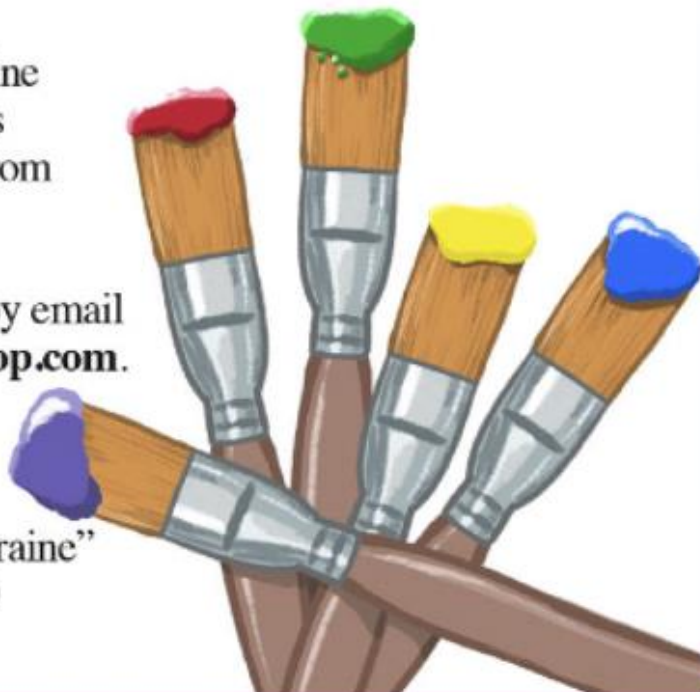
Kid Scoop will publish them on our websites **kidscoop.com** and **kidscoopnews.org** as part of the global **#KidsDrawPeace4Ukraine** project that also includes children's newspapers from around the world.

Send us your creations by email to **Woodward@kidscoop.com**.

Or, mail to:
Kid Scoop News
"Kids Draw Peace 4 Ukraine"
181 Andrieux, Suite 200
Sonoma, CA 95476



#KidsDrawPeace4Ukraine



#KidsDrawPeace4Ukraine

BIAS, RACE AND DISCRIMINATION

“Some have criticized certain reporting on Ukraine as racist and called attention to story framing and word choices that portray 'the invasion as the sort of thing that happens in poor countries, but not in Europe.' Even just the sheer amount of coverage, critics say, reveals a double standard in how Western media has covered this war compared to conflicts in other parts of the world.” - [The Sift: An educator's guide to the week in news literacy, March 21, 2022](#)

It is important to know that reaction to the war in Ukraine is not without controversy. Many feel that the crisis and war in Syria did not attract the same worldwide support. Also, there were reports that people of color did not receive the same treatment while attempting to flee the violence in Ukraine.



Source: www.cnn.com

“If we decide to help Ukrainians in their desperate time of need because they happen to look like 'us' or dress like 'us' or pray like 'us,' or if we reserve our help exclusively for them while denying the same help to others, then we have not only chosen the wrong reasons to support another human being. We have also, and I'm choosing these words carefully, shown ourselves as giving up on civilization and opting for barbarism instead ... The BBC interviewed a former deputy prosecutor general of Ukraine, who told the network: “It's very emotional for me because I see European people with blue eyes and blond hair ... being killed every day.” - [Moustafa Bayoumi, The Guardian](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Foreign students fleeing Ukraine say they face segregation, racism at border](#)
- [They are 'civilised' and 'look like us': the racist coverage of Ukraine](#)
- [The Russian invasion of Ukraine shows racism has no boundaries](#)
- [Fleeing war, facing racism: Refugees from Ukraine meet challenges at Europe's borders](#)
- [#AfricansInUkraine: Escaping students describe rejection at border](#)