

'Mr. Peace' Inspires Compassion in Massachusetts

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EAST BRIDGEWATER, MA - Growing up in Detroit, Mich., Mr. Peace had every reason to be hateful.

"I was back-to-back-to-back to back pallbearer for four people in my family and lost two other friends," Kevin Szawala told an auditorium of transfixed fifth & sixth grade students. "I had hate in my heart & just wanted to keep feeling that." But Szawala's life was transformed when he instead embraced compassion & diversity to become Mr. Peace. That's the message Mr. Peace shared with the students of Gordon W. Mitchell Middle School in East Bridgewater Thursday during a 45-minute presentation that featured his spoken word & hip-hop stylings.

"The main message is to show compassion in our actions and to see the impact of our actions," Szawala said before taking the stage. "It's about kindness, diversity and breaking racial stereotypes."

"Mr. Peace" teaches kindness & diversity to 5th and 6th graders



Mr. Peace, a youth minister and motivational speaker who performs for students grades K-12 at schools across the country, talked to East Bridgewater students in fifth and sixth grades Thursday morning at 8:45 a.m. Then, at 10 a.m., third- and fourth-graders met Mr. Peace during a second presentation. School administrators organized the event to address topics of diversity and acceptance among students - messages of high priority, Gordon Middle School principal Andrew Gentile said. "This message is incredibly important," Assistant Principal Deborah Duprey told students before introducing the guest speaker. "I want you all to be attentive listeners."

Assistant Superintendent of Schools Gina Williams and school committee members attended the presentation, as well as Central Elementary School principal Catherine Byrne and high school teachers and staff members, Duprey said.

"We decided on (hiring Mr. Peace) based on our own assessment of needs," Gentile said. "I think it's never too early (to introduce a discussion of race and diversity), especially in a town like East Bridgewater where the diversity, in general, is limited."

"Here's the idea:," Mr. Peace said. "If we let love, peace, forgiveness, joy enter into here fully, we can turn this, (closed fist) into this (peace sign).

Gentile is hopeful Mr. Peace's lesson will resonate with students in the community. "It sends the message of overall kindness and compassion," Gentile said. "So we are trying to build off this and make it part of the fabric of our community."





