

Strengthening Empathy, Imagination, and Stewardship in the Face of Trauma, Aggression, and Conflict

A proposal for launching our VR Curriculum in 2022/23



**THE PEACE
LITERACY
INSTITUTE**





OVERVIEW

At the PLI, we view peace not just as a goal but as a skill set that needs practice and training; and we view VR as a powerful training ground.

The PLI is a **non-profit**, dedicated to providing free access to educational, allegorical journeys in VR, that support health and wellbeing, by focusing on the skills of empathy, imagination, and stewardship in the face of trauma, aggression, and conflict.

Our VR curriculum builds on our **global partnerships** with school districts and non-profits in 4 countries. In our current VR world, participants learn the root causes of aggression and alternatives to aggression.

Our proposed VR content develops the idea of **stewardship**, helping participants build empathy to see past tangles of trauma and make connections between their own wellbeing and that of their communities and the environment.

Our university **research** team assesses the effectiveness of our curriculum.



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VR CURRICULAR LAUNCH

OUR TEAM



PLI is led by Paul K. Chappell, a West Point graduate, Iraq War veteran, former Army captain, and the founder of Peace Literacy.

Chappell's journey from war to peace began with the trauma of growing up in a violent household and experiencing racial alienation in Alabama, where he was raised by his Black father and Korean mother. Realizing that trauma is a root cause of so many national and global problems, and that 21st century challenges require people to be as well-trained in waging peace as soldiers are in waging war, Chappell started PLI as an educational technology nonprofit bringing together a team of educators, researchers, and software developers to create free Peace Literacy curriculum for traditional and VR educational settings.





OUR TEAM

Shari Clough, PhD, is a **professor of philosophy** at Oregon State University (OSU). She is an award-winning teacher whose published research focuses on the practice and philosophy of science, diversity, and social justice. Clough directs Phronesis Lab: Experiments in Engaged Ethics, where she and her team investigate the basic Peace Literacy skills needed for deliberations about controversial science policies. As Peace Literacy Curriculum Coordinator, she leads a research team at OSU to assess the effectiveness of Peace Literacy curriculum.



Dr. Shari Clough
Curriculum, Research, and
Assessment Team Coordinator, PLI

Blake Cash/Centauri
VR Developer, Programmer,
and 3D Modeler, PLI



At only 20 years old, Centauri is an up-and-coming **VR developer** out of Dallas, Texas. She has been developing for VR since 2017. In 2020 she was nominated by the Raindance Film Festival, the largest independent film festival in the UK, in the Best Immersive World category for her VR world “Eden.” In both 2021 and 2020, she won 1st place in a world-building Halloween-themed contest hosted by VRChat (she won 2nd place in 2019). She has also worked as part of VKET, the largest VR market in the world. She has been a working member of PLI as a VR developer since June 2020, creating three VR worlds that have been used in our professional development workshops for educators.



OUR TEAM

Devlin Montfort, PhD, is a **professor of environmental engineering** and education at OSU. He researches the ways that people change their thinking about complex concepts. His NSF-funded research compares the kinds of thinking promoted in engineering education with what's required by engineers at work. One overwhelming finding of his research is that engineers need to be able to collaborate with diverse people on difficult problems, and traditional engineering education does not adequately prepare them to do so. Peace Literacy offers the best-supported and most comprehensive approach to this problem that he has been able to find. He has been working with Shari Clough to research the effectiveness of the Peace Literacy curriculum for changing student thinking about aggression.



Dr. Devlin Montfort
**Curriculum, Research, and
Assessment Team, PLI**



Elizabeth Nguyen
**Illustrator
and animator**

Elizabeth Nguyen is a student at OSU pursuing degrees in philosophy and education. She is also an artist and small business owner. She has an Associates degree in video production and brings to the PLI team her creative expertise in **illustration, graphic design, and animation**. She is responsible for all of the illustrations in the Peace and Tech series (<http://peaceliteracy.org/peaceandtech>) and has contributed designs to the Peace Literacy VR curriculum as well.



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WHAT WE DO

While our VR curriculum team **designs** and develops multi-player educational VR spaces, our assessment team conducts human subjects **research** under the supervision of an internal review board at OSU, to evaluate the effectiveness of our curriculum, providing insights and lessons that can improve our use of VR as the medium continues to mature.

Our PLI team **balances** experience and expertise with diversity and fresh insights to design VR experiences that are educational, epic, and **engaging**.



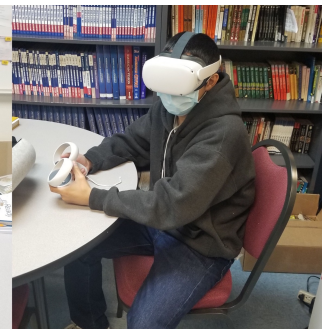
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WHAT WE DO

In 2020, thanks to funding received through a competitive grant from the Orange County Community Foundation (OCCF), we began to develop multi-player software optimized for Quest 2 headsets, in order to bring our Peace Literacy curriculum into VR. Our VR curriculum is rich with allegory. We take students on a field trip into the human condition, sailing across the Cosmic Ocean to different islands where they learn skills around empathy, imagination, and stewardship, especially in the face of trauma, aggression, and conflict.

The first island we designed is the Island of Aggression, where participants learn the root causes or fires beneath aggression as well as alternatives to aggression, by unlocking the eye of empathy. The OCCF grant funded the development of the Island of Aggression, as well as training workshops for teachers, and pilot projects with their students enrolled in an alternative education program for youth-placed-at risk.





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KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The **community** around PLI grows with every effort and event. As we show on the following pages, our stakeholders are also our distributors, students, audience, and collaborators. The **diversity** of our stakeholders is a **strength** of our work and speaks to its **quality**.





KEY STAKEHOLDERS

ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (OCDE)

- High school educators in the Orange County, CA ACCESS program serving youth-placed-at-risk
- 12 teachers went through our Peace Literacy training, followed by a focused VR pilot with students
- The pilot will be expanded in 2022



<https://youtu.be/0xrVT4lvK8o>

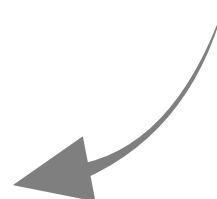
IMPACT

- Help students respond proactively and effectively to the root causes of aggression in themselves and in others, and successfully apply peaceful alternatives to aggression
- Lower numbers of school days missed due to fear of bullying
- Increased retention and graduation rates



FEEDBACK

“The PLI virtual reality training has unlimited potential to engage our most challenging students with meaningful subject matter. PLI presents an opportunity to get in touch with their inner negative tendencies and grow as individuals. This could be the most engaging social emotional learning I have seen in my 25 years as an educator.”



Vern Burton,
assistant
superintendent
OCDE ACCESS
program



KEY STAKEHOLDERS

THE ABRAHAMIC REUNION

- A well-respected non-profit focused on peacebuilding and deradicalization in Israel and Palestine by helping Jewish, Christian, and Muslim youth recognize their shared history and humanity in the figure of Abraham
- 8 members went through our VR training this fall



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLgi10Pvq6U>

IMPACT

- Amplify Peace Literacy globally through Arabic and Hebrew translations of VR materials
- Aid peacebuilding organizations in the creation and maintenance of healthy communities
- Chart development with a system of measurable, progressing markers



FEEDBACK

“The use of Virtual Reality can powerfully immerse participants in Peace Literacy lessons and provides great potential for increasing the impact of the learning experiences and changes in behavior. I and other Abrahamic Reunion Board members see many complementary dimensions to Peace Literacy’s work with the peacemaking work we do in Palestine and Israel and look forward to incorporating Peace Literacy’s curriculum and VR experience into our work.”

Ira Sirkar Harritt
Abrahamic
Reunion





KEY STAKEHOLDERS

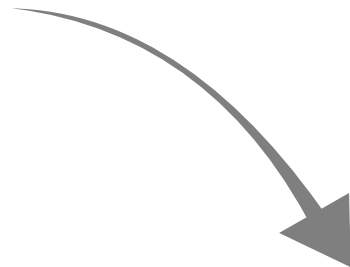
ORANGE COUNTY NON-PROFITS
that provide services to and in
collaboration with marginalized
people, such as people
experiencing houselessness



Andrea Myhre,
Executive Director,
Corvallis Housing First

IMPACT

- A more comprehensive and effective understanding of client needs leading to better housing outcomes
- Lower turnover and burn-out rate in leadership, staff, and volunteers
- Increased support from local businesses, communities, and law enforcement
- Increased neighborhood safety



FEEDBACK

“Peace Literacy skills and frameworks have proven invaluable in my work... I am looking forward to future trainings this fall with the Peace Literacy team. I can’t recommend their workshops highly enough, especially for those of us working in service to people struggling with homelessness. I would be happy to talk with any colleagues in the field about how Peace Literacy workshops are a critically effective tool for our work.”

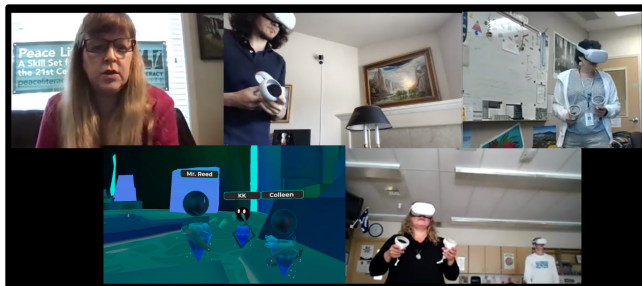




KEY STAKEHOLDERS

CORVALLIS, OR. SCHOOL DISTRICT

- has supported Peace Literacy training in traditional classroom settings for faculty, staff, and students in the three area high schools for 4 years
- this fall we've had follow-up trainings in VR with a team of 9th grade health-class teachers who will pilot the use of the VR curriculum with their students in the new year
- we will conduct formal program assessment in the summer



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_nKMkXxWIE

IMPACT

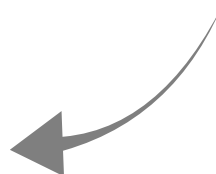
- Help students cultivate a resilient and stable psychological foundation for stewardship in all aspects of life, including relationships, schools, communities, and the environment
- Equip students with skills to increase their sense of purpose in life, shared trust within the classroom environment and beyond
- Nurture realistic hope that a better future is possible and that students can be active participants in creating this future



FEEDBACK

“Staff left the workshop energized and enthused. Within a week we had revised a component of our student behavior response, and teachers were building new lesson plans to integrate Peace Literacy into their teaching. There was real hope and passion about how teaching skills of peace might transform our work with students and each other... [The VR training] inspires imagination, curiosity, and exploration, dispositions essential to learning. Students will remember this experience and therefore remember the content of the lesson.”

Colleen Works
Assistant Principal
(ret) Corvallis High School, Corvallis,
2011 Oregon
Teacher of the Year





COLLABORATORS AND PARTNERS

Meta

- has provided Quest 2 headsets for our work and named us a “strategic partner” at <https://about.facebook.com/immersive-learning/>

Oregon State University

- has supervised our human-subjects research on the effectiveness of our curriculum

Rotary (District 5110)

- A non-profit service organization that has funded teacher-trainings in Corvallis, OR

Peace Literacy Canada

- A new partnership with Rotary Districts and high schools in four provinces

Public Montessori in Action

- Focused in urban Cleveland schools, our work together was featured in an industry publication (below)

United Nations International School, New York, NY

- Our curriculum is being used with K-middle school students

Lincoln High School, Portland, OR

- Host of the inaugural Peace Literacy International Youth Conference scheduled for 2023





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WHAT WE WANT TO DO NEXT

We have a strong start in harnessing the power of VR as a multi-player training ground for practicing the peace skills necessary for humans to **survive and thrive** in the 21st century.

We are now seeking funding to **build, pilot, and assess** the curricular effectiveness of the rest of our VR islands, which continue to focus on empathy as well as appreciation — skills that cultivate a resilient and stable psychological foundation for stewardship in all aspects of life, including relationships, schools, communities, and the environment.



WHAT WE NEED TO DO IT

Based on the timeline and budget for our first phase, our 2022 funding target is **576K**, allocated as follows:

- Lead Curriculum Designer
\$80,000
- 2 VR Developers for 12 months
\$200,000
- 1 3D Artist/Animator
\$75,000
- 2 Faculty Researcher Summer Stipends
\$45,000
- 1 Research Assistant Summer Stipend
\$10,000
- 1 Program Manager
\$70,000
- Overhead (20%)
\$96,000



SUSTAINING THE PROGRAM

To allow for budgeting predictability, sustainable growth, and longer term employee contracts, we anticipate the following annual budget needs:

Role	Hrs/yr	\$/hr	Total
Director/lead curriculum designer	2,000	\$60	\$120,000
Educational lead	1,000	\$60	\$60,000
Front-end VR developer	2,000	\$60	\$120,000
Back-end VR developer	2,000	\$60	\$120,000
3D Animator	1,500	\$55	\$82,500
3D Artist	2,000	\$55	\$110,000
VR Scenery/lighting	2,000	\$55	\$110,000
VR Sound design composing	1,500	\$55	\$82,500
Curriculum lab manager	2,000	\$50	\$100,000
Curriculum developer	2,000	\$50	\$100,000
Curriculum developer	2,000	\$50	\$100,000
Educational trainer	2,000	\$45	\$90,000
Educational trainer	1,000	\$45	\$45,000
Formal research assessment PI	1,000	\$65	\$65,000
Formal research assessment co-PI	1,000	\$65	\$65,000
Research assessment assistant	1,000	\$25	\$25,000
Project manager	1,500	\$50	\$75,000
Support staff	2,000	\$25	\$50,000
Subtotal			\$1,520,000
Overhead/indirect costs (20%)			\$304,000
Sustainable Budget Total			\$1,824,000



PRODUCTION TIMELINE

2019

Proof of Concept (Traditional F2F Delivery)

In the fall of 2019, we trained a team of 9th grade health class teachers from 2 high schools in Corvallis, OR with our curriculum around aggression and calm, and then began a formal assessment of student response to the curriculum, with human subjects research protocols approved by the Internal Review Board at Oregon State University. **We are preparing the data for publication; preliminary results are compelling.**

2021

Phase 1 (VR Delivery)

In early 2021, we began piloting our curriculum in VR focused on the Island of Aggression, with Corvallis High School as well as the Orange County Department of Education focused on youth-placed-at-risk. We also shared our VR project with the Abrahamitic Reunion focused on youth-placed-at-risk of extremist recruitment in the Middle East; we are currently in the process of working with them to have our VR curriculum translated into Hebrew and Arabic.

 We are here

2022/23

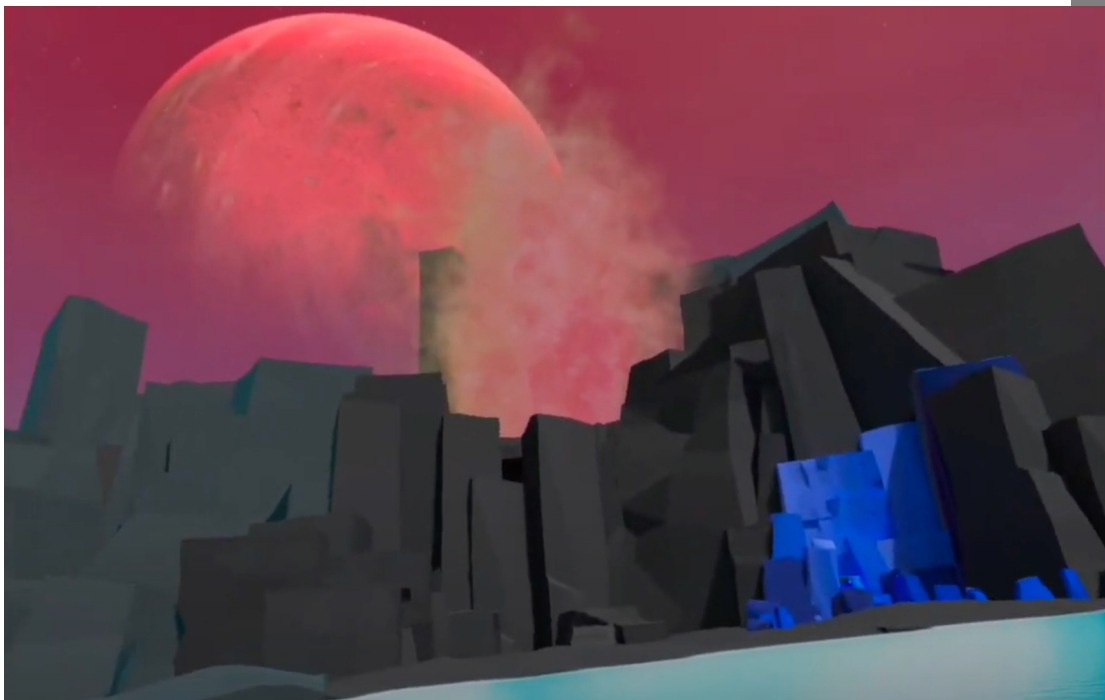
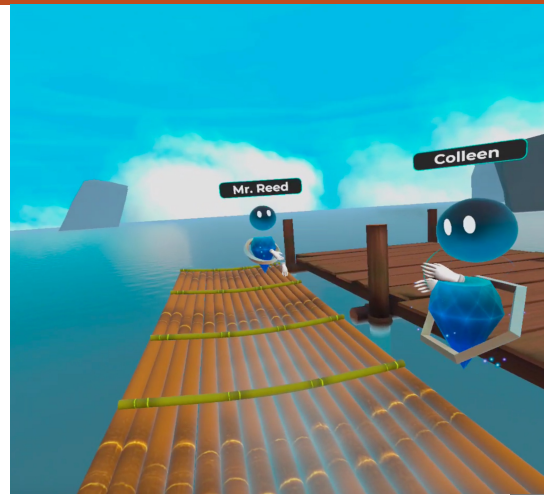
Phase 2 (VR Delivery) Launch

In mid 2022, we will begin the development of new VR curricular content building out the rest of the VR islands. We will reach more students, teachers, and non-profit participants, while continuing our research and program assessment with our partners at Oregon State University.



KEY ART

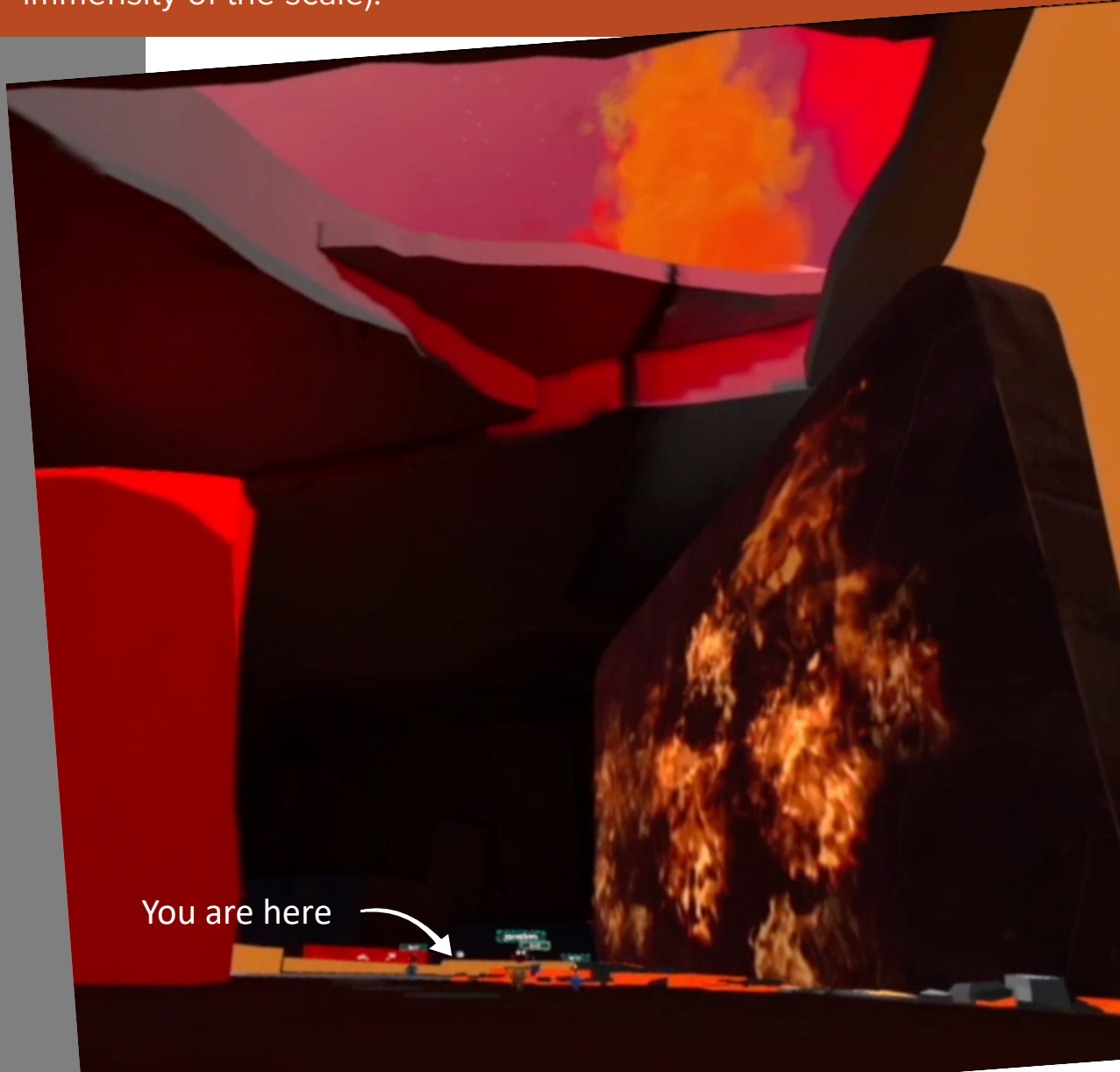
Our VR team uses **Unity Plus** optimized for Quest 2 headsets. The sample of images below includes (from L-R) our avatar creation platform, the raft where participants begin their journey across the Cosmic Ocean, and the Island of Aggression.





KEY ART

This image is from inside the cave, where participants explore the fires beneath aggression, while above them, the heat of aggression rises in a plume (outside of VR, it is hard to get a sense of the immensity of the scale).





IMPACT PLAN

We anticipate that the impacts we have laid out for the new VR content created for this project, **including** our work with the OCDE/ACCESS program for youth-placed-at-risk, the work with service providers for the unhoused, and the Palestinian and Israeli youth in the peace program run by the Abrahamic Reunion, will reach approx. **300 participants** during the next year of the piloting stage, and be integrated into PLI's future educational efforts reaching thousands of teachers and students.

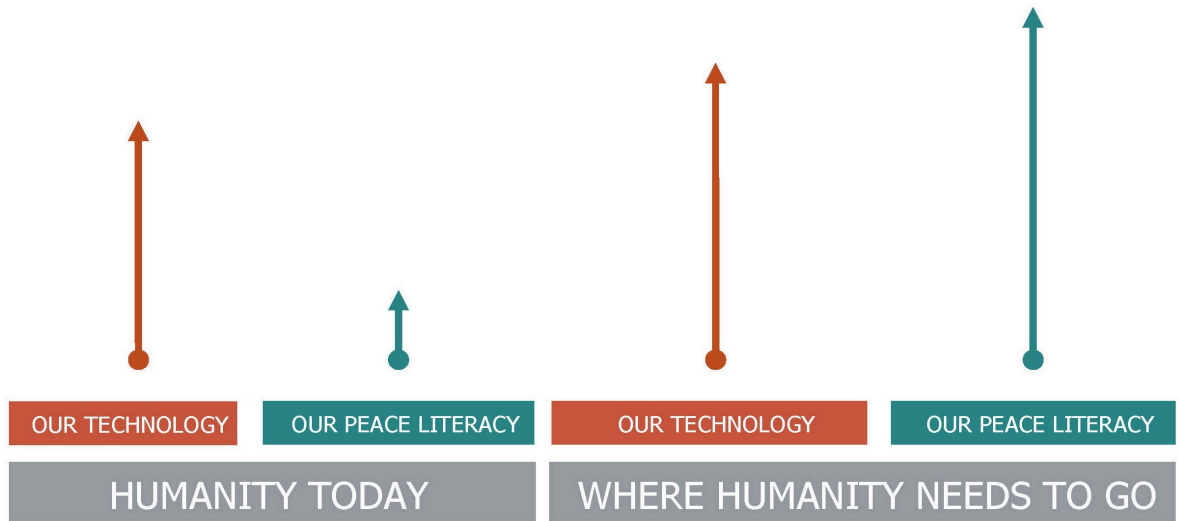
Our PLI research team will evaluate whether and how these impacts are met, gathering follow-up data from our partners, and conducting carefully designed interviews with participants before and after their VR training.

The educational mission of the Peace Literacy Institute is directly related to increasing individual **health and well-being** within the context of our interconnected and interdependent societies and the environment. Our project supports the development of educational VR materials that increase empathy, imagination, and **stewardship**.



Why Peace Literacy? Why VR?

Our curricular focus addresses the promise and peril of emerging VR technologies, and the disruptions, both generative and destructive, that these technologies will bring to relationships, communities, and nations.



Humanity's technological powers will continue to escalate in the coming years, and we must bridge this gap by escalating our Peace Literacy to an even greater extent, to help us achieve greater responsibility, greater understanding, and greater ethical evolution.



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SUMMARY

A small investment in **Peace Literacy** now has the potential for exponential returns for the US and the world.



The late Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, endorsed our work in 2018:

“Peace Literacy has the capacity to repair our broken parts and create a nonviolent world anchored in dignity, meaning, purpose, and compassion for all. Given the crucial role that Peace Literacy can play, I support the recognition of education in Peace Literacy as a universal human right.”

Thank you for this opportunity to share our project!

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