

Why a campaign on respect?

[Submitted by Jan Perring](#) on 5 September, 2008

Have you seen this slogan "Le respect, ça change la vie" on billboards and bumper stickers around town? I like the simplicity of the message that we, as teachers, try to teach every day. And I like the logo - it's bright, and simple. But what I like most of all about the logo is that there is a logo and that it's getting more and more exposure in Geneva.

So I set out to see if we could join in and use the logo here on our website, or even in the school. It wasn't difficult! In the spirit of the campaign, a little respect - in this case asking for permission - was warmly rewarded, and we now have permission to use the logo (respectfully, of course!) here on our website. In fact, M. Abt ("Milou" to his friends), who I talked to, is very keen to make new partners to spread the word, and he'd love to have the Ecolint as an "official" partner.

If you visit www.lerespect.org (at the moment mainly in French) you can learn more about the good work they do to spread the word. The wonderful thing about showing respect is that, like love, it costs you nothing to give it, and the reward - for those with a little patience - is enormous.

Please join us as we change la vie, by encouraging and practising respect throughout our daily lives, at home, at school, in the car - in public and in private.

If, like me, you wondered how such a campaign is started, read on. André Castella, mayor of Avusy, started this campaign in Geneva, but he was inspired by a previous French campaign specifically developed for schools.

Here is his account of how the Geneva campaign started: ([en français](#))

Why a campaign on respect?

I'll try to tell you in just a few words the reasons that led me to get so deeply involved in the subject. In any case, I hope that my words will make you as aware as I am.

Early in my term as mayor in December 1999, I was struck – to say the least - by the negative effects of countless "incivilities" – the fashionable word - incivility committed by members of the population, from the youngest to the oldest. These incivilities can take many forms - verbal, physical, behavioural, physical, economic etc...

At the same time, being interested in French policy, I also found that the measures introduced to counter the worst rudeness (strongly supported by the people of this country during the recent election campaigns and implemented immediately by new government), did, in fact,

have little impact on the frequency and severity of the behaviour in question. Among these shock measures some communes or suburbs introduced a curfew, a term that we thought we would never have to hear again in Europe after WWII. And, paradoxically, these measures led our democratically elected representatives, often ordinary people, to be branded "fascist" and "reactionary": which is an unjust reward for valiant effort.

Meanwhile, the "innocuous" incivilities, those that "Mr Average" commits every day, are still not affected by these drastic measures ... I am thinking for example of the behaviour of sportsmen towards referees, students towards their teachers, dog owners to our lawns and children who ride there, children against their parents, motorists against motorists, offenders against policeman, graffiti "artists" facing a blank wall, and so on.

Given the impotence of government to a situation that is beyond their control and shocks us all at the same time, before the "malaise" sets in and the victims take the law into their own hands (the worst thing), it seems to me that we all have to think about it. I'm convinced that part of the solution to this problem lies in the discussion between generations, between administrators and administered, between those who make and those who implement the decisions.

It is time to stop burying our heads in the ground and wake up to the fact that this part of the population is asphyxiating society. I'll say it again, the time has come for a wake-up call to the whole population about this before they do to us, in short, we must start a dialogue in the street, in sports, in schools, and in government.

As mayor, it's customary for me on the 1st August (our national day) to address the commune with a patriotic speech, and share a glass of Gamay and cup of vegetable soup with the polite Avusiens. But that year, full of my convictions, I made them a proposal: Together, to start a campaign called "Respect ça change ..."

And I was very surprised!

So many people contacted me on the night, and later, to tell me what they thought, I can tell you, quite modestly, that I touched the heart of the people, a nerve. They told me how much they were "fed up with the young vandals", the young vandals were tired of the "old people who don't listen", "tired of authorities who do what they like, what they think" or yet "tired of authorities who build things to get make themselves look good", etc., etc. The list is long and misunderstanding enormous!

Faced with this widespread dissatisfaction expressed so loudly, there are two solutions: the first is to look elsewhere. This is the simplest. The other is to try to understand the malaise and suggest remedies.

The first remedy, in my view, is the one that we all know (whether we're young or old), but we don't always use: RESPECT, used in good faith. And it works! Proof: I tried it on myself!

Respect is simple. We can show respect every day, everywhere. In the street, at work, at school, on the football field, applicable in the most ordinary of situations, and it's my opinion that the success of such a campaign, such an undertaking, lies in this simplicity.

To join in the campaign of respect, there's no need to make a big thing, or fantastic promises that can't be kept. Anyone can do it, and life starts to get better immediately. All this might seem a little naive, but I sincerely believe that it can be done, especially in a small canton like ours.

I must admit to having been inspired by the campaign that the French Ministry of National Education launched a few years ago. In my opinion, the campaign "Respect, ça change l'école", sponsored by popular personalities (artists, athletes, etc.) was very well conceived.

The campaign that I have started could also be sponsored by well-known people: athletes, artists, political institutions or bodies, businesses, religious organisations, schools, etc.

Finally, I am the small mayor of the small town of Avusy, but I am certain that from this embryo of an idea something positive will emerge: Now it's up to all of us to speak about it and put it into practice.

André Castella, Mayor of Avusy

www.lerespect.org

LE RESPECT

ÇA CHANGE LA VIE

... ET ÇA CHANGE L'ÉCOLE !