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Teaching Students in Grades K-2 Effective Conflict Resolution Skills: a Curricular Unit

Marissa Wilkerson
Regis University

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TEACHING STUDENTS IN GRADES K-2 EFFECTIVE CONFLICT

RESOLUTION SKILLS: A CURRICULAR UNIT

by

Marissa Wilkerson

A Research Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Liberal Studies
Communication in Education

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May, 2006

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Marissa Wilkerson

has been approved

May, 2006

APPROVED:

Dr. Sharon Sweet, Course Facilitator

Dr. Adriana Karch, Faculty Advisor

ABSTRACT

Teaching Students in Grades K-2 Effective Conflict Resolution Skills: A Curricular Unit

The purpose of this project will be to develop a curricular unit that can be used to teach students in Kindergarten through second grade how to use effective, constructive conflict resolution techniques with one another. Also, this curricular unit will include methods for the establishment of a kind and cooperative classroom climate and to teach students the communication skills necessary for effective conflict resolution. This researcher has searched for the lessons and activities that best exemplify what have been determined to be the six most important steps to teach conflict resolution: (a) establish a positive classroom climate, (b) teach students to handle their feelings constructively, (c) teach effective communication skills, (d) help students to appreciate diversity and commonalities, (e) teach students the definition of conflict and, (f) teach a specific four step process for the solution of conflicts.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Conflict between elementary school students is inevitable; however, since the 1960s, educators have developed and implemented conflict resolution programs in an effort to meet the challenge of escalating conflict and violence among children in schools (Hamburg & Hamburg, 2004; Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Research and anecdotal evidence suggest that conflict resolution programs have been effective in helping students to manage their problems constructively and to improve their communication skills with one another to find solutions to disputes, instead of resorting to ineffective or destructive conflict resolution strategies, which is detrimental to children's well being as well as to the learning environment (Jacobson, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Lantieri, 1998). Recently, Stevahn, Johnson, Johnson, Oberle, and Wahl (2000) demonstrated that teachers can train their students to use effective negotiation and mediation techniques with one another that they can use on a daily basis when problems arise.

Statement of the Problem

Since 1966, conflict resolution programs have been implemented in thousands of elementary schools, and their popularity increased during the 1980s and 1990s (Hamburg & Hamburg, 2004; Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Students and teachers have been successful in building more harmonious learning environments by use of these kinds of programs. However, a major problem that faces elementary school educators today is that, often, there are insufficient resources or time available to implement a stand alone,

school wide conflict resolution program. In response to this, some educators have developed conflict resolution programs that can be integrated into the classroom curriculum in order to enhance students' conflict resolution skills as well as to improve their levels of academic achievement (Stevahn et al., 2000).

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project will be to develop a curricular unit that can be used to teach students in Kindergarten through second grade how to utilize constructive, effective conflict resolution techniques with one another. Also, this curricular unit will include methods for the establishment of a kind and cooperative classroom climate, and for teaching students the necessary communication skills necessary for effective conflict resolution. Students as young as Kindergarten age can be trained to successfully use simple integrative negotiation skills with one another to find solutions to conflicts (Stevahn et al., 2000). This researcher intends to describe how classroom teachers can train their students to use a basic, four step conflict resolution process, and how teachers can establish a classroom climate that is conducive to constructive problem solving. This curricular unit can be integrated into required standardized curricula in elementary schools for immediate use in Kindergarten through second grade classrooms.

Chapter Summary

It is this researcher's position that young children can learn effective conflict resolution techniques that assist them in building positive relationships with one another, which improves the quality of the learning environment. In Chapter 2, the Review of Literature, this researcher will present the background material to support this position to

make a case for teaching young children specific conflict resolution techniques. In Chapter 3, Methods, this researcher will detail a classroom conflict resolution program with lesson plans that can be integrated into the curriculum in Kindergarten through second grades.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this project will be to develop a curricular unit that can be used to teach students in Kindergarten through second grade how to use effective, constructive conflict resolution techniques with one another. Also, this curricular unit will include methods for the establishment of a kind and cooperative classroom climate, and for teaching students the communication skills necessary for effective conflict resolution. There is a wealth of information available in the forms of articles, books, activity guides, and websites about conflict resolution programs that have been implemented in elementary schools.

Educators and researchers have implemented small scale programs (e.g., only within the classroom) as well as larger scale programs (e.g., school wide or district wide). In addition, conflict resolution programs have been either integrated into the existing classroom curriculum, or stand alone and consist of more than one component (e.g., peer mediation programs). There are several leading researchers and educators in the field of conflict resolution (CR) in schools (Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Lantieri, 2002; Porro, 1996; Kreidler, 1984; Stevahn, Johnson, Johnson, Oberle, & Wahl, 2000) who have published case studies and curricular guides. Some of these same researchers have developed programs that have been very successful in the improvement of students' relationships and achievement in schools.

The Teaching Students to Be Peacemakers Program

David W. Johnson is a pioneer in the field of CR in schools, and in 1966 he developed one of the first CR programs (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Along with his brother Roger T. Johnson, he developed the Teaching Students to Be Peacemakers (TSP) program for use in grade schools. Johnson and Johnson (2004) described the origins of the TSP program: “We used social interdependence theory to define the occurrence of conflict as a breakdown in cooperation and the restoration of cooperation as the purpose of resolving conflicts” (p. 72). In addition, Johnson and Johnson explained that “integrative negotiation is a procedure aimed at maximizing joint outcomes and achieving mutual goals; mediation is a process to reestablish stable cooperation among disputants; and constructive conflict resolution is the establishment of stable cooperation” (p. 72). Johnson and Johnson cited a meta-analysis they conducted in 2002 that included reports on 16 studies to assess the TSP program between 1988 and 2000. They summarized the major results that showed the benefits from the use of conflict resolution programs.

Johnson and Johnson (2004) explained that students engage in conflicts daily, and that most of those were about: (a) possession and access to resources, (b) preferences about what to do, (c) playground issues, and (d) turn-taking. However, very few conflicts were related to academic work. Some of those conflicts involved physical and verbal aggression. Before the use of conflict resolution training, usually, students managed their conflicts by either an attempt to force the other student to concede a withdrawal from the conflict, or they withdrew from the other person. Johnson and Johnson asked in their meta-analysis, “Was the TSP training successful in teaching students the negotiation and

mediation procedures?” (p. 73). They reported that, across their studies, 90% of the students accurately recalled 100% of the negotiation and mediation procedures, and up to a year after the training had ended, more than 75% of students were still able to write out all the negotiation and mediation steps.

Also, Johnson and Johnson (2004) reported that their results indicated that students were good at the application of negotiation and mediation procedures immediately after training, as well as months after training was over. They explained that the findings from their meta-analysis demonstrated that, in fact, students used negotiation and mediation procedures on their own at school in the hallways, lunchroom, and on the playground. In addition, many students were able to transfer their skills and used the procedures in family settings. Johnson and Johnson stated that “following the TSP training, students were placed in a negotiation situation where they could either try to win or maximize joint outcomes. Untrained students almost always tried to win, while the majority of trained students focused on maximizing joint outcomes” (p. 74). In addition, “untrained students left many conflicts unresolved. The number of integrative solutions that resulted in both sides achieving their goals was much higher in conflicts among trained (rather than untrained) students” (p. 74).

Johnson and Johnson (2004) asked the question, “does the TSP training increase students’ academic achievement?” (p. 68). They found that “students who received the peacemaker training as part of the academic [English literature and history] unit tended to score significantly higher on achievement and retention tests than did students who studied the academic unit only” (p. 74). Also, “students not only learned the factual information contained in the academic unit better, they were able to better able to

interpret the information in insightful ways” (p. 74). In addition, Johnson and Johnson found that trained students developed more positive attitudes toward conflict in comparison to their peers who did not receive TSP training. Also, students showed enthusiasm for the negotiation and mediation processes and, in general, agreed to participate and enjoyed the processes.

Johnson and Johnson (2004) summarized the findings to the question “does the TSP training result in fewer discipline problems that have to be managed by the teacher and the administration?” (p. 68). They found that students tended to resolve their conflicts without the involvement of the adults in the schools, and significantly reduced classroom management problems. “The number of discipline problems teachers had to deal with decreased by about 60% and referrals to administrators dropped about 90%” (p. 74).

In 1994, Johnson and Johnson conducted another study about their TSP program and found that students learned the steps of negotiation and the procedures of mediation, and demonstrated the ability to use those skills in the resolution of real life conflicts. As they explained, “even when [students] were involved in emotionally intense, serious, and prolonged conflicts with classmates, students tended to use the negotiation and mediation procedures” (p. 811). However, they noted that the training was not perfect: “the most difficult parts of the negotiation procedure for students to master were expressing feelings, reversing perspectives, and providing a rationale for their position” (p. 811).

Johnson and Johnson (2004) outlined the immediate staff development goals for educators who participate in TSP training.

1. Master the basic negotiation and mediation procedures and model them competently.
2. Train students to negotiate and mediate.
3. Conduct the follow-up training to refine and upgrade students' skills in using the negotiation and mediation procedures.
4. Implement and monitor the effectiveness of the program and adapt it to changing conditions.
5. Integrate negotiation and mediation training into academic lessons. (p. 75)

Johnson and Johnson (1996) explained that the TSP program as they have implemented it throughout North America, Europe, and several countries in Asia, Central and South America, the Middle East, and Africa, is a 12 year spiral program in which students learn increasingly sophisticated negotiation and mediation procedures. They outlined the six steps that comprise their entire long term program. The first step is for teachers to establish a cooperative classroom context. When individuals are in a competitive setting, they will strive for a win in conflicts rather than try to solve the problem in a mutually acceptable way. For students in a school to participate in a true problem solving approach, they need to recognize their long term interdependence and the need to maintain effective relationships with each other, conditions that exist only in a cooperative context.

The next step of the TSP program (Johnson & Johnson, 1996) is to teach students when a conflict does and does not occur. As they explained, "many students see conflicts as always involving anger, hostility, and violence and do not recognize conflicts as such when they lead to laughter, insight, learning, and problem solving" (p. 4). The third step of the TSP program is to teach students a concrete, specific procedure for the negotiation of agreements in regard to what their future interactions will be, so they can achieve their goals while they maintain or improve the quality of their relationships. As Johnson and

Johnson explained, “telling students to ‘be nice,’ ‘talk it out,’ or ‘solve your problem’ is not enough” (p. 4).

The fourth step of the TSP program (Johnson & Johnson, 1996) is to teach students a concrete, specific mediation procedure and to give students opportunities to practice this procedure to develop some expertise. The initial training of the nature of conflict and how to negotiate and mediate usually consists of 30 half hour lessons, so these are skills that take a considerable amount of time to practice and learn. The fifth step of the TSP program is to implement a peer mediation program, whereby students work in pairs at first to help their schoolmates negotiate more effectively, and each student has the chance to be a mediator. The sixth and final main step of the TSP program is to continue the training in negotiation and mediation procedures for students weekly throughout first through twelfth grades to continue to refine students’ skills, because “to become competent in resolving conflicts takes years and years” (p. 4).

Peace Education

Johnson and Johnson (2005) offered a broad, theoretical definition of “peace education” (p. 276) which is another branch of conflict resolution programs that are related to TSP. Peace education is an educational philosophy that frames the importance of teaching conflict resolution skills on a global level.

Teaching individuals the information, attitudes, values, and behavioral competencies needed to resolve conflicts without violence and build and maintain mutually beneficial, harmonious relationships. The ultimate goal of peace education is for individuals to be able to maintain peace among aspects of themselves (intrapersonal peace), individuals (interpersonal peace), groups (intergroup peace), and countries, societies, and cultures (international peace). . . [peace] is based on mutuality (positive interdependence) and the constructive management of conflict. (p. 276)

Johnson and Johnson (2005) explained that peace education carries with it the goals for constructive resolution of conflict on a large scale: “certainly, the prevention and mitigation of war and the building and maintenance of peace [on national and international levels] depends on [peace education programs]. And where is a better place to begin then with the children who occupy a nation’s schools?” (p. 279).

Hinitz (1998) explained that,

For decades, peace education was viewed as a lofty, difficult-to-attain ideal. In past decades, peace education was accorded greater respect and more serious consideration. Peace education is now considered by many as a viable curriculum that could be integrated into many school programs. It is also a growing movement internationally, one that is considered a way to reduce the levels of ethnic hatred that may have persisted for centuries. In America, peace education is especially viewed as a way to create more peaceful and safer schools for the new century. (p. 4)

Hinitz succinctly detailed some of the profound benefits to teaching children the skills of peacemaking and conflict resolution.

As conflicts arise, children would ideally apply peacemaking skills in an effort to discern how to mediate conflicting viewpoints. Each has contributed a possible solution. Each has brainstormed a remedy, sharing and respecting each other’s viewpoints. Many of us involved in the observation of children during peacemaking sessions see tears, hugs, and a sense of relief when the problem is resolved, so that each can forgive and go on with their lives. Cognitive and emotional learning has literally taken place before our eyes (p. 5).

The use of conflict resolution can help students to establish a harmonious school and classroom environment and to improve their academic achievement. In addition, it can be used to help them to develop the skills they need to help make the world a safer place, which is something that everyone desperately needs.

The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program

In 1985, Lantieri and Roderick started the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP), which was a collaboration between the New York City Schools and an organization in Massachusetts titled, Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR). The program had so much success that by 1998, 360 schools across the country had adopted the program, including 155,000 students and 5,100 educators (Lantieri, 1998). Lantieri reported that 71% of teachers who participated in RCCP “saw a reduction in fighting in their classrooms, 66% said verbal putdowns decreased, and 78% said caring increased” (p. 18). In addition, the results of a 3 year evaluation of RCCP with a sample of over 8,000 students in 15 schools showed that “student participation in the program slows the growth of aggressive tendencies that lead to violence and anti-social behavior” (p. 18).

Also, Lantieri (1995) reported that RCCP “had an observable and quantifiable impact on students, participating staff, and classroom climate” (p. 388). Teachers devoted about seven periods per month to specific lessons on conflict resolution, and they integrated the concepts of conflict resolution into other parts of the curriculum as well. Teachers noted “less physical violence in their classrooms, a decreased use of verbal put-downs in favor of more supportive comments, spontaneous student use of conflict resolution skills, and an increase in students’ self-esteem, leadership skills, and initiative” (p. 388). In addition, “they also reported positive effects in themselves, particularly in their ability to handle angry students and deal with conflict in general” (p. 388). In 2003, the results from a study of more than 11,000 New York City public school children who participated in RCCP showed that “in all racial and ethnic groups and in both sexes, children exposed to RCCP, when compared with those

not exposed, became less aggressive in all measured respects – fewer behavior problems, less hostile attribution bias, less aggressive and more effective responses to social situations” (“Preventing aggression in children,” 2003).

Selfridge (2004) explained that,

The primary goal of RCCP is to ensure that young people develop the social and emotional skills needed to reduce violence and prejudice, form caring relationships, and build healthy lives. RCCP works to change school cultures so that these skills are both modeled and taught as part of the basics in education. (p. 59)

Selfridge reported the key findings from on several studies about RCCP. The results of a 1997 study (Metis Associates, 1997) indicated that “64% of teachers reported less violence in their classrooms, 75% of teachers reported an increase in student cooperation, 92% of students reported feeling better about themselves, 90% of parents reported an increase in their own communication and problem-solving skills. . . [and] student and teacher attendance improved in RCCP schools” (p. 62). In addition, suspension rates at the middle school level decreased significantly, and drop-out rates at the RCCP high school decreased significantly (p. 62).

Also, Selfridge (2004) reported the results from a 1999 study (Metis Associates, 1999) in which it was found that: (a) “there is a positive association between the level of RCCP implementation and academic achievement, particularly in reading,” (b) “there is a sense of community among staff members at high implementing schools,” and (c) “students are skilled and empowered to articulate their feelings and understand triggers of conflict in high implementing schools” (p. 61). In addition, Selfridge explained that one component of the RCCP success is that

All of the adults in the school contribute to a positive school culture by modeling positive communication, engaging in mutually respectful interactions and having the ability to de-escalate conflict. In an RCCP school, all of the adults – including office staff, maintenance staff, transportation staff, lunchroom aides, and classroom aides – are familiar with the concepts and practices of RCCP so children consistently experience positive interactions and adult support throughout the school. (p. 63)

In an RCCP participating elementary school, teachers receive a curricular manual entitled, *Resolving Conflict Creatively: A Teaching Guide for Grades Kindergarten-Six*, and this comprehensive curriculum program is used in addition to a peer mediation program (DeJong, 1994). DeJong explained that, according to ESR, the founding group of RCCP, “school mediation programs are best implemented as part of a larger effort to train staff and students in conflict resolution, [and] this is a significant strength over mediation-only projects elsewhere in the country” (p. 9). The RCCP elementary school curriculum is built around 51 lessons called workshops, a term that calls attention to the fact that the teacher acts as facilitator, and leads students through a series of learning activities. Each lesson has the same structure: “(1) warm-up exercise (“gathering”), (2) review of the class agenda, (3) workshop activities, (4) student evaluation of the workshop, and (5) closing activity” (p. 9). The curriculum is divided into 12 units, with separate units for Grades K-3 and 4-6. The units are entitled:

1. Setting the Stage
2. Peace and Conflict
3. Communication
4. Affirmation
5. Cooperation
6. Acknowledging Feelings
7. Resolving Conflict Creatively
8. Appreciating Diversity
9. Bias Awareness

10. Countering Bias
11. Peacemakers
12. The Future – A Positive Vision (pp. 4-8).

Carlsson-Paige and Lantieri (2005) described the model called The Peaceable Classroom, which is a component of RCCP. They wrote that The Peaceable Classroom is defined as “a caring classroom community based on the following independent principles:

1. Building Community and Mutual Respect
2. Shared Decision-Making
3. Democratic Participation
4. Social Responsibility
5. Appreciation for Diversity
6. Affirmation and Acceptance
7. Personal Connections
8. Caring and Effective Communication
9. Emotional Literacy
10. Cooperation and Collaborative Problem-Solving
11. Managing and Resolving Conflict. (p. 99)

Also, these authors noted that “the UN General Assembly has declared the first decade of the new millennium as the Decade of the Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World, “and that our task is to figure out what actions we can take today in our own sphere of influence to educate our children to think, act, and feel, first as global citizens and second as national citizens” (p. 102). They declared that “our best hope for humanity is to fully engage young people so they come to understand themselves, others, and the interdependent world in which they live; to believe in justice and peace, and to work to bring about a better world” (p. 103).

The Integration of Conflict Resolution into the Existing Classroom Curriculum

Stevahn et al. (2000) conducted a study to assess the effectiveness of a conflict resolution training program integrated into a Kindergarten academic unit about friendship. These researchers found rather dramatic results. Before training, only two of the children had been able to correctly define conflict, and none of the children could outline integrative negotiation procedures to solve conflict. However, following the study, “trained children used significantly more constructive interventions to help [themselves as well as] others resolve conflict than untrained children,” and additionally, “trained children compared to untrained recalled significantly more of the friendship concepts taught than did the untrained children” (p. 778). After training, “37% of the trained children used all or part of the integrative negotiation procedure to solve the conflict; none of the untrained children used integrative negotiation to solve the conflict,” and also, after training, “26% of the children who received training indicated that they would help mediate the conflict [of other children] by using the negotiation procedure to help the disputants reach agreement on a solution” (p. 782).

Stevahl et al. (2000) noted that “the results of this study provide strong evidence that the children not only learned the integrative negotiation procedure but also tended to internalize it,” and “the importance of training young children in how to manage conflicts constructively cannot be overemphasized” (p. 782). The authors acknowledged that their study was limited, in that, there was not a broad range of socioeconomic or racial diversity among these children, and they suggested that would be an area for future research. Also, they made a point that would be of interest to all elementary educators: that conflict training can be implemented into academic coursework “in ways that

enhance achievement [increasing] the probability that conflict programs will be adopted and institutionalized into the daily life of classrooms and schools” and that “practicing negotiation in the context of the academic curriculum apparently makes the curriculum more meaningful and memorable” (p. 782). In sum, the results from this important study indicated that “all elementary-age students, including kindergarteners, can be trained effectively in conflict resolution and can thereby participate in making the school a safe community where learning can flourish” (p. 783).

Stevahn (2004) succinctly expressed the benefits of integrating conflict resolution training into existing curricula.

Schools can become places where intellectual pursuits and the resolution of interpersonal disputes combine to enhance classroom life and academic rigor. Educators no longer have to make either/or choices between programs aimed at increasing academic achievement versus those aimed at developing interpersonal competence. (p.56)

Stevahn continued by explaining,

Accomplishing both simultaneously is possible, practical, and prudent for several reasons. First, the likelihood of creating a safe, orderly school community where students can excel increases when all students not only learn procedures for constructive conflict management, but also use those procedures to resolve real conflicts. Second, curriculum-integrated conflict training may be the key to overcoming factors that inhibit schools from institutionalizing conflict resolution programs, even when such programs are desired. Finally, the history of innovation in education indicates that school programs are likely to be ignored or discontinued unless perceived to be effective tools in increasing student achievement, [and] we now have empirical evidence that substantively links curriculum-integrated conflict resolution training to increased academic achievement. (p. 56)

Jacobson (1999) reported that the results from a study conducted in Washington state (first published in the March 1999 issue of *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*) in which it was demonstrated that the use of an elementary school curriculum

that emphasizes conflict resolution, negotiation, and decision making skills can reduce the chances that students will commit violent acts, abuse alcohol, and engage in risky sexual relationships as adolescents. In addition, students who participate in such a program are more likely than those who do not to behave better in school, achieve at higher levels, and have a more positive attitude toward school. The lead researcher (Hawkins, 1999, as cited in Jacobsen) followed the students until age 18 and found that those who participated in the program reported the commission of notably fewer violent acts than those who did not: 48.3 % compared with 59.7 %. Also, there was a notable difference between how often students in the control group and the intervention group drank alcohol. Control-group members were more likely (e.g., 25 percent in comparison with 15.4 %) to report drinking alcohol 10 or more times in the past 12 month period.

Chapter Summary

In summary, the literature about conflict resolution programs that have been implemented in elementary schools has shown that teachers can successfully train students in grades K-2 to use effective conflict resolution skills with each other. When students have the opportunity to learn and practice these skills, the results are always positive and often include dramatic decreases in student violence and destructive methods of resolving disputes, as well as dramatic increases in students' and teachers' perceptions of safer and more harmonious school and classroom environments. In Chapters 3 and 4, this researcher will synthesize components of the most effective conflict resolution programs that have been published, and combine these to develop a new curricular unit that can be integrated into K-2 classrooms.

Chapter 3

METHOD

Ideally, in all elementary schools, there would be a conflict resolution program such as Teaching Students to be Peacemakers (TSP; Johnson & Johnson, 1995) or the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP; DeJong, 1994) in place, but unfortunately different, less effective methods of school and classroom discipline have been utilized in many schools. The purpose of this project will be to develop a curricular unit that will synthesize the most effective activities for teaching children effective conflict resolution skills and for establishing a caring, cooperative classroom climate, that have been published. Teachers in Grades K-2 can integrate this unit into their current academic curriculum and implement it to create a more harmonious classroom environment. This researcher will combine features from the following conflict resolution programs to develop the new unit.

1. *Teaching Students to Be Peacemakers* (Johnson & Johnson, 1995)
2. *The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program* (DeJong, 1994)
3. *Creative Conflict Resolution* (Kreidler, 1984)
4. *Teaching Concepts of Peace and Conflict* (Kreidler, 1991)
5. *Teaching Conflict Resolution Through Children's Literature* (Kreidler, 1994)
6. *Adventures in Peacemaking* (Kreidler & Furlong, 1995)
7. *Talk It Out: Conflict Resolution for the Elementary Classroom* (Porro, 1996)
8. *Teaching Conflict Resolution with the Rainbow Kids Program* (Porro, 2002)
9. *The Friendly Classroom for a Small Planet* (Prutzman, Stern, Burger, & Bodenhamer, 1988)

Target Audience

The groups or individuals who would be interested in use of this unit would be elementary school classroom teachers in Kindergarten, first, and second grades. This unit could be used at the beginning of the school year and serve as the foundation for a classroom management plan.

Goals of the Project

There will be two main purposes of this curricular unit. The first purpose of this unit will be to provide teachers with lessons and activities they can present to assist them with the establishment of a caring and cooperative classroom climate. The second purpose of this unit will be to provide teachers with lessons and activities they can present to assist them in teaching students the communication skills necessary for constructive conflict resolution, and, ultimately, a four step conflict resolution process that students can use daily.

Procedures

Use of this unit will allow teachers to gradually introduce and reinforce concepts that are the foundation of conflict resolution, such as cooperation and empathy, and to train students in specific communication techniques that are essential components of conflict resolution, such as active listening, I-messages, and expressing their needs.

Peer Assessment

This author will request several other elementary school teachers to review and provide informal feedback in regard to this curricular unit. Based on this feedback, the recommended changes will be made.

Chapter Summary

Identified in this chapter was the target audience who could use this curricular unit, that is, teachers in grades K-2. Also, the goals of this project and procedures of the unit were described. In addition, details about peer assessment were provided. In Chapter 4, this author will present the curricular unit, and in Chapter 5, she will discuss and summarize this Research Project.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

There are several shared components of the most successful, comprehensive conflict resolution programs for early elementary students (DeJong, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Kreidler, 1984, 1991, 1994, 1995; Porro, 1996, 2002; Prutzman, Stern, Burger, & Bodenhamer, 1988). The purpose of this chapter is to present a curricular unit that synthesizes the best practices in teaching children in Grades K-2 effective, constructive conflict resolution skills. Following are the five sections that will comprise this unit:

1. establish a caring, cooperative classroom climate;
2. recognize and handle feelings constructively;
3. learn effective communication skills;
4. appreciate diversity and commonalities; and
5. define and solve conflict.

This unit has been developed with the rationale that teachers must first establish a cooperative, respectful classroom climate and teach children effective ways to communicate and handle their feelings so that they will be prepared and receptive to learning specific conflict resolution skills. When children have had the opportunity to participate in community building activities, they will create positive, caring, experiences with one another so that, as conflicts arise, they already have a foundation of friendship

in place and will be more likely to want to solve their conflicts respectfully and preserve their relationships (Kreidler, 1984).

The prerequisite to this unit is for teachers to communicate expectations, rules, and consequences for student behavior on the first day of school. Each teacher may have a different approach to the development of classroom rules and consequences; however, Kreidler (1995) suggested that teachers involve students in the development of guidelines for behavior, and to avoid rules that are: (a) too general, (b) too harsh, (c) too many, (d) too negative, or (e) ignored. For example, instead of "Do not hit," a more positive, comprehensive rule would be "Keep your hands to yourself." Some teachers may not even want to term these guidelines as rules. Although the process of the development and implementation of specific rules is not the focus of this unit, it is important to note that it is an important foundation of all classrooms.

It is encouraged that teachers begin this unit on the first day of school, if possible. The first days and weeks of school are crucial to the establishment of the classroom climate and expectations for the entire school year, and therefore, it would be beneficial if teachers introduce these concepts as soon as possible. If that is not possible, this unit may be introduced at any time of the school year; however, it is more difficult to *undo* students' learned negative habits than to teach them more positive methods to handle problems early in the year.

This author designed this unit to be user friendly and flexible. The activities that have been adapted from the educators listed on page 21 are presented in a simple Procedure format and list the directions for instruction. It is encouraged that teachers use

as many of the lessons and activities as possible, but they have the flexibility to omit or adapt certain lessons and activities based on the needs of their students.

Section One: Activities to Establish a Caring, Cooperative Classroom Climate

"Introductory Name Game" (Adapted from Prutzman et al., 1988, p. 17)

Procedure:

1. Have students sit in a large circle. Ask a simple, interesting question such as "What is your favorite dessert?" and go around the circle and have everyone say his or her name and answer the question.

"Manners" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1984, p. 102)

Procedure:

1. If your class does not already regularly say "please," "thank you," and "excuse me," discuss their use and importance.
2. Do role plays with and without manners.
3. Discuss with students when are good times to use these polite phrases, and how using manners is an important way to show kindness to others and help make the classroom a caring, happy place. If you can think of other verbal or nonverbal examples of showing manners in your classroom that students need to learn, discuss those with students as well.

"Helping Hands" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1991, p. 14).

Materials: Construction paper, scissors, crayons

Procedure:

1. Gather students as a whole group, and begin by discussing the concept of helping. Ask students, "What are some ways you help other people in school? At home? In the community? The concept of community or neighborhood may need to be explained to younger students.
2. Give each student a piece of construction paper. Have students trace both of their hands and then cut out the outline. On each cutout have students write their names. On each finger have them write a way in which they help other people. Kindergarten teachers may need to write out students' responses. Younger students may also write just one helping activity on each cutout.
3. Mount the cutouts on a Helping Hands poster or bulletin board in the classroom.

"Caring T-Chart" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1994, p. 102)

Procedure:

1. Write the word, caring, on the board. Ask volunteers to define it. Explain that the class will identify ways to make the classroom a caring place.
2. Make a T-Chart on the board, labeling it "What caring looks like" and "What caring sounds like," and have students brainstorm specific behaviors for each side of the chart.
3. Ask students, "Why is a caring classroom important?" and "Which things on our chart could we do right away?"

"Rainbow Board" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1991, p. 141)

Materials: Construction paper in red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple, cut into 4" x 8" strips (should be enough strips for each child to have three).

Procedure:

1. Gather students as a whole group. Begin by reviewing the behaviors that contribute to a caring classroom community. Ask students, "What is something you have done that has helped to make our classroom a kind, caring place?" Help students brainstorm if necessary.
2. Give each student three strips of paper, each a different color. On each strip the children should write their names and something they do, or could do, to contribute to a caring community. Examples may be "I keep my hands to myself," "I help people when they get hurt," or "I put materials/games away."
3. Mount the strips on the bulletin board arranged in a rainbow fashion. Point out all the different special ways that students help contribute to a caring classroom. Add that everyone has something special to contribute to making the classroom a happy place, and when all of those things are put together, it is like a rainbow.
4. Also, older students can set *caring goals*. For each caring activity they write, they can also write a *caring goal*, for example, "I will try to argue less during games." Encourage goals that are specific and measurable, and meet with students individually each subsequent week to evaluate their progress and set new caring goals.

"Caught Caring! Bulletin Board (Adapted from Kreidler, 1984, p. 103)

Material: tagboard

Procedure:

1. Ask students to become positive *tattletales*, telling you when they see acts of caring and kindness on the part of another student. Then, on a 5 x 8" tag, write the relevant student's name and the reporting student's name and describe what he or she did. Post the card on the "Caught Caring!" bulletin board for 3-5 days, and then give it to the child to take home and keep.

"Putting Positive Statements on Silhouettes" (Adapted from Prutzman et al., 1988, p. 46)

Materials: large sheets of butcher paper, pencils, crayons, markers, fabric, yarn, and glue

Procedure:

1. Put children in pairs and have them trace each other on large sheets of paper. They can fill in features with crayons or markers, and glue pieces of yarn and fabric for their hair and clothes. Have children put their names on their silhouettes and hang them on the wall.
2. In small groups, children write their names on index cards and distribute them to each member of the group. Each child writes one nice thing about each person on his or her card, and they may sign their names to their comments. When everyone is finished, the cards are returned and children enjoy their praise. If children are too young to write, the teacher and other adult volunteers can record their responses.
3. Collect the cards and tape them to the silhouettes on the wall.

"Caring Circle"

Procedure:

1. Have students sit in a circle and have students go around the circle and each child says one kind thing about the student sitting to their right. This is a quick activity that can be used at any time to create a more caring tone in the classroom.

"Cooperative Storytelling" (Adapted from Prutzman et al., 1988, p. 32)

Procedure:

1. This activity can be either verbal storytelling or *shared writing*. For the verbal version, have everyone sit in a circle and begin a story, for example, "Once there were a boy and a girl walking down a very long road. The girl had a basket in her hand," then point to someone else to continue the story. Let the student add a sentence or two, and then point to another student. Not knowing who is next keeps interest higher than going around the circle in order. If there is time, everyone, who wants to, should have a chance to contribute. The story can be make-believe or realistic; in either case it should move quickly.
2. For the written version, write the story on the board or chart paper as students add sentences.

"Cooperative Word Chains" (Grades 1-2; Adapted from Kreidler, 1984, p. 147)

Materials: pencils, paper

Procedure:

1. For this vocabulary building activity, students should work in pairs. On a piece of paper, the first student writes a word and then passes the paper and pencil to the second student.
2. The second student writes a word that begins with the final letter of the first word (for instance, if the first word was *animal*, the second might be *letter*), and passes it back to the first person. The length of the list is variable. Start with 20 words.

"Cooperative Teddy Bear Making," or "Robot Making," at the discretion of the teacher
(Adapted from Kreidler, 1995, p. 49)

Materials: Construction paper, crayons, scissors, tape, role cards (one set per group with the following roles: leg maker, arm maker, head maker, body maker)

Procedure:

1. Divide students into groups of four. Explain that the group is to create a teddy bear and come up with a description of the teddy bear. The rules are simple: everyone in the group helps decide what the teddy bear will be like, and everyone in the group helps make the teddy bear. In this activity the decision making is very simple because each child is in charge of a body part. The student can make the body part look however he/she wants it to look.
2. Explain that you will be giving role cards to the group. Everyone in the group will have a specific job to do. Give each group a set of cards, face down, and have the group members pick cards.

3. Give each group the materials they need to create their teddy bears and have them begin. Circulate to help those groups who need it.
4. When the groups have finished, have them share their teddy bears with the other groups.
5. Since students often like to make things that they can take home, and the cooperative teddy bear stays in the classroom, a good follow up activity is to have each student make a baby teddy bear for the cooperative teddy bear, and these can go home with the children who made them.

"The Line Forms Here" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1995, p. 65)

Procedure:

1. Explain that, for this game, there must be absolutely no talking and no touching each other after you have finished describing the rules of play. The group goal is to line up in a certain order, such as by height, as quickly and accurately as they can. Ask the students to stand up in the middle of the room. After you have answered any questions they may have, put the no talking rule into effect. (Younger students enjoy this game, but it may take them a few tries to get the knack. Start by having them line up from shortest to tallest and allow them to talk. Repeat the game and ask the group if they are ready to try it without talking.)
2. Allow students to begin to put themselves into the line, and tell them that they should raise their hands in a victory sign when they think that they have lined up in order and are definitely finished.
3. Watch as they work it out, and make sure that no one talks!

4. Once every student has raised his/her hand to show that the group is finished, help them check to see if they lined up as close to accurately as possible.

To make the activity more challenging for older students, have students line according to their birthdays, with one end starting at January 1, and the other end ending at December 31. This would work for second grade students learning about the calendar. Conduct the activity the same way, and at the end, pose these reflection questions:

1. How did you communicate without using words?
2. How did you feel when someone did not understand what you were trying to tell them? Were you frustrated or angry? Did it make you laugh?
3. Did you give up or keep trying?
4. Was there a moment when you and someone else finally understood each other? How did that feel?
5. Did the two of you share your new communication system with someone else?

Activity for *A Chair for My Mother* (Williams, 1982; Adapted from Kreidler, 1994, p. 104)

Materials: drawing paper, crayons

Procedure:

1. Before reading, explain that this book tells the story of a family that works together to save for something. Ask students if they have ever saved

money for something they wanted and have a few children describe their experiences.

2. Read the story, and then ask students, "How did the neighbors help the family?" "What did the grandmother say about the neighbors? How were they kind?" and "What were some of the things the family did in the chair?"
3. Explain to students they are going to do an activity called "If I Had a Hundred Dollars." Begin by asking student to imagine they have \$100.00 to give away, and they may give it to any person, group, or organization. Ask a few volunteers to explain their ideas.
4. Divide the students into cooperative groups of three or four and distribute the materials. In the center of the paper, have the students draw a \$100 bill. Then, each student in the group draws a picture to show how he/she would spend the money. The students should label their pictures, saying who receives the money and why. A variation on this activity is to have the students make the decision as a group.

Activity for *Teammates* (Golenbock, 1990; Grades 1-2; Adapted from Kreidler, 1994, p. 105)

Materials: drawing paper, pencils, crayons

Procedure:

1. Before reading, explain that *Teammates* tells of two friends who helped each other to be brave. Discuss discrimination; that is, treating people

unfairly because of the way they look. As you read the book, point out the examples of discrimination that are described.

2. After you read, as students, "How did Pee Wee Reese show that he cared about Jackie Robinson?" "Why was it dangerous for him to show that he cared about Jackie Robinson?" "How do you know that Jackie Robinson was a brave man?" and "How do you know that Pee Wee Reese was a brave man?"
3. Introduce the activity, "Silent Caring." Explain that when Pee Wee Reese put his arm around Jackie Robinson, he was telling the crowd, "I am standing by him. This man is my teammate." He did not use words, but everyone who saw his action knew what he meant. Have students act out each of the following statements nonverbally ("saying 'I care' without saying a word"), then have students draw pictures to illustrate each statement: "Glad to meet you," "You are my friend," "I am glad you are here," "Do not feel bad," "Hooray for you!" and "You did a good job!"

Activity for *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughter* (Steptoe, 1987; Adapted from Kreidler, 1994, p. 106)

Materials: drawing paper, crayons

Procedure:

1. Before reading, ask students how people in their families show they care for each other. Then explain that this story tells of a girl who showed many people and animals she cared about them.

2. Read the book, and then ask students, "If Nyoka the snake was going to give advice to Manyara, what do you think he would say?" "Nyasha was rewarded for her caring behavior. What good things have happened to you when you have showed people that you cared?" and "In what ways are you like Nyasha or like Manyara?"
3. Introduce the activity, Nyasha's Way. Depending on the reading and writing abilities of the group, have students decide how they think Nyasha would respond in each situation (this also introduces the concept of mediation to children): (a) if Nyasha saw children arguing about the rules of a game, she would, (b) if Nyasha saw her sister blaming her brother for letting the potatoes burn, should would, (c) If Nyasha saw two brothers telling a younger brother he could not play with them, she would, or (d) if Nyasha saw a bully who was taking sunflower seeds from other children, she would. If students cannot read or write, these questions can be discussed as a whole group. If students can read and write, they can complete each sentence by writing it on a sheet of paper and illustrating their responses.

"Caring T Chart for Books" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1994, p. 107)

Procedure:

1. Repeat the activity, Caring T Chart, but have students cite specific caring behaviors from books the class reads. Make a T chart on large paper and post it in the room, and each time a specific caring behavior is recorded, also, record the title and author of the book.

Section Two: Recognizing and Handling Feelings Constructively

"I Feel Sunny; I Feel Cloudy" (Adapted from Porro, 2002, p. 87)

Materials: pictures of a sun and cloud, crayons, drawing paper

Procedure:

1. Read *The Rainbow Kids Story* (Porro, 2002) to students.
2. Beginning the next day, discuss the terms sunny and cloudy. Discuss how the Rainbow Kids in the story had different feelings, and we have feelings like them. Ask students, "have you ever felt sunny? What do you think sunny means? Can you think of a time when you felt cloudy? What does cloudy mean to you?"
3. Distribute paper and art supplies, and have students fold their paper in half. Demonstrate drawing a sun at the top and a cloud on the bottom, and have students draw a picture on each side of a time they felt sunny and a time they felt cloudy. Point out that everyone feels sunny and cloudy at times, and it is a normal part of life.
4. Help students write or dictate a sentence about their pictures.
5. Set up a time for students to share their sunny and cloudy pictures with the class. Point out how we are alike and different. For example, "Everyone has feelings. We all feel sunny at times and cloudy at times. What makes me feel sunny and cloudy may be different from what makes you feel sunny and cloudy. Evan loves playing chase at recess. When someone chases Evan, he feels sunny. But Hannah feels cloudy whenever people

run after her." Also, you could bind these papers together and make a class book that students can read and enjoy.

"We Spread Sunshine" (Adapted from Porro, 2002, p. 91)

Procedure:

1. Make charts for the next three lessons for: (a) spreading sunshine, (b) feeling cloudy, and, (c) clearing clouds away. Observe students ahead of time and jot down several examples of students who did either positive or hurtful things. Record these examples on the charts; use the students' names if the incident was positive, and use, someone, if the incident was negative.
2. Introduce the spreading sunshine metaphor. Tell students, "The Rainbow Kids were good at spreading sunshine at the beginning of the story. What does spreading sunshine mean?" Any action, word, or gesture that lets others know you care about them is spreading sunshine.
3. Help students identify ways they spread sunshine to each other. Say, "I have noticed we are like the Rainbow Kids. Sometimes we spread sunshine too." Present the charts with the examples already noted and read them to the students. Then ask students if they have noticed other examples of spreading sunshine in the class. Quickly jot down the children's' anecdotes, and add their examples to the chart later. Each time a child offers an example, nod and reply matter-of-factly, "Yes, that's spreading sunshine." Avoid compliments or praise of the student who showed the kindness, because the purpose of the lesson is not to reward

caring students with public attention, although that will happen inadvertently, but to acknowledge kind deeds and their effects.

4. Continue to explore the concept of spreading sunshine, and invite students to report sunny incidents as they occur. Add the new examples to the chart and read them to students daily. Continue until every student is listed on the chart at least once (and include yourself). Every student needs to feel part of the caring classroom community. If you find that a few children have not been named, privately coach them to think of a kind gesture and support them to carry it out.
5. Phase out charting spreading sunshine incidents as students internalize the concept: say, "As I look at the chart, I see that everyone understands what spreading sunshine means. Now that we all know how to spread sunshine we won't keep track on the chart anymore."
6. If you want to continue to acknowledge spreading sunshine, begin a Caring Time part of the day in which students can thank a classmate for doing something kind for them.

"We Feel Cloudy" (Adapted from Porro, 2002, p. 100)

Procedure:

1. Introduce the cloudy metaphor for feelings. Tell students that sometimes the Rainbow Kids in the story felt cloudy, and ask them if they remember what caused the Kids to feel cloudy, and what they think cloudy means.
2. Help students identify and explore cloudy feelings. Point out that, as in the story, *throwing clouds* in retaliation usually leads to negative

consequences and makes the problem bigger rather than smaller. Also, ask students if they can think of times they felt cloudy.

3. Begin collecting examples of students' reports of cloudy feelings and events and add them to a We Feel Cloudy chart to be posted in the room. Gradually phase out the use of this chart after a few days.

"I Can Help Myself Feel Better" (Adapted from Porro, 2002, p. 118)

Procedure:

1. Brainstorm a list of appropriate cooling off strategies with students.
2. Have students draw pictures of their three favorite constructive ways to help themselves feel better, and to dictate or write a story about their pictures. The story could begin, "When I feel cloudy I can make myself feel better. I can ____, ____, or ____." Share the stories with the class. Point out that different people have different ways of handling their upsetting feelings. Let students know that you expect them to use cooling off strategies at school when they become cloudy so that they will be better prepared to clear clouds away.
3. In addition, model cooling off as often as possible. The next time you become angry or frustrated, say that you need to cool off before you proceed. You can combine this information with an I-message. For example, "I feel angry when you run back to the classroom after P.E. I'm going to take three deep breaths to cool off and then we'll talk about what happened." This demonstrates that everyone becomes upset at times and shows children how to effectively handle these emotions. Letting students

know you are upset and inviting them to cool off with you also gives them a chance to settle down as well.

Creating a Feelings Chart (Adapted from Kreidler, 1995, p. 148)

Materials: 4" x 6" index cards, chart paper (blocked with headings for each letter of the alphabet)

Procedure:

1. Explain that the group will be making a Feelings Chart to be posted on the wall. Have the students brainstorm feeling words. Write or have a volunteer write each word on an index card.
2. When the group has at least 10 words, organize the words alphabetically. You can do this yourself or with the help of the group. Record the words alphabetically on the chart paper under the appropriate letter labels.
3. Expand the chart by reading the following sentences and have volunteers identify the feeling for the particular *trigger*:
 - (a) When someone pushes me, I feel ____.
 - (b) When I make a mistake, I feel ____.
 - (c) When I do a good job, I feel ____.
 - (d) When I help someone and they say thanks, I feel ____.
 - (e) When someone calls me a name, I feel ____.
 - (f) When someone will not share with me, I feel ____.
 - (g) When someone will share with me, I feel ____.
 - (h) When someone smiles at me, I feel ____.
 - (i) When I get a snack I did not expect, I feel ____.

4. Refer to the chart often during the day. Use and add to the chart to help students name their feelings.

"Ballooning and Draining" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1995, p. 153)

Procedure:

1. *Ballooning* is basically deep breathing. Have the students stand, tell them to take slow, not deep, breaths and fill themselves up with air as if they were balloons. Then they should slowly let the air out of the *balloons*. Repeat a few times and have children note how they feel.
2. *Draining* is consciously tensing and relaxing the muscles in the body. Again, have students stand. Ask them to tighten all the muscles in their bodies and hold them tight until you say to let go. After a few seconds say, "Now relax slowly and let all the anger drain out of you. Imagine a puddle of anger at your feet."
3. Ask students, "How did you feel when you finished ballooning/draining? When might you use them? How could you balloon or drain in a less obvious way?"

"Cooling Off" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1984, p. 18)

Procedure:

1. When a conflict becomes so volatile that violence breaks out, the participants are not likely to be able to work things out nonviolently until some of the emotion exposed in the conflict has dissipated. There are several ways to calm antagonists. One is to establish cool off corners. These are areas where students are sent not to be punished but to calm

down. Obviously, you need separate corners for each student. When they feel they have cooled off, they may leave the corners.

2. Get the students to try deep breathing. Have them take slow, deep breaths while you count to 10 and then back to 1 again.
3. Try having the participants sit silently for a few minutes. Cooling off de-escalates a conflict; it does not resolve it. Sometimes, however, two students cool down to find that they would just as soon skip the whole thing. In this case, you should check to see that no hard feelings remain, and then let it go.

"Finding the Positive" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1984, p. 117)

Procedure:

1. Explain that often, even though we may be angry or frustrated, we also have positive feelings.
2. Ask for volunteers to describe situations that evoked negative emotions. Make a chart on the board using the following headings: (a) negative feeling, (b) situation, and (c) positive feeling. One example may be "cheated/playing Monopoly with classmates/proud of being honest" and another may be "insulted/being called names on the playground/grown-up - did not call names back."
3. Ask and discuss with students why it would be helpful to think of positive things.

"Distracting" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1984, p. 121)

Procedure:

1. Establish a laughing corner. Laughter can dissipate anger and aggression. Have a scrapbook of cartoons and books of jokes there. You might also have clay, paints, little toys, and balloons - whatever an angry student might use to distract himself/herself.
2. List the steps for a distraction dance: Post the following sequence to be completed quickly: "Clap three times, sit on the floor, kick your right foot, kick your left foot, jump up, wave arms, breathe in-fill up with air, deflate slowly, like a balloon, onto the floor, in slow motion, stand, turn around three times, say aloud, 'I'm calm now.'"

Section Three: Activities for Learning Effective Communication Skills

"Good Listening" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1995, p. 102)

Procedure:

1. Discuss with the group why listening is important. For example, by listening we get information, identify dangerous situations, and learn how others feel, get enjoyment, etc. Arrange ahead of time for one child to assist you in demonstrating poor listening and good listening. Call that child up for the demonstration. Say the following: " ___ (child's name), I just got a message from the principal. You just won a contest and you get a million dollars and a free trip anywhere you want to go. But you have to go down to the office right away and call the contest people or they will give the prize to someone else. And you have to say these special words to them or they will give the prize to someone else. You have to say, 'I'm

a great listener. Do you understand?" As you talk to him or her, have the child look around the room, fidget, interrupt you, hum, and show other signs of *poor* listening. Ask the students to describe what they saw.

2. With the same student, repeat the speech, this time with the child demonstrating good listening, i.e. paying attention, looking at you, nodding occasionally, not interrupting, repeating the key information when you have said "Do you understand?" Then ask the group how the first time was different from the second time, and which one was good listening?
3. Make a T Chart of Good Listening with the class. Write the following on a piece of chart paper: "What good listening looks like" and "What good listening sounds like." Have students identify specific behaviors for each side of the chart.
4. Ask students how good listening can make the classroom a better place, and if someone can give an example of a time when good listening helped them.

"The Telephone Game" (Adapted from Prutzman et al., 1988, p. 36)

Procedure:

1. Have students sit in a circle; whisper a simple sentence in one child's ear. Tell students they should whisper the sentence to the child sitting to their right. Explain that their goal is to for the last child to be able to say the sentence aloud exactly like the original sentence.

2. Ask students what helps them to hear the message correctly, for example speaking slowly and clearly, a quiet room, etc. List their answers on the board. Then think of a new message and begin the process again. Tell children they can check back if the message is unclear by asking, "Did you say ___?"

"How to Talk and Listen" (Adapted from Porro, 2002, p. 120)

Materials: *talk* and *listen* signs (a mouth and an ear), I-message, written on a sentence strip, need statement, written on a sentence strip

Procedure:

1. Role-play with students how to take turns talking and listening, holding the talk and listen signs. Tell students that when it is their turn to talk about their feelings, it works best to use an I-message. Show the sentence strip with the message formula: "I feel ___ when you ____." Give students examples of how to do this.
2. Also introduce how to make a statement of need. Tell students it is helpful to talk about what they need and what is important to them: "I want ___."
3. Describe various scenarios of common occurrences in class that may spur conflicts, and have students practice forming I-messages.
4. In addition, model using I-messages and make statements of need whenever you have feelings or desires to express. For example, "I get frustrated when you do not listen because then I have to repeat what I said" or "I need help cleaning the room."

"Understanding Other Perspectives" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1994, p. 69)

Procedure:

1. Introduce an activity called, "Do you see what I see?" Stand in front of the group and pantomime a simple activity, such as washing windows. Ask students to guess what you are doing. Try to elicit several different guesses. For example, washing windows may look like waving to a friend or erasing the chalkboard. Point out that children saw the same activity differently.
2. Ask for a volunteer to stand in front of the group and act out an activity. It may be helpful to give suggestions for pantomimes, such as scrubbing the floor, watching TV, talking on the phone, riding in the car and looking out the window, or mixing cookie dough.
3. Explain that the same activity can look different to other people. We all see the world differently. The way we see the world is called our *point of view*.
4. Books that are good for discussing point of view include *Two Bad Ants* (Van Allsburg, 1988), *The Chinese Mirror* (Ginsburg, 1988), and *The True Story of the Three Pigs* (Scieszka, 1989).

"Empathy Game" (Adapted from Porro, 2002, p. 141)

Materials: two chairs, two pictures of suns and clouds

Procedure:

1. Talk to the group about dress up play and the fun of pretending to be someone else. Then say, "Today we are going to pretend to be someone

else, but instead of trying on clothes, we are going to try on another person's feelings and see if we can guess if the person is feeling sunny or cloudy." Hold up the sun and cloud.

2. Discuss with students why it is desirable to be able to tune into other people's feelings. Point out that people who can guess the feelings of others, or empathize, are good at spreading sunshine because they can figure out what makes someone feel sunny. Also, if you know how others feel, you are less likely to throw clouds because you can predict whether an action is hurtful or not. It is also helpful to understand others' feelings when looking for ways to clear clouds away.
3. Have students gather in a circle. Put two chairs in the center of the circle, one behind the other. Invite two students to sit in the chairs. Give them both a sun and cloud to hold in their laps. Tell a story about a hypothetical scenario in which the student in the front may be involved. At the end of the story, ask the student in the first seat to hold up a sun or a cloud, depending on how she feels, so that the students sitting behind cannot see it. Then ask the student sitting behind to *try on* or empathize with the first child by guessing his/her feelings, and hold up a sun or cloud to indicate his/her guess. A correct guess ends the round, and two more students take the seats for another story.

Section Four: Activities for Appreciating Diversity and Commonalities

"Same and Different" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1994, p. 92)

Materials: drawing paper, crayons

Procedure:

1. Have students work with partners. Have the partners interview each other to determine three things they have in common (i.e., ways they are alike) and three ways in which they are different. Have them make a list of the similarities and differences.
2. When the list is complete, each student should draw a portrait of his or her partner. Tape or staple the two portraits to the list and display them on the bulletin board.
3. Non-readers can work with their partners to discover one way they are alike and one way they are different.

"Family Bag Reports" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1994, p. 93)

Materials: brown paper bags, crayons, collected objects

Procedure:

1. Have students create *bag reports* that represent their families. On the front of the bag, have them draw pictures of their families. They place various objects inside the bags representing aspects of their family lives. For example, they may collect objects representing something the family likes to do together, a tradition in the family, a way a child helps his or her family, a trip the family took, or a story the family likes to read.
2. Give students a few days to work on their bag reports, and then have them present their bag reports to the class. They should describe the picture on the front of the bag, and then show each object and describe what it

represents. As students present their bag reports, discuss how families can be very different and still have many things in common.

3. Another way to encourage appreciation for diversity is to model this. Take opportunities to discuss similarities and differences among children. Help them see specific ways that differences benefit the classroom. If students see that you are not afraid of diversity, your attitude will give them permission to talk about differences and encourage appreciation for diversity.

"The Human Family" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1984, p. 156)

Materials: drawing paper, crayons, magazines, scissors, glue

Procedure:

1. Have students draw pictures of their families and label family members. Post these on a bulletin board, and add photographs of family groupings that may not appear in drawings (e.g., single parent families, couples without children, families of different races). Discuss the differences and similarities.
2. Tell students that they also belong to a much larger *family*, the human family. Distribute magazines and scissors and have the class cut out pictures of people to glue into a collage of the human family. Discuss the diversity and similarities of the human family.

Section Five: Activities for Defining and Solving Conflict

"What is Conflict?" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1994, p. 12)

Materials: cardboard strip showing the word *conflict*, conflict discussion pictures

Procedure:

1. Display the cardboard strip, read the word "conflict," and ask if anyone knows what it means. Build on students' responses by explaining that a conflict is a disagreement between people. Ask students if they know of examples of conflicts.
2. Show each conflict discussion picture and discuss the conflict that is depicted. During the discussion, encourage students to use words other than *fight* by modeling a range of conflict related vocabulary. Ask students what they think is happening in the pictures, what they think the conflicts are about, and how they think the people in the conflicts feel right now.
3. Have students draw a picture of a conflict they were involved in. Ask them to label the pictures, or dictate labels to you.

"Conflict Escalator" (Adapted from Kreidler, 1994, p. 26)

Materials: conflict discussion pictures, chalkboard and chalk, scissors, crayons, glue, drawing paper

Procedure:

1. Ask students to describe an escalator. If necessary, explain that an escalator is a set of stairs that moves up or down. Draw an escalator graphic on the board. Explain that when conflicts get worse, we say that people are on the *conflict escalator*.

2. Describe a conflict to students, using pictures, to describe how two children said things that kept escalating a conflict in which they were involved. Write these phrases on the steps of the escalator. Ask students how, at each step, the children could have said or done something different to come down the escalator and solve their problem.
3. Divide students into pairs, and distribute art materials to them. Help them draw an escalator with four steps. Read a story to the students that involves four incidents of climbing the conflict escalator. Give students four pictures that depict those incidents, and as you read, have the children identify the appropriate illustrations and place them on the conflict escalator they have drawn.
4. Discuss this particular conflict with the students, and ask them what the children in the story did to make the problem worse, and what they could have done to make it better and to solve their problem. Help guide students with appropriate ideas if necessary.

“Brainstorming” (Adapted from Kreidler, 1995, p. 269)

Materials: an ordinary object such as a box, a wooden spoon, or a cardboard tube; chart paper, markers

Procedure:

1. Brainstorming is a skill that can and should be practiced often in all types of problem solving, not just conflict resolution. Explain that the purpose of brainstorming is to come up with as many ideas as possible in a short period of time. During the brainstorm no one says whether the ideas are

good or bad, sensible or silly, workable or not workable. The point is simply to get out as many ideas as you can. After the brainstorm is finished, the ideas are evaluated.

2. Set the object in front of the group. Ask them to suggest all the things they can think of that they could do with that object. Write their suggestions on the board. After a few minutes, or after their energy runs down, end the brainstorm and begin evaluating the ideas. The objective is not to come up with one right or wrong answer, but rather to practice the process of thinking *out of the box* of many different ideas.

“We Clear Clouds Away” (Adapted from Porro, 2002, p. 108)

Materials: pictures of sun and cloud with arrow (i.e., the “clearing clouds away” symbol), small cloud, large sun, light bulb (i.e., symbol for brainstorming), and two smiling suns (i.e., symbol for choosing)

Procedure:

1. Introduce and discuss the clearing clouds away metaphor. Say to students, “Remember in the Rainbow Kids Story when Julie and Dennis got into a fight during the hide and seek game? What did they do that helped clear the clouds away?” Hold up the clearing clouds away symbol, a sun and cloud with arrow. What does clearing clouds away mean?
2. Help students identify ways they “clear clouds away” (solve problems). Say, “I have noticed that we clear clouds away like Julie and Dennis in the story. Sometimes when we get angry or upset, instead of throwing clouds, we say or do something that solves the problem and clears the clouds

away. Display the We Clear Clouds Away chart and read the examples listed, that you have observed, collected and recorded ahead of time.

After each example, invite the two students named in the incident to talk about what happened and how they were feeling. Use students' answers to point out that when clouds are thrown, accidental or not, we can clear them away by doing something that helps the person feel better and works to solve the problem.

3. After reading and discussing the examples written on the chart, elicit other examples of problem solving behavior. Ask, "Has anyone else cleared clouds away? What happened? What did you do that helped solve the problem?" If examples are offered, jot them down and add them to the chart. Each time a child gives an example, nod and reply, "Yes, that is clearing clouds away." As in the spreading sunshine lesson, avoid praising the student who solved the problem. The purpose of the lesson is to explore problem solving behaviors and their effects, not to single out and compliment individuals who cleared clouds away.
3. Continue to elicit examples of clearing clouds away. As in the previous two lessons, invite students to report problem solving incidents as they occur. Keep track and add the new examples to the chart. Read the new entries daily.
4. Point out the need to learn more about how to clear clouds away. Say, "As I look at our charts, I notice that, even though there are lots of clouds in our room (point to the We Feel Cloudy chart), we do not have as many

examples of clearing clouds away. That may be because it can be difficult to solve problems when we become angry and upset. For the next few days, we are going to learn about how to clear clouds away so that when problems happen in our room, we will know how to solve them in ways that help everyone feel sunny again.”

5. Investigate ways to clear clouds away, beginning with little clouds (i.e., minor irritations). Say, “Let’s start by talking about how to clear little clouds away. (Hold up a little cloud). Later we will learn how to handle bigger problems. Little clouds happen when we have little problems and when we get a little upset. Often, it is easy to think of a way to clear a little cloud away.” Give an example of a minor problem that occurs in your room and invite students to brainstorm ways to solve it. Have a couple of students act out the scenario as you describe it. Use the symbols when appropriate. Hold up the cloud and sun to show children’s feelings. Display the light bulb when children brainstorm, use the smiling suns to indicate when students choose the idea they like best to solve a problem.
6. Have students brainstorm possible solutions to one particular scenario, help them choose an idea that solves the problem, and have two children act out the scenario. Record the example on the We Clear Clouds Away chart. Although the scenario was contrived by the teacher and resolved in a role-playing exercise, write the students’ names and the solution on the chart.

7. Present additional demonstrations showing how to clear clouds away using situations that commonly occur in your classroom. Make a list of the little things that go wrong in the room and develop a role play scenario for each. Select different students to act out the scenarios. Display the weather symbols to show feelings and the Brainstorm and Choose symbols for the appropriate steps. Invite the class to brainstorm many solutions to the problems as described. Ask the students involved in the demonstrations to choose a favorite idea and act it out. Record the winning solutions and the role players on the We Clear Clouds Away chart.

“How to Brainstorm and Choose” (Adapted from Porro, 2002, p. 124)

Materials: “How to Clear Clouds Away” poster, light bulb (symbol for brainstorming), two smiling suns (symbol for choosing), two large suns, “We Clear Clouds Away” chart

Procedure:

1. Review the first two steps of the How to Clear Clouds Away process: Cool Off, and Talk and Listen. Introduce Step 3: Think of Ways to Solve the Problem (brainstorm). Present another hypothetical classroom problem scenario, and tell students, “Let’s find out how many different ways the problem could be solved. Who has an idea?” As students offer ideas, write them on the board. Encourage the class to come up with as many ideas as possible. Keep restating the problem in terms of the needs of both children involved. Keep the pace quick and remember that all ideas are acceptable. If students comment about the ideas, remind them

that feelings and thoughts about the ideas (i.e., their evaluations) belong in the next step.

2. Evaluate the ideas. Introduce and demonstrate Step 4: Choose the idea you both like. Go through the list of ideas students brainstormed and beside each idea draw two blank faces. Write one student's name above the first column of faces and the other student's name above the second. Ask both students how they feel about the ideas listed and fill in the face with a smile, frown, or straight line, depending on their response. A straight line face means the idea is so-so, not a favorite but one that may work.
3. Hold up the Choose symbol (i.e., two smiling suns). Say, "It is easy to find the idea they both like because there are two smiling faces next to it." Read the win-win idea and ask the students represented in the hypothetical scenario if that is the idea they both want to try. If there is more than one idea with double smiles, ask, "Of these two (or more) ideas, which one do you want to try first?" Students may also decide to combine a couple of their favorite ideas into the plan.
4. Turn the idea into an action plan. Ask students open ended questions that make the solution concrete and specific. Then, have students role-play to act out the plan to see if it works to solve the problem. When they have acted out the final scene, ask students "Did the idea work to clear the clouds away?" Hand them both big suns and invite the class to clap and thank them for demonstrating how to clear clouds away.

5. Record the problem solving example on the We Clear Clouds Away chart. Write the role-players' names and their solution on the chart. Continue collecting examples of clearing clouds away and adding them to the We Clear Clouds Away chart. The examples from the chart can be taken from more role play scenarios you develop or from real social problems that occur in the class. Let students know that when clouds are thrown, you are available to guide them through the problem solving process if they need help. When helping students to find solutions to real problems, it works best to ask them to evaluate the ideas as they are offered, rather than first generating a pool of ideas and evaluating them later. After one student offers a solution, ask the other, "Is that okay with you?" If the idea is rejected, continue seeking ideas and checking them out with the other student until they arrive at a solution they both like. If the two have trouble coming up with ideas, possibly ask classmates for help. Continue recording successes on the We Clear Clouds Away chart and reading the new entries daily. This reinforces the idea that "We are getting better and better at clearing clouds away."

Chapter Summary

In summary, it is advisable to begin this unit on the first day of school to begin establishing a caring, cooperative climate and teaching the skills that comprise the foundation of conflict resolution right away. Some of these activities may be repeated at times throughout the school year if teachers think their students need extra help or

practice with a particular skill. It is this author's belief that, if teachers make a notable effort early in the school year to establish a friendly, respectful, cooperative classroom climate, and to teach specific communication and conflict resolution skills, they can then enable their students to solve their conflicts in the most effective, constructive manner possible. Therefore, there is more time to teach and learn the academic curricula and establish a more harmonious environment for all. In Chapter 5, the author will summarize the purpose and results of this Research Project, discuss limitations to the Project, and make recommendations for future study.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this project was to develop a curricular unit that combines the best features of elementary school conflict resolution programs by DeJong (1994), Johnson and Johnson (1995), Kreidler (1984; 1991; 1994; & 1995), Porro (1996; 2002), and Prutzman, Stern, Burger, and Bodenhamer (1988). These educators have all made notable contributions to the field of classroom based conflict resolution; however, none of them included all of the aspects that are included in the unit in this Research Project. Based on this author's extensive research on the field of elementary school conflict resolution programs, as well as her professional classroom teaching experience, she believes that the unit presented here comprises all of the most important features of a classroom conflict resolution program. This researcher has searched for the lessons and activities that best exemplify what have been determined to be the six most important steps to teach conflict resolution: (a) establish a positive classroom climate, (b) teach students to handle their feelings constructively, (c) teach effective communication skills, (d) help students to appreciate diversity and commonalities, (e) teach students the definition of conflict and, finally, (f) teach a specific four step process for the solution of conflicts.

This author is surprised that, although many publications exist on the topic, the subject of teaching students conflict resolution skills is nearly missing from

undergraduate teacher education programs. Many teachers search for ways to teach their students effective, constructive ways to handle their conflicts with one another, and the first that this author learned about these great programs was when she reviewed the literature for this project. This author plans to implement this unit this Fall when she begins to teach a new class of students, and she hopes that other new teachers will be able to use this unit as well.

Limitations to the Project

One of the limitations to this project may be that there are an uneven number of lessons and activities for each of the five sections. However, this author believes that the establishment of a caring, cooperative classroom climate is the basis for teaching conflict resolution and has found many valuable activities for this section. Also, it is believed that the lessons and activities included for Section 5, Defining and Solving Conflict, are sufficient for teaching a specific conflict resolution process. This author thinks that there is the right amount of activities in that section to be effective without obscuring this topic for young children. Another limitation to this project was that it was not meant to be a comprehensive classroom management program. As mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 4, it is important for teachers to explain guidelines for behavior on the first day of school, and this author did not focus on the establishment of classroom rules and consequences in this project.

Recommendations for Future Study

This author recommends that researchers further study the development of classroom behavior rules, guidelines, and consequences that are congruent with the

philosophy of the lessons presented in this curricular unit (e.g., teaching students humane, peaceful, effective methods of handling everyday conflict). In this unit, the ideas and tools are presented for the establishment of a cooperative classroom climate and teaching students constructive ways to communicate; however, a simple, effective list of rules, guidelines, and consequences that teachers in Grades K-2 can explain to students on the first day of school would provide a useful foundation for this unit. Of course, teachers in elementary schools need to take into consideration the general school rules as well as the needs of their students when they plan for their individual classrooms, so no two sets of rules may be exactly the same. However, it would be helpful for future researchers to recommend basic rules that are compatible with a classroom in which constructive conflict resolution is used.

Project Summary

In Chapter 1, this author introduced the purposes and goals of this Research Project. In Chapter 2, this author reported information about research that has been conducted and materials that have been published in the field of elementary school conflict resolution. In Chapter 3, this author described the method that would be used to develop this research project. In Chapter 4, this author presented a curricular unit comprised of the following components: (a) establish a positive classroom climate, (b) teach students to handle their feelings constructively, (c) teach effective communication skills, (d) help students to appreciate diversity and commonalities, and (e) teach students the definition of conflict and, (f) teaching a specific four step process for the solution conflicts. This author combined the best lessons and activities for conflict resolution that have been published thus far into a comprehensive five step curricular unit. Finally, in

Chapter 5, this author discussed the Research Project, including the beneficial features as well as the limitations to this Project, and recommendations for future study. This author believes that use of the unit she has developed will greatly assist teachers to establish a positive classroom climate and in teaching students effective, constructive communication skills that will help them to prevent and solve daily classroom conflicts, as well as help students for the rest of their lives.

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