

WITH EYES TO SEE



PEACE AND JUSTICE CONCEPT: CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

ideas for
teachers

who want
to
integrate
social
justice
concepts

into what
and how
they teach

September
2000

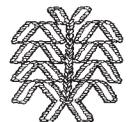
Various studies in the last ten years have shown that violence is seen as the most urgent problem facing schools today; the recent school shootings which have dominated our news and discussions certainly add to this view. Despite the fact that recent studies indicate an actual reduction in juvenile violence, there is often a sense that students today are more violent and less attentive in the classroom than in the past. How are schools dealing with this increase in violence and conflict?

Pedro A. Noguera, an educator at the University of California at Berkeley writes: "Though . . . less coercive strategies for reducing violence have proven relatively successful in particular schools, the overall momentum of school policy has been biased in favor of the 'get tough' approach." (Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 65, No. 2, Summer 1995, 189) Often, the "get tough" approach takes the form of punishment (detention, suspension, expulsion, transfer, zero-tolerance policies, etc.). However, it has been shown that such policies do not reduce violence/conflict, and in many cases make it worse!

On the other hand, becoming a teacher who eliminates punishment by ignoring violence in her/his classroom and school or by making light of such conflict is not a constructive alternative. Students themselves have great advice for teachers on this subject, evident in the answer most give to the question "What makes a teacher special?" They state: "**FIRMNESS, COMPASSION, and an INTERESTING, ENGAGING, and CHALLENGING** teaching style." (Noguera, 205) How does one incorporate both Firmness and Compassion into addressing conflict?

In the previous With Eyes to See newsletter (May, 2000), it was suggested that when teachers are "interesting, engaging and challenging," and they build a community of respect and empathy in their classroom, many issues of conflict cease to exist. Despite the best of intentions, conflict can never be completely eliminated from schools. As a result, all schools and classrooms employ a wide range of conflict management strategies. It is the intent of this newsletter to explore some methods of resolving conflict between students and between teachers and students . . . strengths which do not focus on punishment, but rather attempt to follow the Infusion Methodology's definition of **Conflict Management**:

"After defining a conflict, to develop alternative solutions and negotiate a settlement while maintaining community with the other."



CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: IDEAS

In the previous newsletter, the first part of Julia Jasmine's approach to conflict resolution was explored. She stresses that in order to develop conflict resolution strategies with one's students, a foundation of understanding must first be in place which focuses on "Self-Concept," "Social-Awareness," "Communication," and "Respect and Empathy." When both students and teachers have these skills, then they can all "begin to use, with some promise of success, the actual tools of resolving conflicts: ASSERTIVENESS, NEGOTIATION, COMPROMISE, and MEDIATION." (*Conflict Resolution*, Westminster: Teacher Created Materials, 1997) They are as follows:

"Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate."
-JFK

"We must learn to live together as brothers [and sisters] or we are going to perish together as fools."
-Martin Luther King, Jr.

1. ASSERTIVENESS

Based on respect for self and others

"I" statements are assertive

Between passiveness (gives in) and aggressiveness (becomes angry)

(Elementary grades)

- Role-play situations calling for assertive reactions, e.g., a student takes another's pencil; a student asks another to cheat during a test; a teacher confronts a student who didn't turn in homework; etc.

(Secondary grades)

- More role-plays, but focus on the more extreme situations often facing teens (and younger children too!), e.g., violent fights, drugs, sex, etc. Practice various ways to handle such situations, e.g., a friend asks another to help in a fight after school:

- "I" statements ("I don't want to")

- Put responsibility elsewhere ("My parents will ground me till next year")

- Use "broken record" technique ("no, no, no, no," etc.)

- Walk or run away (don't show up)

- Report it (let someone of authority know about it)

2. NEGOTIATION

When assertiveness meets with resistance, learn to negotiate

(Elementary grades)

- Choose problem in class (e.g., talking out of turn, crowding door before lunch, etc.)
 - brainstorm solutions (plans)
 - state ideal outcome
 - discuss plans and rate "best solutions," "next best," and "last resort"
 - try "best" plan for a week, evaluate

(Secondary grades)

- Apply negotiating skills in conflict situations. Each "side" has demands/plan...this leads to the need for compromise.

3. COMPROMISE

Give a little (hopefully what is least important to you) to get a little (hopefully what is most important to you)

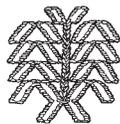
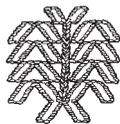
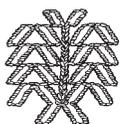
- In small groups or one-on-one, two "sides" use negotiation plans for various conflicts to generate ideas for compromise.

4. MEDIATION

Students can help one another deal with conflict situations

Students can ask for help to mediate conflict situations from peers/adults

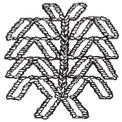
- See the next two pages for examples and resources on mediation/conflict resolution.



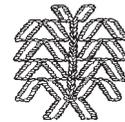
RATIONAL SITUATION ANALYSIS

Rational Situation Analysis, or RSA, is a great way to give students in conflict situations a way to tell their "side" of the story without judgement. The program can be set up differently to meet a school's needs, but the general idea is as follows: During a student's in-school suspension, a teacher, who volunteers one planning period every two weeks (and is not the student's teacher), chats with him/her for 5 to 20 minutes about what happened to cause the suspension. The teacher only listens and encourages the student to share what happened, and how s/he might deal with the situation differently next time. The student often feels respected and listened to, and s/he now has an adult at school, other than their teacher/principal, who represents someone who is there to listen and not judge. It has been shown that RSA reduces conflict situations in schools, and in a noncoercive, nonpunishment manner.

"The motto should not be: Forgive one another; rather, Understand one another."
-Emma Goldman
1911



START WHERE THE STUDENTS ARE



Peter McLaren, a professor of education at UCLA, argues that "The major drama of resistance in schools is an effort on the part of students to bring their street-corner culture into the classroom. Students reject the culture of classroom learning because, for the most part, it is delibidinalized (eros-denying) and is infused with a cultural capital to which subordinate groups have little legitimate access." (*Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education*, New York: Longman, 1998, 191) In other words, schools tend to value a culture which is often different than that of many students. In order to succeed, such students must deny their own culture, and in a sense, deny who they are. Instead of rejecting themselves, they resist school. The result is conflict. A major pedagogical step in addressing this resistance in one's classroom, according to McLaren, is to "[TAKE] THE PROBLEMS AND NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS THEMSELVES AS [THE] STARTING POINT." (217) An important component of this step is the ability of students to "voice" their problems and needs. McLaren defines "VOICE" as "THE MEANS THAT STUDENTS HAVE AT THEIR DISPOSAL TO MAKE THEMSELVES 'HEARD' AND TO DEFINE THEMSELVES AS ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN THE WORLD." (221) Once students are able to name and understand their problems and needs (and their relationship to the socio-economic realities which surround them), they and their teachers, united, can engage in what the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire calls "CONSCIENTIZATION," or "CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS," "LEADING TO A HUMANE TRANSFORMATION OF, RATHER THAN A PASSIVE ACCOMMODATION TO ONE'S WORLD." (226) Basically, schools which value students' prior experiences by placing them at the center of the classroom rather than trying to mold students to the dominant culture, and which work together with students to change those aspects of society which are oppressive, help create students who feel a part of a school/society which respects them and which they helped shape. One of the many positive results of such a pedagogy is a substantial reduction of conflict.

"Understanding human needs is half the job of meeting them."
-Adlai E. Stevenson Jr.
1952

RECOMMENDED

"We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee."
-Marian Wright Edelman

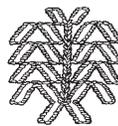
"A person is a person because he recognizes others as persons."
-Desmond Tutu

RESOURCES FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The **Conflict Resolution Education Network** is a clearinghouse on various conflict resolution programs, publications, support, and links to related organizations. A quick visit to their web site is a great start <www.crenet.org>. Or, 1527 New Hampshire Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. Phone: 202/667-9700, fax: 202/6678629, or email: <membership@crenet.org>. They are affiliated with the **National Association for Community Mediation** (same address and telephone as above; <www.nafcm.org> or <nafcm@nafcm.org>), and the **Society for Professionals in Dispute Resolution** (same as above; <www.spidr.org>).

The **Children's Creative Response to Conflict, Inc.** presents many different kinds of teacher-training programs throughout the world. They also have many resources available for purchase. Box 271, 521 N. Broadway, Nyack, NY 10960. Phone: 914/353-1796, fax: 914/358-4924, or email: <ccrcnyack@aol.com>.

Sunburst carries "programs that will help you create an atmosphere of tolerance, acceptance, and mutual respect." Call 1-800-431-1934 to request a catalogue of their programs on guidance, health and family life, including conflict resolution.



Teaching Tolerance offers materials on interracial and intercultural understanding, and many are free! They also have \$2,000 grants for teachers implementing tolerance projects. 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104. Phone: 334/241-0726, fax: 334/264-3121, web site: <www.teachingtolerance.org>

GOT A GREAT IDEA TO SHARE? Send us a description of a Peace/Justice lesson or project that worked well for you and we will include it in a future edition of WITH EYES TO SEE. We look forward to hearing from you!

CONCERN AMERICA

is an international development and refugee aid organization that sends doctors, nurses, engineers, educators, and nutritionists as volunteers to train and empower the materially poor in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Brazil, Guinea and Mozambique.

In support of these projects, Concern America offers educational services in Orange County which include:

- * the St. Nicholas Project
- * Walk Out of Poverty
- * Infusion Method Workshops for teachers
- * "Training for Transformation" Workshops for adults
- * school and parish consulting for the implementation of the Bishops' Pastoral: "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions" (June, 1998)
- * Lending library for resources of peace and social justice

Information on any of these projects can be obtained by contacting:

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