

# WITH EYES TO SEE



## PEACE AND JUSTICE CONCEPT: CONFLICT

ideas for teachers

who want to integrate social justice concepts

into what and how they teach

May 2000

For many teachers, especially newer ones, **Conflict** (most notably classroom management) is the number one reason cited for teacher stress and failure. For many years career-related studies have rated teaching in the top five of the most stressful jobs, and other studies have pointed out that half of all certified teachers leave the profession for other jobs. As a result, there is a severe lack of teachers in many communities

**The Peace/Justice concept "Conflict"** is defined in the Infusion Methodology as "A recurring situation arising from the normal human condition because persons have diverse and sometimes divergent perspectives on a problem..." In our schools, conflict manifests itself on many levels: community/parents vs. school/teachers; school administration vs. teachers; teachers vs. students; students vs. students. In order to truly create the ideal school, all of these levels must be addressed. Teachers, however, have most influence over themselves and students. Therefore, this last edition for the 1999-2000 school year of WITH EYES TO SEE focuses on conflicts between teachers - students and students - students, and more importantly, how to prevent such conflicts from occurring. The following pages present ideas and tools which can be used to reduce conflict in the classroom: something to think about over the summer and possibly implement in the fall.



"If we do not change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed."

-Ancient Chinese Proverb



Though teachers are primarily responsible for their classrooms, they can also be vehicles for positive school and system-wide changes in education. On page four, there is a brief mention of four educators whose actions and ideas may inspire us to move beyond the classroom to reduce conflict and increase quality education.

Have a great end of the school year, a relaxing summer, and a successful beginning of school next fall. WITH EYES TO SEE will see you then and will explore practical ways in which teachers can help students (and others) deal with situations of conflict once they arise. Enjoy!



# CONFLICT: IDEAS

Conflict is a natural part of life, and, of course, conflict exists in schools. It can never be completely eliminated. There are many ways, however, through which we can reduce conflict in our classes, allowing for a more positive learning environment. Note: "Conflict," as used in this newsletter, refers to what can be called "negative conflict," not the "positive" type that can be used to spark engaging discussions or motivate students to problem-solve and create solutions to such conflicts.

"I dream of giving birth to a child who will ask: 'Mother, what was war?'"

-Eve Merriam

"The time absolutely must come when the world spends on peace what it now spends on war."

-Robert Muller

Julia Jasmine, in her short book Conflict Resolution (Westminster: Teacher Created Materials. 1997), encourages teachers to look beyond conflict resolution skills and focus first on laying a foundation of understanding, TOGETHER with their students. She writes, "A welcome bonus of this approach is that many conflicts disappear altogether in the process and many of those that remain become less significant or, at least, less threatening." **TRY IMPLEMENTING THESE FOUR STEPS:**

## 1. SELF-CONCEPT--Who am I?

- Celebrate diversity in classroom (ethnic, language, gender, ability)
- Avoid stereotypes and model good language/behavior towards all
- Increase self-esteem: focus on process, not product; success through quality effort
- Create an environment where all "Intelligences" are valued and touched

Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences:

Linguistic, Logical-mathematical, Spatial, Musical, Bodily-kinesthetic, Interpersonal and Intrapersonal

## 2. SOCIAL-AWARENESS--Who are you?

Social Awareness continuum:

- (1) Recognition-->
  - (2) Appreciation-->
  - (3) Acknowledgement of diversity-->
  - (4) Adoption of code of behavior
- "Recognize:" take time for all to get to know each other
  - "Appreciate:" point out everyone's positives
  - "Acknowledge:" invite students and parents to share their uniqueness
  - "Adopt code:" basically, good manners; do you model and encourage them?

## 3. COMMUNICATION--Can we talk?

Miscommunication=85% of conflicts between students

Recognize students' rights to say how they feel, but we all must send clear messages, receive messages, and make appropriate responses.

- "Send:" focus on "I" statements; teach it and model it
- "Receive:" teach speaking/listening skills by encouraging students to talk about topics of interest (classroom discussions)
- "Respond:" apologize, make a promise, agree, agree to disagree, etc. (show you have heard the other and give your side of the issue)

## 4. RESPECT AND EMPATHY--Why should I care?

Answer: "I care because I know what you mean and I know how you feel."

Build Community to teach Respect and Empathy by having students share their experiences/tell their stories:

- to increase a respect and empathy for the students
- be prepared to hear serious, sad, shocking information--be brave enough to take this step
- use literature to start the discussions
- teach/practice confidentiality first



## ARE YOU "WITHIT"?

Effective teachers were shown to have the following Management Behaviors:

- "WITHITNESS"--spot deviant behavior almost before it starts;
- "OVERLAPPINGNESS"--deal with behavior while continuing with lesson;
- "SMOOTHNESS AND MOMENTUM"--absence of behaviors that interrupt flow;
- "GROUP ALERTING"--keep uninvolved students attending and forewarned of upcoming activities;
- "ACCOUNTABILITY"--keep students accountable for their performance;
- "CHALLENGE AROUSAL"--keep students involved and enthused;
- "VARIETY"--mix it up.

(Kounin, J. S. "Discipline and group management in classrooms." Learning to Teach. Arends, R. New York: McGraw, 1991. 162-163.)

## EXPECT A LOT, GET A LOT

QUESTION: Want to decrease discipline issues and increase student attendance and academic performance?

ANSWER: Have high expectations for students' academic success and hold students personally responsible for their own behavior. Create a safe, orderly and academically focused environment where you are serious about teaching and expect the students to be serious about learning.

(Rutter, W. A., Maughan, B., Mortimore, P., & Ouston, J. (with A. Smith). "Fifteen thousand hours: Secondary schools and their effects on children." Educational Psychology. Gage/Berliner. Boston: Houghton, 1992. 379.)



## ACTIVITIES TO REDUCE CONFLICT

1. Try holding what William Glasser calls "Classroom Meetings." There are three types of meetings, as Glasser describes, and they should be held frequently: "... the social-problem-solving meeting, concerned with the students' social behavior in school; the open-ended meeting, concerned with intellectually important subjects; and the educational-diagnostic meeting, concerned with how well the students understand the concepts of the curriculum." (from Schools Without Failure. New York: Harper, 1969. 122.)

2. Explore Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences with your class/es. Have your students identify their predominant strengths, and discuss together ways in which everyone's intelligences can be fostered in your class.

3. Increase the appreciation of the ethnic diversity in your classroom by leaving a world map up at all times. Have the students identify where they or their ancestors are from, and then write their names on small flags which are posted at their countries of origin on the map. A related activity: hang another world map, in an inconspicuous spot in your classroom, upside down; then wait until a student asks why. This is a great way to spark a 10 minute discussion (or a longer lesson) on why our maps are oriented as they are (North up, South down; some countries looking larger than they are in comparison to others; why certain countries are at the "center" of maps), and how this relates to the way we view people from various regions around the world. A wonderful map which "corrects" these problems is the Peters Projection World Map, and can be purchased at local book stores. (World Leisure Marketing Limited, P.O. Box 17, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 4XP, England)

"Children must learn early on the value of respecting themselves and others. Confucius was right when he advocated courtesy and respect as the foundation of family and of society."  
-Robert Muller

"Though I am different from you, we were born involved in one another."  
-Tao Chien

# RECOMMENDED

"Reporter:  
'Mr. Gandhi, what do you think of Western Civilization? Gandhi: I think it would be a good idea!"

"This planet must be managed so that each individual human life can be a great work of art."  
-Robert Muller

## RESOURCES FOR SYSTEM-WIDE CHANGE

JOHN DEWEY founded the "Laboratory School" in 1902 which was student centered, hands-on, and relevant to the students' world. His monographs "The School and Society" and "The Child and the Curriculum" are just as relevant and provocative today as in the early 1900s.

(University of Chicago Press, 1990 edition)

DEBORAH MEIER has turned around failing public schools in New York City with the creation of small, community-centered schools in which parents, teachers, administrators and students all form one education team, and where teaching is connected to real-world activities. Her book, The Power of Their Ideas, is inspiring reading.

(Boston: Beacon Press, 1995)

WILLIAM GLASSER, a psychiatrist, has worked for years on school reform. One of his more recent books, The Quality School: Managing Students without Coercion, thoughtfully deals with high-quality schoolwork through a "Lead-management" in place of a "Boss-management" model.

(New York: Harper Collins, 1992)

JONATHAN KOZOL is an educator that has been greatly influenced by Paulo Freire. He has written many wonderful books, and his Savage Inequalities is a moving critique of the state of our schools today.

(New York: Crown Publishers, 1991)



## 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:

Education Coordinator  
Concern America  
P.O. Box 1790  
Santa Ana, CA 92702  
(714) 953-8575

To learn more about **HOWARD GARDNER'S MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES**, try two of his books: Frames of mind: The Theory of multiple intelligences, 1983, and Multiple intelligences: The Theory in practice, 1993. New York: Basic Books.

**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!