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EARLY INTERVENTION IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION FOR LOWER
ELEMENTARY STUDENTS IN A SELF-CONTAINED CLASSROOM

by
Colleen Roughgarden

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
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of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
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Thesis Chair: Valarie Lee, Ed.D.

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ABSTRACT

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EARLY INTERVENTION IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION FOR LOWER
ELEMENTARY STUDENTS IN A SELF-CONTAINED CLASSROOM
2009/10

Valarie Lee, Ed.D
Master in Science of Teaching

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to investigate the effects of teaching conflict-resolution strategies to lower elementary students in a self-contained classroom. The students received conflict-resolution strategies and social skill development through an instructional unit involving children's literature along with student self-evaluations, appropriate outlets for tattletales, and the formation of a classroom club against bullying. This qualitative research study was conducted in a kindergarten and first grade self-contained classroom located in southern New Jersey. In order to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the students, all names have been altered. There were seven students in the class who participated in the study. According to the students' Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), the disabilities included communication impaired, multiple disabled, specific learning disability, and other health impaired. In analyzing the data, the findings suggested that all of the students who participated in this study achieved success in two or more areas of conflict resolution.

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the people who have been there for me throughout my entire educational career. My family has always motivated me to get to where I am today. Even when I was stressed and overwhelmed, they always offered encouraging words to push me in the right direction. Without their support and dedication to my dreams, I would not be celebrating the completion of a major milestone in my life. Also, I would like to thank the phenomenal teachers and professors that I have been fortunate enough to encounter throughout my educational journey. Not only have they helped me to realize that I wanted to be a teacher, but they set fine examples for me to emulate. And finally, I would like to thank my incredible friends who are always willing to help me in any circumstance. And of course, I do not know if I would have made it through without my Collaborative Education cohort.

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Chapter I

Scope of the Study

Introduction

“Every conflict we face in life is rich with positive and negative potential. It can be a source of inspiration, enlightenment, learning, transformation, and growth—or rage, fear, shame, entrapment, and resistance. The choice is not up to our opponents, but to us, and our willingness to face and work through them.”

- Kenneth Cloke and Joan Goldsmith

Purpose Statement

Students typically engage in arguments or controversies with their peers for a variety of reasons. For the majority of issues, children can take control of the situation themselves or the controversy quickly dissipates. However, some conflicts escalate becoming issues that need to be successfully resolved for the well-being of all participants. Educators need to be receptive of the emotional needs of their students. Although teachers should intervene when necessary, students should be educated in appropriate ways to resolve conflicts on their own when possible. With the implementation of conflict-resolution lessons, students should be capable of independently monitoring controversies.

With the heightened concern over an increasing number in acts of school violence, many schools are responding to the growing need in all levels of schooling. If the students are taught conflict-resolution strategies in primary grades, the hope is that the students will commit the approaches to memory and utilize them more often when they

become comfortable with the ideas. Teaching students appropriate ways to resolve a conflict or de-escalate a problem if it has already intensified can decrease the risk for further damage (Palmer, 2001).

Although teaching lessons about conflict-resolution and peer mediation could seem to take time away from other academic areas, the lessons learned speak volumes to students who view school as a social atmosphere as well as an academic arena. Once the students learn the appropriate techniques to handling conflicts, teachers will inevitably use less of their own time intervening situations that students may become involved in. Teachers who allow students to fully internalize conflict resolution strategies may have students who can effectively mediate their own controversies rather than involving the teacher and other students.

Educators can provide students with a wealth of strategies to use during conflicts. As fully explained later in Chapter Two, some conflict-resolution strategies include the telephone game, story-like scenarios, children's literature, role-play situations, win-win strategies, I-messages, Peace Pal peer mediation, and More Than Manners approach using peaceful outlets (Palmer, 2001; Leadbeater, Ohan, & Hogg, 2006; Schellenberg, Parks-Savage, & Rehmann, 2007; Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2007). Educators provide the majority of the lessons focusing on these strategies. However, students need to commit the strategies to memory and be able to use the approaches independently. When conflicts arise, students are responsible for utilizing the appropriate strategy in order to come to a compromise with their peers. Student-driven approaches allow students to internalize and become accountable for their retrieval of information at appropriate times

(Heydenberk et al., 2007). In violent or extreme cases, teachers need to be prepared to intervene so that more damage is not committed to the classroom climate.

As lessons are taught to students, it is important for educators to learn more about their students as well. Part of the learning experience is to realize how and why students prefer certain strategies to resolve conflicts over others in order to understand the cognitive and emotional well-being of the students (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004). Students who are suffering from aggressive or depressive behavior may choose inappropriate outlets for their anger or ineffective strategies for conflict resolution. If teachers notice this trend, it may be necessary to conduct more lessons targeting the best way to choose appropriate strategies based on specific situations. Students who can recognize behaviors and strategies as inappropriate are able to choose the proper resolutions to conflicts more effectively (Heydenberk et al., 2007). Encouraging students' choices regarding conflict-resolution approaches is a start; however, teachers need to guide students into making the most effective decisions for resolutions.

When students are taught conflict resolution strategies through a whole-class approach rather than providing training to only a few specific students, students learn a common vocabulary that can be used amongst all their peers (Campbell, 2003). Peer mediation training that relies on a select number of chosen students to learn the strategies and then report back to the class do not allow for full immersion of all students into the practice. When all students are involved, the conversation can include common vocabulary that all students can understand and communicate through. Communication processes between students are encouraged in order to talk through situations. The use of I-messages provides communication skills to articulate their own personal feelings as

well as empathizing with their peers' feelings (Heydenberk et al., 2007). The specific terminology becomes ordinary in classrooms which actively utilize conflict-resolution strategies.

When students see the benefits of using conflict resolution strategies they have motivation to continue employing them in both similar and unfamiliar situations (Heydenberk et al., 2007). Success in peer relationships provides a comfortable disposition in the school environment. When students feel comfortable in the learning community, students are more apt to successful academic and social experiences as well (Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2005).

Teachers should take every opportunity to teach valuable lessons to young students rather than allowing or forcing students to shy away from or ignore conflicts. Arguments occur regularly in elementary school classrooms due to the nature of young children; however, each argument provides the opportunity for a learning experience that can last a lifetime. Students who can effectively mediate their own problems and immediately resolve controversies with others are provided with an advantage over students who do not choose to work towards a resolution.

Statement of the Research Problem and Question

The purpose of this teacher research study was to investigate an early intervention in conflict resolution for lower elementary students in a self-contained classroom. In the process, I intend to find the answers to five sub-questions: How do the students perceive the conflict resolution strategies? (Effective or ineffective?) Do the students remember to use the strategies? Which students have more difficulty using the strategies and why?

Which strategies are more difficult to utilize? What impact does a conflict resolution curriculum have on students' independent use of the strategies?

Story of the Question

Shouts erupt from across the classroom. The classroom becomes a fury of typical “he said, she said” antics. The teacher no longer has control amongst the students because they have become an audience to the argument occurring in the back of the room. The students have been behaving in this manner all week, but the teacher cannot figure out the source of the problem. In an effort to save the last remaining piece of the lesson, the teacher asks the students to stop arguing and focus on the lesson. Once control is regained, the class continues on with the lesson and the teacher forgets the scene even occurred. The goal of teaching the prepared academic lesson is accomplished.

This scenario is commonplace in elementary school classrooms. Stopping the argument before it launches into a large-scale issue seems to be the preferred method for many teachers. However, the classroom arguments that are glossed over and go unsolved could develop into large-scale issues down the road. Throughout my experiences observing, participating, and teaching in various placements in a number of elementary classrooms, I realized that my concerns are always linked to social aspects of the students' lives. I find myself wondering about the dynamics of student relationships and friendships. How do students choose close friends amongst a sea of peers? What makes friendships last through the years, while other relationships end quickly? What characteristics set children up to dislike one another from the start? Simple unplanned situations such as seating arrangements and random pairings of students can create issues that were not intended to occur. Subtle feelings of dislike between students can escalate

into major conflicts that can last long term. When creating lesson plans, I find myself wondering about the social aspects in the sequence of learning as well as the academic parts.

Stigmas from elementary school situations can follow a child through the rest of their school years. Unfortunately, I can recall a number of the students who had difficulty forming friendships in elementary school and continued to face the same struggles throughout middle school and high school. It was difficult to digest that some students became known as “loners” or aggressive bullies at a young age and were never able to rid themselves of that reputation. I believe educators need to work diligently to foster a learning community within their classroom. Allowing and dismissing regular controversies is not healthy to the overall classroom climate. Therefore, I believe conflict-resolution lessons need to become a regular component of the elementary school curriculum. Students should be provided with a multitude of strategies to deal with controversies rather than resorting to shying away from the issue, ignoring the problem, or retaliating in an aggressive manner. When students learn appropriate conflict resolution strategies at a young age, children can properly resolve situations rather than allowing them to continue.

Thinking back to the students who were categorized as “loners” or bullies, I cannot help but wonder what the result could have been if teachers had responded to the primary situations with conflict-resolution strategies. Students may have had the opportunity to work through controversies rather than shying away or becoming aggressive in the face of opposition. For many students, school is as much about social aspects as the academics.

Organization of Thesis

Chapter Two takes a more in-depth look at the related research on conflict-resolution strategies. The topics discussed include familiar and unfamiliar scenarios, role-play, win-win compromises, and peaceful beings and peace journals from the Peace Pal program. Chapter Three discusses the context of the study and describes the research design and methodology. Chapter Four discusses the results of this particular study. Chapter Five addresses the implications for further research.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

As a central component of human nature, people engage in conflicts over a multitude of different issues. Conflicts occur for a variety of reasons, mainly over a difference in opinion. Especially during childhood, children believe they are correct in their actions and will continuously fight to prove this point even if they know otherwise. Varying opinions tend to lead to some type of controversy. This is typical among all people; however, it can be dealt with appropriately in most settings. When conflicts escalate from common arguments to larger issues, bullying becomes a concern within the school environment. Although bullying can occur in situations outside of the classroom, the controversy may be carried over into the classroom environment.

Within the last two decades, school violence and bullying have become issues that must be addressed in schools. Since news coverage exposed stories of violent acts, school violence became a national issue that has not diminished. Consequently, one of the first conflict-resolution plans using peer mediation was implemented in 1994, which showed a 36% decrease in fighting, verbal abuse, and arguments (Hanson in Schellenberg et al., 2007).

Although elementary schools see small-scale arguments or fights between young students, these issues can escalate into large-scale problems that can change the climate of the school. Schools have developed plans in an attempt to lessen the probability of a small-scale issue developing into a larger problem. Most importantly, awareness of

conflict-resolution strategies between students and teachers could be the strongest factor in keeping conflicts from escalating into large-scale problems or violent scenarios.

What is the Research Question?

The purpose of this teacher research study is to investigate an early intervention in conflict resolution for lower elementary students in a self-contained classroom. In the process, I intend to find the answers to five sub-questions: How do the students perceive the conflict-resolution strategies (effective or ineffective)? Which students have more difficulty using the strategies and why? Which strategies are more difficult to utilize? Do the students remember to use the strategies? What impact does a conflict-resolution curriculum have on students' independent use of the strategies?

What is Conflict Resolution?

In many elementary school classrooms, students' arguments focus on their desires for companionship, praise, and property. In most cases, arguments disperse or students can effectively control them on their own. However, conflicts can escalate very quickly into larger situations that can be detrimental to the students, teachers, and the class as a whole. Teaching students appropriate ways to resolve a conflict or de-escalate the problem if it has already intensified can decrease the risk for further damage (Palmer, 2001). The importance of maintaining lower-level conflicts or de-escalating problems if they have already intensified involves processes that keep students at the center of problem-solving.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, "one in 10 students report having been threatened or injured on school property in the preceding 12 months, and over 5% reported missing school due to safety concerns and threats from fellow students" (Simon,

Barrios, Lowry, Eaton, & Brener in Heydenberk et al., 2007). Schools should be safe havens where students are free to learn and interact socially with peers. Students should not fear conflicts erupting constantly at school. They deserve a staff who is ready to intervene properly at any given time. Furthermore, “a World Health Organization survey of over 1,500 students found that approximately 20% of students reported having being bullied (identified themselves as victims) and 20% of students identified themselves as bullies” (Heydenberk et al., 2007). Educators need to take the opportunity to reverse the information provided in these statistics to make the school environment conducive to learning for all students. Students who feel comfortable in their learning environment typically achieve a higher academic performance (Heydenberk et al., 2005). The abilities to self-regulate feelings and build upon those feelings with problem-solving techniques allows for higher-level thinking. Students who can think critically in conflict situations and possess cognitive flexibility can also apply this knowledge to academic areas as well.

Student Benefits of Conflict-Resolution Strategies

Emotional Needs

Victims of bullying can become targets for peer aggression repeatedly if something is not done to break this cycle. The most important job of educators is to foster a learning community within their classroom as a place where all students feel comfortable academically and socially. When students become victims of constant aggression, the results can be detrimental to the student and the classroom climate. Advice-seeking and conflict-resolution strategies have proved to be effective in reducing further peer abuse (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004). Students should learn the proper way to successfully mediate conflicts and work through them until a resolution has been reached.

Long-Lasting Effects

Conflict-resolution programs not only provide immediate responses to situations; lifelong skills and decision-making processes are also achieved in the process (Heydenberk et al., 2005). The peer mediation skills students learn at a young age will carry on throughout their lifetime in other situations as well. Using these skills, students differentiate between normal arguments and situations that turn into bullying. Once the student determines the necessity of a mutual resolution, students work together, even when they are at odds, to reach a compromise. The skills required to successfully resolve a conflict can be applied to many other similar situations whether it be in school, family life, or careers. Conflicts always arise but possessing the ability to resolve conflicts before they escalate can be a valuable attribute.

When conflict-resolution programs are implemented in schools, students have the opportunity to learn lessons that will last a lifetime. Not only do students learn the importance of conducting successful peer mediation sessions, a new vocabulary is designed as part of the techniques to resolve conflicts (Campbell, 2003). Once students learn the multiple ways peer mediation can be conducted, the students see that the paths to resolutions do not follow a specific pattern. The tools to resolve issues are dispersed and used spontaneously by the students as they see fit.

When conflicts are not resolved in responsible methods, problems can linger long after the issues have occurred, which can affect the emotional stability of students. Typically students react to conflicts using strategies that range from shying away or ignoring the issue to aggressively fighting back or seeking the help of an adult (Leadbeater et al., 2006). Students need to be taught the positive effects of seeking advice

from an adult or fellow classmate. Resolving conflicts in a positive manner immediately will send the message to other students that this student is a safe classmate to trust (Leadbeater et al., 2006). The benefits for the students may be immediate and long-term when continuous use of positive conflict-resolution strategies is employed.

Educators' Responsibility

Within the last few decades, elementary schools have employed anti-school violence and anti-bullying programs that work to create a positive atmosphere in which all students can learn. The majority of issues between students can be resolved; however, a number of issues escalate to higher levels.

Educators have implemented a vast number of methods that can be teacher- or student-directed to use in classrooms and applied to real-world situations. The push is not only to have schools implement conflict-resolution programs, but to use primarily student-driven approaches to solving conflicts. Conflict resolution needs to be a dynamic process that involves teachers and staff members; however, the main priority is to have students thinking, feeling, and acting for themselves to solve problems.

Successful conflict-resolution programs utilize a number of components in their theoretical framework including active listening skills, motivation to be involved, role-playing situations in order to look at new ways of thinking, understanding of social norms, and negotiation strategies (Campbell, 2003). Students need to be thoroughly involved in the decision-making process of the most appropriate approach to handling a situation after learning the proper conduct from an adult.

Albert Bandura's social learning theory suggests that students learn from their environment, more specifically from the imitation of adults (Zirpoli, 2008). When

educators model productive conflict-resolution strategies, students imitate the proper use of these approaches until they become second nature.

Conflict-Resolution Strategies

The Game of Telephone

The simple game of telephone teaches the life lesson that you cannot always believe everything you hear. Many conflicts arise when students think something was said to them or about them, but do not know the truth of the matter. Teachers can use this approach with small groups or whole-group instruction by whispering a sentence into one student's ear and spreading the words through the grapevine. The last student to hear the sentence typically heard something entirely different from the starting sentence. The teacher can use this opportunity to show that rumors can start in a similar manner and can be spread without any truth to them (Palmer, 2001). Students should keep this in mind when they believe something negative was said about them and remember to question the individual first before a serious conflict begins that has no basis. Discussing the rumor and finding the truth before a confrontation begins can eliminate the conflict altogether.

Story-like Scenarios

In many cases, schools implement conflict-resolution strategies that focus on the use of story-like scenarios to analyze students' responses to conflict and question their thoughts on approaches to resolutions. In some circumstances, real-life situations are described depicting similar situations that students may find themselves in, whereas other scenarios deal with fictional characters, such as animals on a farm, to see what students think of fake scenarios (Leadbeater et al., 2006). When teachers use story-like scenarios, students are less likely to be shy or embarrassed to tell their perspective of the scenario

because it is not based specifically on their actions or a situation in which they know the participants. Educators have the opportunity to understand the students' approaches to handling situations. This can allow lessons on conflict resolution to be tailored to students' specific needs.

Conflicts in Literature

Another popular approach to teaching students about conflict resolution is using children's literature that depicts scenarios of conflict in situations in which students can relate. Students may be relieved to see that issues are not specific to them individually, but that many children deal with similar situations and handle them in a positive manner. The literature should be thought-provoking and allow students to reflect upon the story and their lives as well. After being presented with the stories, students should be able to retell the causes of the conflict, the reactions of participants, the effects on the participants, and solutions that led to a positive conflict-resolution model (Palmer, 2001).

Role-playing

Role-play situations are commonplace in the process of teaching students proper conduct when dealing with a conflict. The students act out a situation that could be familiar or may have happened to them, such as fighting over equipment on the playground. The teacher should ask the participants a number of questions: How did you feel during the conflict? Why do you think that conflict occurred? How did you react? Did your actions cause the conflict? Did your response dissolve the conflict or cause it to increase? What are some other possible ways to resolve the conflict? (Palmer, 2001).

Extensive questioning allows students to think about the manner in which they acted and alternative possibilities based upon that specific scenario. Educators may also

choose to take students' answers and apply them to other scenarios that may or may not be similar to the first scenario. Students would have to decide how some methods can be utilized similarly while other scenarios require entirely new approaches in order to be successful.

Advantages

In order to work through a conflict and end at a successful standpoint, both participants need to compromise a resolution to the situation to maintain fairness to both sides. Students will mistrust conflict-resolution strategies if they do not see favorable advantages to all individuals involved. Win-win strategies provide opportunities for individuals engaged in conflicts to reflect on the situation as they see it, listen to others' perspectives, brainstorm solutions as a team, and compromise on a resolution that will satisfy everyone involved (Palmer, 2001). When students realize that situations can end with all individuals coming to a common decision that benefits all who are involved equally, students will see the advantages of using conflict-resolution strategies effectively.

Some Program Examples

Peace Pal

The Peace Pal program trains students in peer-mediation practices that can be led in the classroom when conflicts arise. This belief system is linked to Bandura's social learning theory, which combines the operant and classical conditioning to the child's social environment and cognitive development (Zirpoli, 2008). The Peace Pal program trains students to improve their understanding of conflicts and anger, enhance their knowledge of the dynamics of conflict, conflict-resolution practices, mediation, and

appropriate ways to conduct resolutions between peers (Schellenberg et al., 2007). Through peer mediation, select students engage in activities that promote awareness of conflict-resolution strategies that they can bring to their classroom for everyday use.

More than Manners

Conversely, the More than Manners program put forth by Heydenberk (et al., 2007) uses five strategies to keep students actively engaged in conflict-resolution strategies at all times, not only during conflict situations.

- 1- The check-in strategy provides students with the opportunity to share something about how they are feeling or a particular event each day. The students learn the value of their own feelings, awareness of others' emotions, and connections to classmates.
- 2- Students learn to use I-messages, which are statements that begin with I, to explain how they are feeling. I-messages are a large component of conflict-resolution techniques because students must take responsibility for their own feelings and actions rather than blame a peer or adult.
- 3- The peaceful being is a life-sized cut-out of a person that students make independently or as a class to provide examples of typical behavior among their age group. For each negative behavior, the students come up with an alternative positive behavior. Once a number of positive behaviors have been listed, the behaviors are copied onto the body of the peaceful being, which is displayed at all times in the classroom.
- 4- The conflict-resolution circle is used between students when controversies arise. The circle denotes the situation the students have found themselves in and the need to resolve the issue using strategies that include talking out the problem, paraphrasing others'

perspective, and collaboratively working to find a resolution that makes a compromise between all individuals involved.

5- Peace journals allow students to write or draw about prosocial behaviors (Heydenberk et al., 2007). Students may also use the journals as an appropriate space to write confidentially about conflicts they may be facing and to ask for help or advice from the teacher who reads the journal entries.

Reasons for Student-Driven Approaches

Many teachers follow their own protocol for dealing with classroom issues. In many districts, there are whole-school approaches implemented by the administration and trained educators on the techniques that should be used. In other cases, teachers independently decide the approach with which they feel most comfortable. The method may change with new circumstances or new classes. However, conflict-resolution practices have the best chance of surviving if supported by a number of teachers, administrators, and parents or guardians (Campbell, 2001). Teachers should strive to involve as many adults in the process as possible to help the students reach successful outcomes. Students' comfort level using conflict-resolution approaches will increase as they see a multitude of people willing to help and reinforce their decision-making process. When more students and adults are on the same page, techniques can be applied to home and school situations. It may be possible that collaboration among multiple people can lead to a reduction in time spent dealing with conflicts and violence in general while promoting self-control and problem-solving skills (Campbell, 2001).

Dealing with the emotional aspects, the study conducted by Leadbeater (et al., 2006) focused on how children's justifications of the 'best thing to do' in peer conflicts

related to their emotional and behavioral problems in early elementary school. Scenarios using conflicts of farm animals were provided to judge students' choices of the best ways to solve conflicts. Of the first through third grade participants in the study, 60% to 80% of each grade chose help-seeking strategies as the best technique for the animals to use. On the other hand, 19% to 39% stated that ignoring the issue would be the best strategy for the animals to use during this conflict, whereas 2% or less chose aggressive strategies such as hitting or yelling (Leadbeater et al., 2006). With the help of bullying prevention and conflict-resolution practices implemented in classrooms, students can learn the appropriate means to solving issues once they have mentally chosen which technique they deem suitable. When students learn the proper way to deal with issues immediately, conflicts do not become drawn-out situations that affect students in a number of emotional facets. Teaching students prosocial behaviors and ways to meet social goals provides opportunities to continuously be maintained and to develop new friendships.

Effective Implementations of Conflict-Resolution Strategies

Results of Peer Victimization

In the study "Peer Victimization: The Role of Emotions in Adaptive and Maladaptive Coping," the results found that students chose specific conflict-resolution strategies based on their emotions when bullied (Kochenderfer-Ladd 2004). Students who admitted that they felt afraid or embarrassed about being bullied connected with the advice-seeking strategy when faced with a conflict. Furthermore, conflict-resolution strategies were consistently chosen by all students over revenge seeking, cognitive distancing, or advice seeking (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004). Students who felt anger or

resentment had a much more difficult time choosing conflict-resolution strategy and rarely thought about their decision to use revenge.

Results of Peace Pal

The Peace Pal program was found to be effective in elementary peer-mediation techniques. After the implementation of the program, the school found a reduction in the number of in- and out-of-school suspensions over a five-year period. There was also a decrease in violence in the areas of physical and verbal conflicts after implementation of the Peace Pal program (Schellenberg et al., 2007). With results that suggest a positive outcome after the implementation of a conflict-resolution system, it seems that students can benefit from learning successful techniques as a whole class and commit them to memory to be used on an instinctual basis.

Results of More than Manners

Similarly, the More than Manners approach found significant results when using student-driven measures to discover the effectiveness of the program's implementation. The students were held responsible for the own learning about conflict-resolution strategies through student self-reports and student exit interviews. With self-reports, the students evaluated themselves by checking boxes based upon their behavior each day. The student needed to determine whether or not he or she engaged in the following activities each day: Kind Hands (helping fellow students), Kind Words (complimenting or supporting classmates), I-messages (using conflict-resolution statements to explain how he or she felt about a situation, Hurting Hands (engaging in physical aggression), or Hurting Words (engaging in verbal aggression such as insults, rumors, or bullying) (Heydenberk et al., 2007).

Furthermore, all students were interviewed individually about whether or not they used any of the strategies either in-school or out-of-school contexts and which ones specifically. Students were asked to explain the situation in which the strategies were applied and given the option to draw a picture of the scenario. The results found that many of the students used the strategies in both school and out-of-school contexts when faced with a conflict. Some students took the program so seriously as to make their own conflict-resolution circles when they could not use the one in the classroom. In addition, they found significant increases in the use of I-messages and problem-solving skills, while there was a decrease in the use of physical aggression or “hurting” behaviors (Heydenberk et al., 2007). The results of this study proved that students are capable of internalizing conflict-resolution strategies and retrieving this information to be used at the appropriate times under the applicable conditions.

Meta-cognition Competence

In the study conducted by Heydenberk (et al. 2005) regarding increasing meta-cognition competence through conflict resolution, it was found that students reach higher level thinking skills and critical thinking when taught to resolve conflicts through peer mediation and their own means rather than constantly seeking the advice of an adult. After implementation of conflict-resolution programs, students saw an increase in their knowledge of handling situations on their own in a positive manner. When researchers asked how they had changed since being a part of a classroom that employs the use of conflict-resolution strategies, the most frequent response was “now I stop and think” (Heydenberk et al., 2005). Students felt a heightened sense of belonging to the classroom and attachment to their classmates after learning effective methods to solve conflicts.

They learned the essential lesson of perspective-taking skills that influence children's thinking in a number of areas other than conflict-resolution applications. Synthesis thinking occurs on a more frequent basis when used more often (Heydenberk et al., 2005). Although it may be difficult for students to become involved in synthesis thinking in academic areas, the lessons learned through conflict-resolution programs teach concepts that can be applied elsewhere.

Conclusion

Providing education in the classroom for conflict-resolution procedures can aid students in making the connections to everyday life situations. Conflicts arise both in the classroom atmosphere and outside of school. Many elementary schools provide anti-bullying programs on a small scale through life skills classes, assemblies, guest speakers, or anti-bullying weeks through the guidance counselor. However, students need to see the importance of conflict-resolution strategies working consistently on a daily basis. One-time programs are simply not enough to have the students place their full trust in utilizing these approaches. The target of conflict resolution is to aid students in enhancing empathy, social skills, and pro-social behaviors, while reducing aggressive tendencies (Leadbeater et al., 2006). Lessons learned can transcend the boundaries of school and be used in other life situations.

Teaching students pro-social behaviors and ways to meet social goals allows for opportunities to develop new friendships and maintain existing ones. Furthermore, the students gain independence for their own actions and develop a sense of maturity. Reflective thinking needs to become a process that students engage in frequently at a young age rather than it being forced upon them (Heydenberk et al., 2005). When

children reflect on their actions, they become more conscious of their decisions. This allows for beneficial friendships and relationships to flourish.

Looking Forward

Chapter Three discusses the context of the study and describes the research design and methodology.

Chapter III

Research Design and Methodology

Chapter Two discussed the relevant literature and research studies conducted within the area of conflict resolution as they pertain to this particular teacher research study. This chapter will discuss the context of the study and the manner in which the investigation was carried out through the research design. The focus of this study was to provide lower elementary students in a self-contained classroom the opportunity to become responsible for their own actions through conflict-resolution strategies.

Data was collected for this study through a teacher-researcher journal including anecdotal evidence and observation, student self-evaluations, responses to a conflict-resolution unit plan, use of the Conflict Corner: Home of the Tattling Turtle to speak about tattletales, and the formation of a Bully Blockers Club. The collection of data focused on conflict-resolution strategies which would allow the teacher researcher to study the effects of providing lower elementary students in a self-contained classroom with conflict-resolution methods to deal with anger and frustration.

Context

This study took place at Osage Elementary School in Voorhees, New Jersey. Voorhees, New Jersey is a suburb of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania located in Camden County. Osage Elementary School is one elementary school in the Voorhees Public School district. This district is comprised of four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Osage Elementary School serves students from kindergarten through fifth grade. Students of Osage Elementary School are provided with many

resources in order to ensure success. Basic skills, English as a Second Language courses, numerous special education settings, counseling, mentoring, and speech are just a few of the services students can benefit from at Osage Elementary School.

This study was conducted in a kindergarten and first grade self-contained classroom at Osage Elementary School. Throughout the day, the students were pulled from this classroom to benefit from the services provided as per their Individualized Education Plans (IEP). The specific disabilities in this classroom included: communication impaired, multiple disabled, specific learning disability, and other health impaired. This study involved only the students whose parents or guardians returned the signed permission form. Seven of the nine students in the classroom were involved in the study. Two of the seven students were female; the other five students were male. Both of the female students are white Caucasian. Two of the male students were African American while the other three male students were white Caucasian.

Research Design and Methodology

This study took the form of a qualitative teacher research approach. This method of inquiry was chosen based on the nature of the study. Since teachers have the opportunity to spend a great length of time with the subjects of their studies, the primary goal of teacher research is to help understand the students more thoroughly (Hubbard & Power, 1999). Teacher researchers have the convenience to analyze occurrences as they are happening and react immediately or plan accordingly.

Students who are taught in self-contained classrooms typically do not have the opportunity to interact with a large group of their peers as often as students in regular education classrooms. Due to the possible disadvantage for socialization, students in a

self-contained classroom may have difficulty in the development of social skills in a small or large group setting. Teacher research in the area of social skill development is necessary to inform primary grade self-contained educators of methods to appropriately present conflict resolution and social skill development to their students. Further research in this area could impact ways in which they teach students properly interact with students outside of their comfort zones within the self-contained classroom. With continued inquiry, teacher research is a stepping stone in the ever-changing educational world (Hubbard et al., 1999).

This particular teacher-research study collected qualitative data rather than quantitative data. Narratives or qualitative data described conflicts and their resolutions more effectively than numbers and percentages of quantitative data (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). In this manner, the results mainly took the form of anecdotal recording. Each data collection instrument listed below was completed through extensive explanations. Students were required to voice their concerns and talk through situations in order to arrive at successful resolutions. As conflict resolution processes were recorded, it was necessary to state the information as it occurred for it to be analyzed in the same manner. Extensive narratives and detailed examples provide insight as to the nature of the conflict and the processes the students used to arrive at a resolution.

The Study

My goal involved engaging students in an instructional unit that spanned the length of my eight week student teaching placement. Well-researched techniques along with the school's ongoing programs intertwined to create an extensive whole-class approach to combating conflicts and bullying.

The instructional unit served the purpose of educating students about appropriate strategies for handling conflict resolution. The students learned from teacher modeling and participation in activities using the strategies throughout the unit. As the students became equipped with knowledge of strategies, student-driven approaches allowed students to take responsibility for their actions and developed independence. Only in extreme or dangerous situations did I interfere in the conflict-resolution process. The students became responsible for utilizing the strategies on their own. The unit taught the students how to choose the appropriate methods in understanding conflicts and synthesizing how to work together to effectively solve controversies.

Data Collection Methods

Teacher-researcher Journal

Throughout this entire study, a teacher-researcher journal acted as an outlet for my thoughts, questions, and ideas (Hubbard et al., 1999). As I caught students “in the act” whether it be starting a conflict or resolving one, I wrote down my observations. Later, I wrote my reactions to the situation and any other thoughts or questions that may have been provoked. Also, I contemplated the conflicts as they pertained to my sub-questions: How do the students perceive the conflict resolution strategies? (Effective or ineffective?) Which students have more difficulty using the strategies and why? Which strategies are more difficult to utilize? Do the students remember to use the strategies? What impact does a conflict-resolution curriculum have on students’ independent use of the strategies? Observing and analyzing student conflicts allowed for future planning of lessons and understanding what aspects of the program with which the students needed more support. After I reflected upon the information in my journal, I observed those

specific students in the following days to decide whether additional whole-group lessons or individual conferences needed to take place. The teacher-researcher journal served as a channel for reflective thinking, which was necessary for continued evolution of the unit along with tracking of students' abilities to effectively utilize conflict-resolution strategies.

Baseline Data

After one week of getting acquainted with the students and observing their personalities, preferences, and academic capabilities, I began to collect baseline data. I engaged in numerous discussions with my cooperating teacher and administrators about the specific needs of this particular classroom. I began by writing down certain characteristics that I observed in all the students to begin understanding their preferences pertaining to conflict resolution. Analyzing baseline data allowed me to gain insight in what strategies are necessary to teach in my instructional unit. Also, as fully explained in the next sub-heading, information collected from the initial student self-evaluations was used as baseline data as well.

Student Self-Evaluations

Prior to the implementation of my instructional unit focused on conflict-resolution strategies, the students completed an evaluation based upon their personal approaches to resolving a conflict (Appendix A). Since this study involved lower elementary students, the evaluation provided yes or no answers for the students to select. Additionally, I read aloud simple questions to the students for complete understanding. These questions included: Have you ever been in a fight? Have you ever argued with a friend at school? Tell me about one of the fights you have been in. The students could write about it using

words or sentences or draw a picture to show it. The evaluation asked the students to think about conflicts they have been involved in and describe the ways in which they responded to the situation. Once the students completed their drawing, I held individual conflict conferences with each student to discuss the picture they had drawn. I explained to the students that I wanted to write down exactly what they told me about the picture. As the students explained the images they had drawn, I wrote their explanations verbatim.

At the conclusion of the instructional unit, I asked the students to complete self-evaluations, using the format of the initial evaluation (Appendix B). The students were asked to describe their personal preferences to resolving a conflict since they have been immersed in a conflict-resolution focused unit. The evaluation questions included: When you have been in a fight, how did it end? Do you think this was the best way to stop a fight? What do you think is the best way to stop a fight? As with the initial evaluation, the students had the opportunity to select from yes or no answers. Also, I read aloud questions to each student, accepting drawings as answers, and writing their explanations of the pictures verbatim. I compared this data to the initial evaluation data in order to test for a correlation between the instructional unit and students' responses to conflict.

Instructional Unit Using Conflict-Resolution Children's Literature

As a main teaching tool in each of the six lessons in the instructional unit, children's literature depicting conflicts and resolution strategies was utilized (Appendix C). Four of the six lessons involved Berenstain Bears books due to the heightened interest in this series I observed during the collection of baseline data. Since connecting lessons to students' interests is crucial to the learning process, I decided to explore Berenstain

Bears books by Jan and Stan Berenstain (1982, 1986, 1993, 1995) for connections to conflict-resolution lessons. Specifically, I read aloud *The Berenstain Bears Get in a Fight*, *The Berenstain Bears and the Trouble with Friends*, *The Berenstain Bears and the Bully*, and *The Berenstain Bears and Too Much Teasing*. Also, I performed a read aloud using a book that focused directly on the key concepts of the unit, *The Bully Blockers Club* by Teresa Bateman (2004). This book sparked such an interest within my classroom that a student requested that I create this club in our classroom. A full explanation can be found in this chapter under the heading Bully Blockers Club. In the final lesson in the instructional unit, the students role-played bullying situations and chose appropriate resolutions to the conflict. The key concepts of the instructional unit included: defining conflicts, reflective listening, fair vs. unfair, bullying situations, bully and victim characteristics, teasing, appropriate behavior in friendships, conflict-resolution strategies, problem solving, and I-messages.

Conflict Conferences

As conflicts arose within the school environment, I asked students engaging in a conflict to talk through the issue in a conference with the teacher. In some cases, I asked both of the students involved in the controversy to conference together in order to resolve the situation in a compromise. In other circumstances, I asked the students to conference with me individually in order to discuss the situation extensively and gain insight about the students' perspectives on the conflict and resolution. Furthermore, I asked the students to conference days later to discuss the effectiveness of the resolution after the conflict conference. The conflict conferences were mainly led by the students with very

little input of my own ideas or thoughts. The goal was to have the students become responsible for their own actions and resolutions.

Conflict Corner: Home of the Tatling Turtle

In the corner of the classroom, the teacher provided the class with a basket filled with index cards with each student's name and picture cards (*Really good stuff: Fun and Creative Teaching Tools for Today's Classroom*). The students were instructed that they can write or draw to "tattle" about small-scale arguments or conflicts from the classroom, lunch, recess, or outside of the school environment. Since many of the students in this study were unable to write, the students attached a picture card, depicting the situation, to the index card with his or her name. The picture cards depicted images including cutting in line, taking a pencil, bothering someone, being called a mean name, getting shouted at, being bossy or acting like the teacher, and a skunk for when someone smelled bad (a common complaint in this classroom). I read through the index cards throughout the day and spoke with the students as I deemed necessary. In this manner, the students learned the difference between small-scale arguments and larger conflicts that need a solution rather quickly. The goal was to create responsibility for their own actions and control the manner in which resolutions were discovered. Students realized the importance between stopping bullying at its start; however, the class was not repeatedly interrupted to hear tattling.

The Bully Blockers Club

After reading *The Bully Blockers Club* by Teresa Bateman, one student in particular requested that I create a similar club in our classroom. The overwhelming response by the rest of the students informed me that this would be a beneficial learning

experience. The rules of our club were simple: the members of the club restarted each day. Every student in the class had the opportunity to be in the Bully Blockers Club if they made responsible choices with their peers. The students were rewarded in praise for obtaining membership in the club. The club became an intrinsic reward that the students earned since a membership to the club was not tangible. Furthermore, the students and teachers began to use membership to the Bully Blockers Club as an incentive for positive behavior choices throughout the day.

Kid Kindness Power

At the conclusion of each conflict-resolution lesson, I reminded the students that I was a detective who was always on the lookout for students exhibiting kindness that went above and beyond. When I caught students in the act of extreme kindness, the students earned a paper badge with the words Kid Kindness Power across it (*Bully prevention for grades K-3: Present and Prevent*, 2003). Once the act of kindness was written on the badge, the student had the opportunity to color the badge and have it taped to their shirt to show their peers that they had gone above and beyond that day.

Conclusion

Together, all the data collection methods combined to produce a conflict-resolution curriculum that enabled elementary students to independently solve controversies. Qualitative data collection methods allowed for deep investigation and reflection of the impact on student learning.

Looking Forward

Chapter Four looks at the data collected using the methods described in Chapter three. Further analysis of the findings provides specific examples of the students' success measured by the aforementioned data collection methods.

Chapter IV

Analysis of the Findings

I shout the word, “Freeze,” and the students think back to all the lessons they have learned about conflict resolution to decide how to handle the bullying situations. After choosing their method, the students continue to role-play the situation. The vice-principal is present to see this lesson unfold. The students appropriately choose resolutions to the fictional conflict with ease. The lesson has ended, and I ask the students if they think they could handle doing this in a real-life situations. Slowly, Mike raises his hand and says, “There is a bully on our bus, and we are really scared of him.” The room erupts with shouts coming from all angles. Each student is shouting to the teachers and the vice-principal about the student on the bus who bullies them every day. Immediately, I quiet the room and each student begins to share his or her feelings with the teachers, administration, and fellow classmates. Every student’s response is generally the same. The older boy on the bus scares them because he calls them names, makes fun of them, and yells in their faces. The students see the art of conferencing with one another and adults at work. Immediately, the vice-principal springs into action. He conferences with the bully individually and reviews the appropriate ways to treat peers with the bus as a whole. Before the day is over, the students have real results, and they only have themselves to thank for the resolution of a major conflict in each of their lives.

Chapter Three discussed the data collection methods used in this teacher research study. This chapter provides analysis of the data collected through the aforementioned method.

Summary of Typical Conflicts

In the context of this kindergarten and first grade self-contained classroom, certain conflicts were more prevalent than others. I believe it is important to note the common types of conflicts since these are the issues that were the focus of my lessons, specifically to provide students with useful information that they could independently use in future situations. Typical conflicts included: arguments over toys, lack of sharing, shouting in anger or frustration, and tattling on one another over actual occurrences or made-up situations.

Most Successful Strategies to Utilize

Every student in this study had success using the tattling turtle. Once I introduced the lesson involving normal conflict and bullying, the students were intrigued by the tattling turtle. After I explained the proper use of the tattling turtle, the students immediately wanted to use this method of tattling. Similarly, students utilized the I-messages at a much higher frequency than I anticipated. Prior to the lesson on I-messages, the students blamed one another during conflicts. After this lesson and frequent reminders from the teachers initially, the students no longer blamed one another for their feelings. Instead they began sentences with “I don’t like when…” or “I feel sad or mad when…” Once this strategy became more commonplace in the classroom through reminders, the students began to independently resolve conflicts in this manner.

In addition, role-playing exercises allowed the students to examine common situations they had been placed in and decide the appropriate method of resolution. Every student participated in a role-playing situation. Each situation came from a real-life conflict in which I found these students. The students role-played situations on the

playground, issues with sharing, being called a mean name, and annoying behaviors such as singing while learning. I supplied the students with their lines, but once I shouted the word “Freeze”, the students conferenced with one another to decide on the best resolution to the conflict. For example, Billy role-played a situation with Nicole involving a bossy friend on the playground. Billy suggested, “I could tell the mean bully to stop.” Nicole stated, “I could tell him that I don’t like when he tells me what to do.” Together, the students decided using an I-message was the better solution. The students did not realize that these activities were lessons; they truly believed that this was a spur of the moment fun activity. Directly engaging the students in the learning process and providing opportunities for critical thinking allowed the students to realize all they learned and provided practice for future conflicts (Heydenbeck et al., 2005). Role-playing involved the students directly in their learning while giving them the opportunity to get real results from the vice-principal as stated in the introduction.

More Difficult Strategies to Utilize

For the majority of students in this study, the cooling-down strategy presented the most trouble. However, this was understandable due to basic human nature. In many cases, once a person is worked up about a situation, it becomes very difficult to calm down. Most of the students allowed their emotions to overwhelm them to the point that it was very difficult to have the students conference with one another. I reminded the students to use the cooling-down methods that they learned such as going to the ‘thinking corner,’ conferencing with the other person involved in the conflict, and using hand motions to calm themselves. For example, I sensed some of Billy’s frustration moments and reminded him to go think in the thinking corner before he felt too angry. However,

the students typically became too emotional during larger conflicts that they either emotionally shut down or continued to scream in anger or frustration.

Surprisingly, Nicole had the most success with the cool-down methods as compared to the rest of the class; however, she typically had the most heightened anger and frustration. During a typical week, Nicole was expected to have two to three meltdowns, which included ripping papers off the walls; throwing garbage around the classroom; screaming and attempting to hit or kick her classmates, teachers, and administration; and throwing her body on the floor in violent temper tantrums that ended in teachers, instructional aides, or administration restraining her and removing her from the classroom. However, Nicole connected to the lesson dealing with cool-down strategies. During times of frustrations or anger, she moved her hands from side to side with her eyes closed while humming lowly. Although cool-down methods provided difficulty for the majority of the students, Nicole found much success with this strategy.

Notable Behavior Changes

Students who had the most conflicts during the collection of baseline data (prior to the implementation of conflict-resolution lessons) internalized and employed the strategies more than the rest of the students. Many of the students in this study encountered typical conflicts common for their age group. At ages five through seven years old, children are expected to engage in conflicts with their peers. However, in the self-contained classroom, these students did not interact with a large number of students (Zirpoli, 2008). As a result, the students became very dependant on one another for friendships and feelings of a tight-knit community. Due to the constant contact these students had with one another, conflicts inevitably arose from these young friendships.

Kristen's Transformation

During the collection of baseline data, it became apparent that Kristen suffered from the 'only child syndrome.' Any toy that Kristen played with or any object that she wanted was hers and only hers. Specifically, during an occupational therapy activity which involved pretend snow, Kristen grabbed every other student's snow to keep for herself. When told to give the snow back to her friends, she began throwing a temper tantrum, throwing the "snow" at her peers, and screaming, "I hate you Robert!" During playtime, Kristen could almost always be found in the midst of a conflict. Frequently, Nicole and Mike felt enraged and screamed at Kristen for taking their books or toys.

Furthermore, Kristen did not want Robert to sit near her at the snack table. She pushed his chair to the other side of the table. Robert responded by telling her that he wanted to sit next to her. She cried hysterically and threw herself on the ground in a temper tantrum. Similarly, Kristen shouted at John and pushed his desk away from her desk in a forceful manner which caused the desk to fall over, scaring John. She simply did not think he should be so close to her and chose to change the situation in her own way even though the teacher had directed John to slide his desk over next to Kristen's desk.

Through my observations, I realized that Kristen is a creature of habit. She needed the structure of each day laid out in the beginning of the day. She focused on the schedule on the board and needed to be in charge of taking the signs down as each lesson or activity ended. Kristen became fixated on daily routines but could not handle herself when a change was made or she did not have the spot in line or job in the classroom that she thought she should have. Kristen benefited from the structure of the classroom;

however, she needed to be taught flexibility since all parts of the day in a classroom cannot be predicted.

After the conflict-resolution lesson focused on fairness and flexibility, Kristen changed many of her actions. I tailored a lesson to show each student what it felt like to be left out of the fun or to be treated unfairly. Kristen's reaction to not receiving a new pencil while the rest of the class received one sparked an understanding eye. Initially she shouted, "Hey! Miss R that is not fair. Everyone else got a new pencil except me. You forgot about me!" Since this reaction was exactly what I was looking for, I engaged Kristen and her classmates in a discussion about fairness. After the class discussed what it means to be fair, how to treat others fairly, and what it means to be unfair, Kristen replied, "I don't like the way I felt without getting a new pencil. I don't want to feel like that anymore."

Another part of this lesson dealt with flexibility, specifically in the order of lining up and classroom jobs. I explained that the jobs and the order in line needed to change each day in order to allow each student to have a turn. Since there were so few students in the classroom, lists for each day told the students their number in line. During the discussion, I asked Kristen how it would feel to be last in line every single day even when she did not want to be. She responded by saying, "I hate being last in line so I shouldn't ever be last." Through some prying, I connected with Kristen by talking about how unfair it would be for her never to be last, because then everyone else would have to be last sometimes. To this point, Kristen replied, "Okay, well... I guess I could be last sometimes even though I am going to hate it a lot." Her answer made her realize the way

she treated her classmates. Kristen connected with this lesson because it was tailored specifically to her needs.

Following this lesson, Kristen became more flexible in changing classroom jobs. Her understanding of the fairness aspect of the order in line changed; however, she continued to have temper tantrums for a different reason during line-up. She would find her name on the list and stand on that number in the line. If someone in front of her was absent, causing the entire line to move up one space, she could not get past that she was allowed to move up a number in line if directed by a teacher. This led to crying and screaming about not following the rules. Although the fairness issue became less of a problem, Kristen still engaged in conflicts when she failed to be flexible. I worked with Kristen on utilizing the cooling-down method, specifically using the thinking corner to understand the situation more thoroughly prior to getting upset. The importance of improving one aspect of her behavior was a challenge in itself; a teacher learns to be pleased with the small changes on the journey to overall improvements.

Furthermore, Kristen's knowledge of resolving a conflict increased from the collection of baseline data to the completion of the unit. In her initial self-evaluation, Kristen resorted to yelling in frustration at Robert for taking John's seat. In her second self-evaluation, Kristen stated that she could share her toys instead of running away with them. During the eight weeks of immersion in a conflict-resolution curriculum, Kristen's behavior showed improvements in the areas of fairness and understanding of peers' feelings.

Nicole's Change from Inappropriate to Appropriate Frustration

Nicole tended to be selfish with not only objects but with attention as well. Arguments in the classroom typically involved Kristen and Nicole over taking a toy and refusal to share. Although Kristen aggressed verbally, Nicole's frustration presented itself both verbally and physically. She chased Kristen around the classroom on multiple occasions because Kristen had the toy Nicole wanted. Moreover, Nicole's anger got the best of her when she refused to allow Billy to play on 'her' side of the sandbox. Nicole attempted to flip the sandbox over. Failure to do so sent her into a complete meltdown involving her hiding under the teacher's computer desk unplugging wires, ripping papers off the classroom walls, and flipping a garbage can over her head. The classroom teacher and her one-on-one instructional aide restrained her on the floor while I found the principal. The meltdown ended with the teacher, instructional aide, and the principal carrying her into the principal's office to calm down and explain the situation. Meltdowns of this variety were commonplace occurrences with Nicole.

Observing her meltdowns during the collection of baseline data informed me as a researcher that some of my conflict-resolution lessons needed to address communicating effectively, sharing emotions, and cool-down techniques. Although Nicole's attention span typically ran short, she remained focused during every conflict-resolution lesson in a way that my cooperating teacher felt was very uncommon. She offered her thoughts during every discussion and committed to using the new strategies. Specifically, Nicole began using I-messages in order to more effectively communicate with her peers. For example, I heard Nicole say, "I don't like when you..." rather than blaming students or pushing her peers away from 'her' play area or toys. In addition to I-messages, Nicole

used the cool-down techniques more often than any other student. Due to extreme speech impediments, it was very difficult to understand what Nicole was trying to say. This led to anger and frustration. Since she felt angry frequently, she began moving her hands from side to side, closing her eyes, and humming lowly. She found immediate relief from her frustration not only because she was not screaming, but also because this cool-down technique was obvious to the teachers and instructional aides in the room. As soon as I spotted Nicole cooling down, I talked through the situation with Nicole and helped her resolve her inner conflict immediately.

During Nicole's first self-evaluation, she yelled at Billy for taking her toy and grabbed it back. In her second self-evaluation after the completion of the conflict-resolution unit, Nicole described yelling at her mother to get a new toy. Nicole decided it would be better to be nice to her mother so that she would want to get her a new toy. Nicole transformed into a student who took responsibility for her own actions to find favorable results.

Billy's Cry for Attention

In an effort at gaining attention, Billy argued and defiantly opposed teacher instructions during lessons, activities, and play-time. Billy believed that he was always right even when being proven wrong by a friend or teacher. For example, when learning to write the letter M, Billy continuously wrote the letter upside-down. After given examples on the board by the teacher and opportunities to write on the Smartboard and in the sand, Billy wrote the M's on the paper upside-down. I offered to write the letter M for him, write the letter M with him sharing the pencil, and allow him to trace my letter M, but he began to scream until he cried that he was right. Billy did not let anyone correct

his mistakes whether it be a friend or teacher. When he became angry, he would shut down entirely, refuse to do any type of work or activity, and cry uncontrollably. His anger presented itself by screaming inappropriately at the adults in the classroom.

Generally, Billy's screaming episodes involved telling the adults how much he hated us, how stupid we are, how much better he was than us, and how he did not like us at all.

Although the adults in this classroom did not become offended or upset by Billy's hysterics, I believed that this behavior was not appropriate for the school environment. As a result of my observations, I created a lesson in my conflict-resolution unit to fit Billy's needs. Communicating effectively using I-messages to share emotions appropriately allowed Billy to witness the need for a change. During this lesson, I used some of the language I commonly heard in the classroom such as you are stupid, you did this to me, I am so much better than you, etc. By the end of the lesson, the students corrected my inappropriate language. Billy specifically volunteered many times throughout this lesson to change my blaming statements into I-messages that told others how I felt. Beyond this lesson, Billy continued to speak inappropriately to adults out of frustration. However, with a simple reminder to use an I-message or communicate effectively, Billy changed many of his hysterical episodes into situations through which we could conference.

Not surprisingly, in Billy's first self-evaluation, his drawing depicted himself bearing claws instead of hands. He wanted to wrestle his cousin because they were both mad at each other. However, in his second self-evaluation, Billy decided that it would be best to say that he was sorry to his cousin for kicking him. As the unit progressed, Billy

self-monitored most of his behaviors, modified his inappropriate language, and showed sympathy for his physical behavior.

Mike's Insight

Unlike the other students discussed previously, Mike gained the most insight into the conflict-resolution lessons; however, he could not apply the concepts into his own life. During the baseline data collection process, Mike involved himself in typical conflicts with the other students. Mike voiced his frustrations much more than the other students through yelling and calling his peers names. During a play puppet show, Mike screamed, "Give me that!" in Kristen's face while grabbing her arm to take the puppet. When Kristen did not back down, Mike reverted to one of his quirks of grunting. Similarly, Mike and Nicole became physically violent with each other when attempting to use the same hook to hang their coats. They pushed and shoved each other into the wall. When separated, Mike continuously grunted in frustration and yelled, "I hate you! You are very stupid. We are NOT going to be friends anymore!" Nicole's anger from Mike's blaming statements resulted in a meltdown that ended with Nicole being restrained on the floor.

During the conflict-resolution lessons, Mike's attention span lasted for the entirety of my lesson. He engaged himself fully in every aspect of the lesson. He asked insightful questions and made connections to the information and literature. At the conclusion of each lesson, Mike brought the key concepts into one concise sentence. His summary of my lesson reinforced my objectives to the other students. Mike's connection to every lesson allowed me to believe he had truly understood the precise points I wanted to get across. After I left this classroom to student teach in another kindergarten class,

Mike saw me in the hallways and said, “Hey! Remember me Miss R? You used to work for me as my teacher. You taught me that big kid word, conflict, and what to do if I see a bully. When are you going to teach me more about bullies?”

Furthermore, Mike’s regular education kindergarten teacher heard about the lessons I had created regarding conflict-resolution. She asked me to teach the lessons in her classroom as well. Upon walking into the classroom, Mike exclaimed, “That’s Miss R! She teaches about mean bullies. I want to be the police officer of her Bully Blockers Club!” I found his memory to be on target with my past lessons. Teachers found Mike frequently talking about concepts from my lessons. His kindergarten teacher asked me numerous times if I had taught about I-messages and tattling because he spoke about it often in her classroom.

Moreover, Mike’s first self-evaluation involved an argument with his brother that did not end even when adults intervened. He disregarded his parents’ attempt to help resolve the conflict over a dinosaur toy. Mike’s explanation in his second self-evaluation involved another argument with his brother. However, Mike’s memory and knowledge employed I-messages as the appropriate technique to solve this conflict. Mike stated that he could tell his brother, “I am very, very super sorry.” He believed his brother should apologize as well. Mike answered the evaluation questions using the appropriate conflict-resolution language while it was hypothetical. However, it is likely that Mike would not have used the appropriate language when actually confronted with a situation.

However, Mike never applied the concepts he spoke about to his own real-life situations. Mike bullied every student in my classroom at one point or another. A behavior management plan was instated to work specifically on his interaction with other

students. This plan required Mike to earn four pennies for exhibiting prosocial behaviors, such as sharing or being polite to his peers, in order to gain his chosen reward, which was typically listening to a book on tape. However, he rarely received more than two pennies throughout the day. Just minutes after the conclusion of the conflict-resolution lessons, he would be found bullying his peers through blaming, yelling, and name-calling. This perplexing situation will be discussed later in this chapter.

Self-Motivation for Kindness

With young elementary students, reward systems allow students to make positive choices while witnessing the encouraging aspect of gaining more in the behavior management plan. Whether the students are working toward marbles in a jar or stickers on a chart, the students take responsibility for themselves. In order to continuously show that conflict-resolution situations can be avoided through kindheartedness and compassion, I implemented the Kid Kindness Power rewards. The reward system (Kid Kindness Power) allowed students to motivate themselves to exhibit key concepts from the conflict-resolution lessons. As stated in Chapter Three, the students needed to exhibit kindness that went above and beyond typical kind behaviors. For everyday kind actions, the students received intrinsic rewards along with verbal praise. However, students earned the tangible paper pin entitled Kid Kindness Power for actions that required extra thoughts of kindness.

At the initial introduction of the Kid Kindness Power badge, the students began asking for the badge for any act of kindness, even expected actions. For example, Collin decided he should earn a badge for throwing his garbage away at the end of snack time. This became an ever-growing habit amongst the students. As a result, I had a conflict

conference with the class as a whole to discuss more examples of extra acts of kindness that deserved to be rewarded. As a group, we dismissed simple or everyday acts of kindness that are expected from each student and discussed acts of kindness that went above and beyond. I concluded the conversation by saying that I was always a detective looking around for students who deserved Kid Kindness Power badges; therefore, students should not be asking for them.

Following the discussion, students showed their understanding through producing acts of kindness for one another. One exemplary situation involved John allowing the entire class to ride his tricycle that he brought in for individual physical therapy. The students talked about how exciting it was that John could bring his real tricycle into school. John's school physical therapist asked if John would be allowed to bring his tricycle into class since he had repeatedly asked if he could share. For this extreme act of sharing, John earned the first Kid Kindness Power badge. John set the tone for the rest of the class's earning of badges.

For the students who showed selfish behaviors, sharing a pencil, crayon, or eating utensil was enough to deserve a Kid Kindness Power badge. Specifically, Robert, John, and Collin earned badges when their fellow classmates became frustrated or angered for not having what they wanted. In these instances, the students offered their objects immediately upon seeing the emotional responses of their peers. These acts of kindness deserved a badge due to the independence the students showed in making selfless choices. Prompting by the teachers was not required; the students chose to share without being asked.

Once each student had received the Kid Kindness Power badge, I decided to remove the badge as the tangible reward for kindness. In many cases, students become too dependent on the reward as their only basis for engaging in positive behavior. Therefore, I taught the students the necessity of committing acts of kindness without gaining a reward (Heydenbeck et al., 2007). I informed the students that the detective would still be looking for extra kindness; however, we would talk about the kindness rather than receiving badges. To my surprise, the students continued to engage in acts of kindness when their only motivation was intrinsic rewards and verbal praise. It became evident that the students truly enjoyed the verbal praise they received when the detective spotted them doing the right thing.

The students earned Kid Kindness Power badges for acts of kindness that went above and beyond typical kind gestures (Figure 1). Also, the chart shows which students continued to commit acts of kindness after the tangible reward had been removed. These students earned intrinsic rewards and verbal praise from the adults in the classroom.

Figure 1: Kid Kindness Power

Student's Name	Received Kid Kindness Power Badge	Committed Kind Actions without Tangible Reinforcement
Kristen	X	
Nicole	X	X
Billy	X	
Mike	X	
Collin	X	X
John	X	X
Robert	X	X

In one specific example, Collin voiced his opinions after being spotted cleaning up the snack table when his peers had left to play by saying, "If the detective was still

giving badges, I would get one, but I am going to clean up anyway.” Four out of the seven students committed the informal lessons on kindness to memory and began to exhibit kind actions naturally. The tangible reward did not prove to be the only reason for kind actions.

Tattling Turtle Resulted in Independence

The implementation of the tattling turtle allowed the students to monitor their tattling and decrease the frequency of interrupting class time to speak aloud about the tattles.

As became expected, Mike summarized my lesson’s objectives into a concise sentence as a conclusion to ensure that he and his peers understood the key concepts. He reviewed the expectations for the tattling turtle with impeccable precision. He offered his classmates a clear reminder of the appropriate use for the tattling turtle. Immediately, the students began tattling to the turtle. In the beginning stages of this strategy, the students tattled to the turtle appropriately; however, they would also tell an adult about the tattle they just told the turtle. On several occasions, Billy and Kristen tattled to the turtle about problems with sharing and immediately told the teacher about the tattle as well. I brought the class together in a discussion to explain that the turtle and I consult the turtle at the end of each day to learn about the tattles (I read the students’ names that were clipped to the tattles); therefore, there was no need to tell an adult following a conference with the turtle. After this reminder, the students used the turtle properly. The students enjoyed the idea that they had a secret with the turtle that no one else could hear about.

Typical tattling included being called a mean name, taking a toy or pencil, being bossy or mean, and being screamed at by another student. The students tended to tattle

about objects they believed were theirs and personal space. The students internalized the idea of normal conflict versus bullying situations. In the few instances of bullying in this classroom, the students always reacted by telling an adult in the room about the problem rather than attempting to tattle to the turtle. These cases dealt with Billy pushing or attempting to hurt his peers. The students understood that normal conflict such as being called a mean name or getting bossed around by a peer was normal conflict that could be tattled to the turtle. However, in extreme cases where there was a possibility of a student getting hurt physically or emotionally, the students responded by immediately speaking with an adult.

After the introduction of the tattling turtle, all but one student tattled to the turtle and also to an adult in the classroom. Each student received a reminder to tattle only to the turtle. Following this reminder, all but two students tattle only to the turtle (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Use of Tattling Turtle

Student's Name	Tattled to turtle and then adult (Introduction)	Reminder to tattle only to turtle	Appropriately tattled only to turtle
Kristen	X	X	X
Nicole	X	X	
Billy	X	X	
Mike	X	X	X
Collin		X	X
John	X	X	X
Robert	X	X	X

Overall, the adults in the classroom noticed a decrease in the amount of talking about tattles. Prior to the implementation of the tattling turtle, tattling was an incessant habit in this classroom. Additionally, one student's tattles typically led other students to refute the tattle or tattle on another peer in revenge. After the reminder discussion that

they were not to speak about the tattle again once they told the turtle, the students tattling to an adult as well as the turtle decreased as a whole group. However, Nicole and Billy occasionally told an adult after tattling to the turtle. The students' independent participation with the tattling turtle revealed a reduction in time spent dealing with conflicts (Campbell, 2003). Furthermore, the frequency of reminders to tattle to the turtle decreased significantly as time went on. At the end of each day, I felt shocked by the amount of tattles I would find in the Conflict Corner: Home of the Tattling Turtle. I could not believe that the students tattled so often without speaking about or being reminded to tattle appropriately. The students took responsibility for their problems, chose an appropriate method of conflict resolution, and monitored the results by their feelings of release.

Realization of Knowledge

One student who did not typically have conflicts realized he handles situations appropriately and began to mentor his peers independently. In this study, one student typically did not get involved in conflicts with his peers. Collin had friendships with all of the students in the self-contained classroom; however, when fights broke out between students, Collin was not involved directly. Overall, this student possessed an amicable personality which allowed him to shy away from students who seemed emotionally unstable. Due to his agreeable nature, it was difficult at times to award him with a Kid Kindness Power badge. Since he treated his classmates fairly at all times, finding actions of kindness that went above and beyond were less obvious than other students who had difficulty in the social setting.

During the lessons about successful conflict-resolution strategies, Collin frequently raised his hand to say, “Hey! I already do that!” He enjoyed exhibiting his intelligence to his peers whenever possible. However, Collin was not only trying to impress his peers; he exhibited knowledge of conflict-resolution on a daily basis. Specifically, he would be caught voluntarily giving advice to his friends during conflicts as a peer mentor. As an observer, I decided Collin could benefit from simple training in peer mentoring. I did not want him to become agitated during the lessons since he felt he already knew the information. Therefore, throughout the lessons, I added in advice for helping peers engaging in an argument. Following the lesson, I worked individually with Collin to speak in-depth about helping their peers. I began these discussions with questions including: Do you ever see conflicts between your friends? Would you like to help your friends end their fights? How could you help them without becoming involved in the conflict?

Collin made teaching about peer mentoring simple. Immediately, ideas erupted from his mouth and a sense of excitement was seen on his face. Specifically, Collin thought it was important to teach his peers the effectiveness of I-messages. Collin started the conversation by saying, “I always tell my friends how I feel because it makes me feel better.” I explained how powerful I-messages were, and we brainstormed ways to get involved in the conflict between peers without overstepping boundaries.

To my surprise, Collin’s peers responded very well when being peer mentored. Since many of the students in this study have emotional control issues, I was unsure of how they would react to help from Collin. However, Collin found success when peer mentoring his peers during snack time. Kristen and John argued over whose garbage was

left on the table. Neither student wanted to claim the garbage as his or her own, admitting to forgetting to throw it away. As Kristen and John's argument developed into a screaming match, Collin stepped in to peer mentor. Collin's advice involved compromise. Collin suggested, "Since there are two napkins, why don't both of you take a napkin and throw it away? Then you both did it!"

Although I felt peer mentoring would be a beneficial experience for Collin, I questioned the potential reactions of his peers. Young students do not like to be told what to do, especially by someone their own age. However, the peer mentoring opportunity illustrated success for the peer mentor and his peers (Schellenberg et al., 2007).

A Perplexing Situation

Students who gained the most insight from the conflict-resolution messages did not make use of the strategies in real-life situations due to lack of support and continuation of concepts at home. One student in particular created a mystery during the analysis of my data. Mike gained the most insight from the conflict-resolution lessons. He brought the key ideas of each lesson into one concise thought. His voluntary summarization allowed the other students to gain a final review of the important concepts. I was offered by his regular education kindergarten teacher the opportunity to teach a conflict-resolution lesson in her classroom as well. Mike announced to the class exactly what I was going to teach as soon as he recognized the read-aloud book I planned. He recalled specific details from the lesson he had been involved in two months earlier. However, he inconsistently used his new-found knowledge. Mike's behavior in the classroom, at lunch, and on the playground exhibited many signs of bullying. He chased other students around, called them mean names, and usually made the other

students cry. The conflict-resolution lessons met his needs specifically. He would speak accurately about conflict resolution; however, his actions never followed his words.

Mike self-reported many stories about his home life. It seemed that Mike was the controller of the household. Although kindergarten story-telling cannot always be held as true, Mike's stories made it seem as if his parents bent to his needs and desires. For example, Mike told stories of torturing his cat by swinging it around by its tail in the backyard. He explained that when his parents told him not to do that he simply stated, "No I want to, so I am going to hurt the cat." In addition, he reported stories of hurting his brother by hitting and kicking him. Mike stated that his family listened to him, and no one could tell him what to do.

The inconsistency between his knowledgeable insight and his actions provided a perplexing situation. It is possible that the gap between home and school life could be the premise for his lack of consistency. If he was being taught appropriate behavior strategies at school but allowed to behave how he chose at home, the conflict-resolution and social skill concepts were not internalized.

Conclusion

Throughout the course of this study, the students' behaviors improved drastically. When I entered the classroom at the beginning of my student-teaching placement, I realized that my teacher research study would be a necessary fit for this group of students. I observed multiple arguments, conflicts, and frustration within my first day. However, I recognized that teaching conflict-resolution strategies, social skill development, and peer-mentoring methods could be daunting and challenging tasks

depending on the reactions of the students. At the conclusion of my study, the students possessed noticeable independence and maturity levels.

In the Final Chapter

Chapter Five will discuss the implications for future research based on the evidence found in this study.

Chapter V

Implications of the Study and Conclusions

Chapter Four analyzed the data collected throughout the study. The findings suggested that all of the students who participated in this study achieved success in two or more areas of conflict resolution. This chapter defines the implications of this particular study and offers suggestions for future research based on the analysis of the findings.

Summary of the Findings

The findings included a drastic change in the behavior of students who created or were involved in the most conflicts. Specifically, four students learned to control their anger or frustration and use appropriate outlets to release their emotions. Prior to the implementation of the unit on conflict-resolution strategies, I found these students in the center of nearly every conflict that arose in the classroom. However, the students internalized many of the strategies taught throughout the unit and began to employ them on a daily basis. These strategies included fairness, flexibility of routines, cool-down methods, and effective communication using I-messages. On the other hand, all of the students found success with Kid Kindness Power badges as rewards for actions of kindness. At one time or another, each student in the study deserved a badge for actions that went above and beyond typical kindness in the classroom. Moreover, three students continued to commit actions of kindness deserving of a Kid Kindness Power badge even once I removed the tangible reward. These three students continued to act very kindly to their peers with only intrinsic rewards and verbal praise as their motivation.

Additionally, all of the students found success with the tattling turtle. This strategy became an exciting way for students to appropriately tattle about their peers' actions while refraining from interrupting lessons. Although the frequency of tattling did not decrease, the adults in the classroom were rarely told tattles since the students used an appropriate outlet. This, in turn, resulted in a decrease in debates between the students about whether or not the tattle was true.

On the other hand, after observing one particular student's realization of his own knowledge about conflict resolution, I recognized the necessity to provide him with additional opportunities for learning. Peer mentoring allowed him to internalize from the conflict-resolution strategies and help his peers through conflicts to result in amicable endings or compromises (Hanson in Schellenberg et al., 2007).

Overall, each student in this study found success in at least two areas of the conflict-resolution instruction. In some instances, a number of students comprehended and showed understanding of multiple strategies by employing the methods in numerous situations in the classroom. For some students, the use of one or two strategies that benefited their specific needs was enough to make a notable behavior change (Palmer, 2001).

Limitations of the Study

This particular study did not begin at the start of the school year. I entered the classroom as a student teacher at the start of the semester according to the university calendar. I did not have the opportunity to observe the students' progress from the beginning of the school year or become acquainted with the students over a great length of time. Since I had two student teaching placements, my time in this classroom lasted

eight weeks instead of the typical sixteen weeks. In addition, this study took place in a self-contained classroom in which the students were taken out of the classroom for additional services. Each day the schedule of special area classes, occupational therapy, speech pathology, physical therapy, and counseling changed for each individual student. Therefore, some of the students did not remain in the self-contained classroom for the entirety of the conflict-resolution lessons. Some students who were not pulled out as often had the opportunity to be more fully immersed in the unit. If all of the students had the opportunity to remain in the classroom for the entirety of the unit, they may have had a greater success rate with all of the strategies. The gaps between the lessons and being removed during the lessons for additional services may have made it difficult for the students to comprehend the concepts entirely.

Implications of the Study for Teaching and Learning

Through analysis of the findings put forth by this study, lower elementary students are far more capable of resolving their own conflicts than commonly thought. Teachers typically intervene during conflicts among students, especially at the elementary level. However, this study shows that with training and immersion in a conflict-resolution unit, students can become responsible for their actions and independently work through issues. Each of the students in this study achieved noticeable improvements in their abilities to resolve conflicts. Although it was difficult to resist intervening in conflicts, the students benefited from recalling past lessons and utilizing conflict-resolution strategies as they thought fit. The students became more confident of their social well-being, which began to show in academic areas as well. The overall

classroom environment changed from a comfortable area to engage in conflicts to a learning community of understanding friends and peers.

Conclusions

As educators, our primary goal is to make lessons meaningful to students in such a way that they will be internalized for future use. Teachers challenge themselves to make this an essential part of their teaching on a daily basis. In some subjects or topics, teachers may struggle more than with others. However, after all, what would be the point of teaching if the students are not learning the material for long-term use? Each lesson builds on prior knowledge and provides the building blocks for future instruction. When students learn through first-hand experiences, they have a greater opportunity to internalize the information and commit it to memory. Although all students benefit from first-hand experiences, differentiating instruction and providing multi-sensory opportunities for learning is essential for students with disabilities. I directly involved the students in the strategies, which allowed for practice of employing conflict-resolution methods. Also, I provided suggestions for independent use in the future. Throughout the lessons I asked the students, “How would you do this on your own? When would you use this strategy?” Additionally, when conflicts arose I asked the students, “What could you do? Think back to what we learned about fighting. What would be best to do right now?” Encouraging the students to retrieve the information they had been equipped with showed their understanding and independent use of their knowledge.

As essential as it is to create meaningful lessons, knowing the learners in the classroom and adjusting to their needs as the teacher deems necessary is equally important. Although teachers attempt to pinpoint the areas in which students may have

difficulty, challenging pieces of lessons cannot always be predicted by the teacher. As teachers present new material, it is necessary for them to observe the thinking processes of the students. In many cases, this means noticing students struggling with the material and differentiating on the spot. As students showed difficulty understanding new conflict-resolution strategies, I immediately put myself in their position to differentiate my lesson objectives. I continually asked myself, “How can I make this lesson work for them? How can I get my point across in another comprehensible way?” Teachers need to predict possible areas of difficulty and think on their feet when their predictions are not correct.

Not only does observing help with immediate changes, teachers use informal feedback from their students to tailor future lessons to their needs. Whether it be differentiation for higher-level learners or lower-level learners, that information lies within the students. It is the job of the teacher to retrieve that information and modify lessons to the specific needs of the students.

Suggestions for Future Research

The connection between the school and home environment is typically considered a beneficial relationship for students, teachers, and parents alike. Conflict-resolution lessons have a greater chance of retention if these lessons are valued in the home as well. In the same way, lessons that teach social skill development have a greater chance of being internalized if the students have the opportunity and comfort to use this knowledge at home as well as school. Further research about home and school connections when dealing specifically with social skill development could inform teachers on more appropriate ways to approach teaching social skill knowledge. Educators could benefit

from understanding how to reinforce lessons from the classroom into the students' home lives.

As the world of education continues to evolve, further research in the area of social skill development is essential. Academic areas of learning typically take precedence in classrooms that combine a large workload and limited time. However, social skill development needs to become a standard part of any elementary curriculum. Further research on how to incorporate social learning into every classroom on a regular basis could only improve the lives of students. When students feel that their school environment is a learning community, the opportunities for learning only continue to grow. Every student should have the ability to learn in a learning community that celebrates differences and works toward a common goal of understanding and compassion for one another.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Initial Student Self-Evaluation

1. Have you ever been in a fight? Yes No

2. Have you ever argued with a friend at school? Yes No

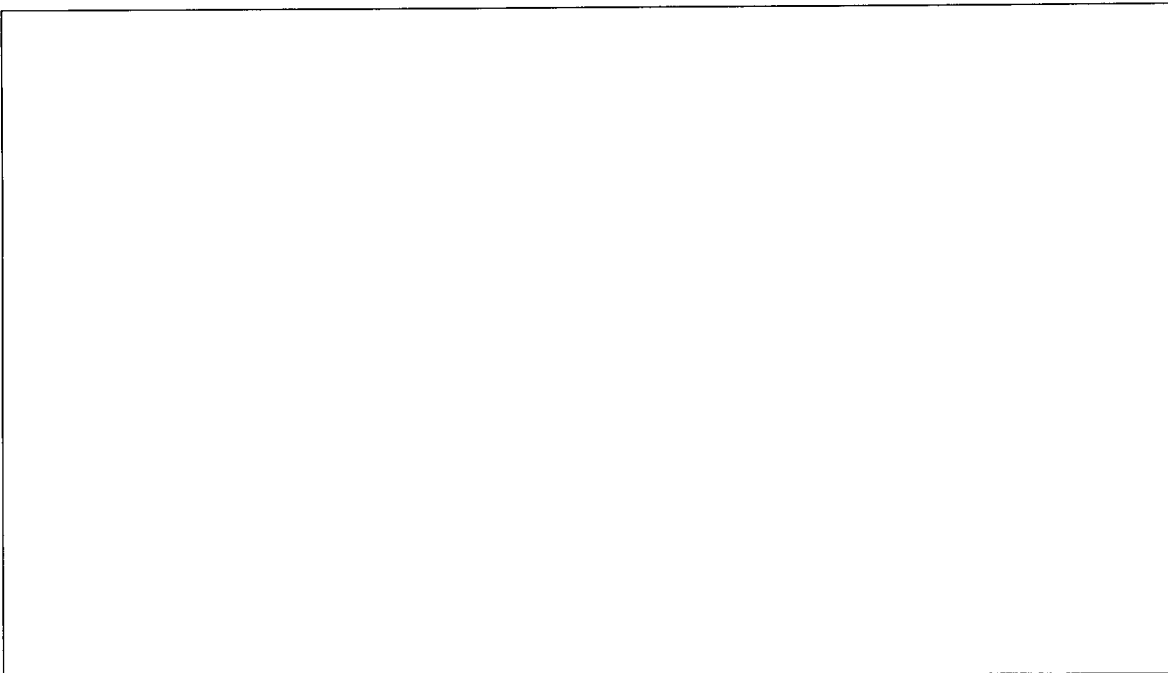
3. Tell me about one of the fights you have been in. You can write about it using words or sentences or draw a picture to show it.

APPENDIX B

Final Student Self-Evaluation

Directions: Write or draw a picture to answer the questions.

1. When you have been in a fight, how did it end?

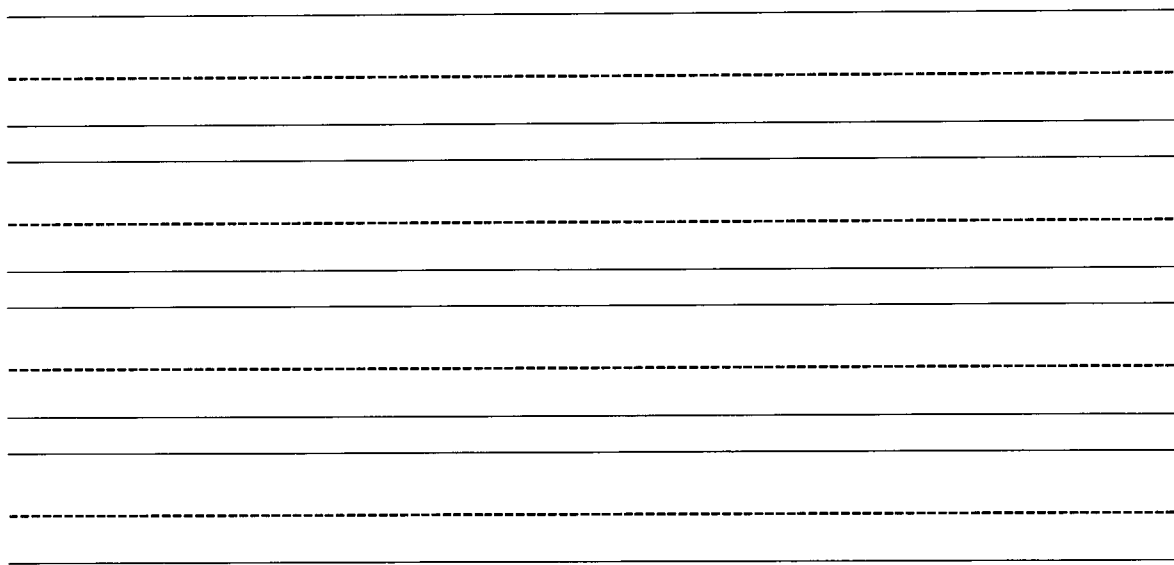
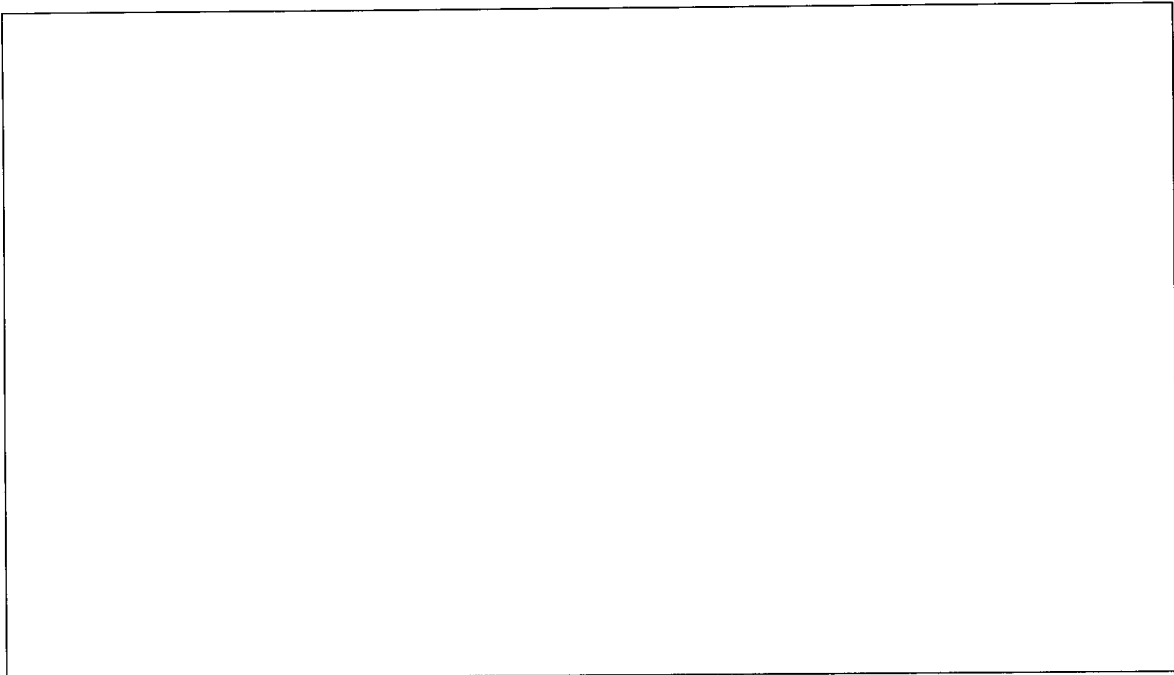


2. Do you think this was the best way to stop the fight?

Yes

No

3. What do you think is the best way to stop a fight?



APPENDIX C

Conflict-resolution Instructional Unit

Overview

- Teacher: Colleen Roughgarden
- Subject: Social skills/Well-being, Language Arts Literacy
- Topic/Unit of Study: Conflict resolution/Social skill development
- Grade/Level: Kindergarten/first grade
- Rationale/Background Information: This is a unit focused on conflict-resolution strategies in attempt to teach students to maintain a peaceful and positive classroom climate.

Unit Standards/Objectives

State and/or National Standards

- 2.1.2 F. Social and Emotional Health, Standard 2, 3, 4
- 2.2.2 A. Communication, Standard 4
- 2.2.2 B. Decision Making, Standard 1
- 2.2.2 D. Character Development, Standard 1
- 2.2.2 E. Leadership, Advocacy, and Service, Standard 1, 2, 3, 4
- 3.1.K A. Concepts About Print, Standard 6
- 3.1.K D. Fluency, Standard 1, 4
- 3.1.K E. Reading Strategies (before, during, and after reading), Standard 2, 3, 4
- 3.1.K G. Comprehension Skills and Response to Text, Standard 2, 5, 6
- 3.3.K A. Discussion, Standard 1, 2, 3
- 3.3.K B. Questioning (Inquiry) and Contributing, Standard 1, 2
- 3.3.K C. Word Choice, Standard 1
- 3.4.K A. Active Listening, Standard 2
- 9.2.4 A. Critical Thinking, Standard 1, 2, 3, 4
- 9.2.4 B. Self-Management, Standard 1, 3, 4, 5
- 9.2.4 C. Interpersonal Communication, Standard 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- 9.2.4 D. Character Development and Ethics, Standard 1, 4

Student Outcomes

- The students will be able to actively listen to a read aloud in order to answer comprehension and prediction questions.
- The students will be able to actively discuss conflicts with the class.
- The students will be able to actively discuss bullies and conflicts with the class.

- The students will be able to orally identify the characteristics of bullies and victims.
- The students will be able to verbally offer conflict-resolution suggestions.
- The students will be able to cooperatively role-play scenarios involving bullies and victims.
- The students will be able to orally discuss alternate resolutions to conflict to be role-played.

Learning Experience

Lesson 1: Students were involved in the read-aloud of *The Berenstain Bears Get in a Fight* by Jan and Stan Berenstain. The literature illustrated situations about conflicts. The class discussed the term ‘conflict’ and how conflicts start, who can be involved, and where conflicts occur. The students’ responses were charted. The students discussed the problem in the story and people involved in conflict.

Lesson 2: The students were involved in the read-aloud of *The Berenstain Bears and the Trouble with Friends* by Jan and Stan Berenstain. The class discussed characteristics of good listening, kindness, and respect. The teacher stressed listening to others, waiting your turn to speak, playing fairly, and putting yourself in someone else’s shoes. The students were engaged in fairness role-playing situations.

Lesson 3: The tattling turtle was introduced to the class. Extensive discussion about rules and proper use ensued. The students were involved in the read-aloud of *The Berenstain Bears and the Bully* by Jan and Stan Berenstain. The literature portrayed situations of bullies and victims. The class discussed characteristics of bullies and victims. The teacher stressed that anyone can be a bully or a victim.

Lesson 4: Students were involved in the read-aloud *The Berenstain Bears and Too Much Teasing* by Jan and Stan Berenstain. The literature portrayed situations of teasing by a bully and victim’s emotional response. Discussion about inappropriate behaviors and methods to changing to appropriate behaviors. Students learned to change blaming statements into I-messages.

Lesson 5: Students were involved in the read-aloud *The Bully Blockers Club* by Teresa Bateman. Students discussed alternate resolutions to conflicts from the literature. Teacher and students created a bully blockers club in our classroom. Rules were established for daily membership to the club.

Lesson 6: Students role-played scenarios of bullying and victimization. The teacher had the students “freeze” and think of appropriate ways to conflict could be resolved. It was up to the discretion of the actors to decide which appropriate resolution they wanted to solve the conflict with.

Subject Integration

This unit brought together instruction based on social skills and language arts literacy. Through the use of a read aloud and analysis of the story, the students learned about conflicts and appropriate resolutions.

Multicultural Content/Multiple Perspectives

The discussion that ensued following the read-alouds brought multiple perspectives of all the students together. The students had the opportunity to express their feelings and discuss similar situations that they had been involved in. The students benefited from listening to their peers' perspectives and comparing them to their own.

Adaptations/Modifications

Since this lesson was taught in a kindergarten and first grade self-contained classroom, the students had a varying range of disabilities. The students used any supports that helped them stay focused including one-on-one aides, weighted backpacks, lap-pads, sensory stimulation devices, etc. Since this lesson mainly involved discussing and listening, all students were expected to participate. However, the students were asked multiple comprehension questions throughout the read aloud in order to keep the students on-task and focused on the story. Also, the discussion allowed ample time for the students to think about the questions and formulate a response.