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The Use of Conflict Resolution to Reduce School Violence

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The Use of Conflict Resolution to Reduce School Violence

Abstract

- ▶ A St. Louis student, 14, was stabbed at school.
- ▶ An Atlanta student 12 was shot at school by a friend showing off a stolen gun.
- ▶ A 5-year-old and two 7-year-old were suspended from school in Rockville, Maryland for bringing knives to school.
- ▶ Two Denver, Colorado high school students detonated a pipe bomb outside their school. 2
- ▶ A Maryland teacher caught a student with a pistol inside a school restroom. The student shot the teacher.
- ▶ A Massachusetts high school student was knifed and clubbed to death during a government class.
- ▶ An Atlanta student opened fire in a crowded cafeteria, killing one student and wounding another. (Violence in the School House: A 10-year Update, 1997, p. 1)

These scenarios taken from "Violence in the School House: A 10-year Update" clearly indicates that violence in the United States is a serious issue for administrators, teachers, parents, and the community. According to the Department of Justice, nearly 3 million thefts and violent crimes occur on or near school campuses every year. This equates to almost 16,000 incidents per school day or one every six seconds (1.9 millions of these incidents are considered violent crimes—rape, robbery, and assault).

THE USE OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION TO REDUCE SCHOOL VIOLENCE

A Graduate Research Paper

Submitted to the

Division of Elementary Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Sabrina L. Taylor

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Chapter One

Introduction

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These escalating statistics in school violence have definitely prompted the U.S. government and school districts to develop programs that focus on decreasing school violence. School violence is such a serious problem that Goal 6 of Goals 2000 (Hoffman, 1996) suggests: "By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning."

"No child or youth should be fearful on the way to school, be afraid while there, or have to cope with pressures to make unhealthy choices (p. 3)."

In addition to Goal 6, the government has chosen numerous ways to address school violence. The first is the development of the 1994 Gun-Free Schools Act, mandating a one-year expulsion for students who bring weapons to school. In addition, the Federal government, and most states, also have made funds available for prevention activities through anti-crime and education legislation. These include anti-gang programs and other very focused prevention education, as well as more general recreational activities.

Many school districts have adopted programs that reinforce many of the ideas purposed by the U.S. government in dealing with violence. According to Sautter (1995), many schools are standing up to violence by trying everything from enacting new school suspension policies to using closed-circuit television on school buses and adopting “zero tolerance” policies for possession of weapons or any kind of violent behavior. In addition, many school districts collaborate with social service agencies to address underlying causes of violence. Some other districts have decided to teach students the skills of conflict resolution and peer mediation. (Nationwide, more than 2,000 schools conduct conflict resolution programs). These programs teach students a variety of options they can resort to instead of turning to violence. Despite, the efforts many school officials and parents seriously speculate if these anti-violence initiatives will decrease school violence. The question remains: Can schools successfully achieve Goal 6 by the millennium?

It is essential to analyze existing information on school violence to determine the following:

- How other researchers view the problem of school violence,
- examine alternative suggestions by researchers for addressing the problem,
- evaluate the recommended suggestions,
- and determine if the alternatives can be successfully and effectively adopted by local schools.

This review will address the following questions:

- How often does school violence occur? What are the causes of school violence and the effect of violence on administrators, teachers, and students?

- How can conflict resolution programs reduce school violence?

What is the rationale for implementing the peaceable classroom? What are some ideas on how to create the peaceable classroom?

Methodology

The initial search began with using the following descriptors in the ERIC index: school violence, conflict resolution, and peaceable classroom. The search resulted in a vast amount of information on school violence. However, limited information was revealed regarding the peaceable classroom and conflict resolution. Thus, additional sources were consulted. The World Wide Web was extensively used. However, the majority of the sources used were from sites maintained by the Department of Education and Eric. The Department of Justice and The National Center for Education Statistics were used to obtain statistics on how often school violence occurs, to identify types of violence, and the effect of violence on teachers and students. In addition, Conflict Resolution Education: A guide to Implementing Programs in Schools, Youth-Serving Organizations and Community & Juvenile Justice Settings was used because it provided a comprehensive review on the types of conflict resolution programs available and how to implement such programs. Materials were obtained from the following non-profit organizations: Peace Education Foundation, Programs for Young Negotiators, National Institute for Dispute Resolution, and The Iowa Peace Institute. The information acquired described conflict and how to promote peacemaking skills in homes, schools, and communities. These sources were chosen because they contained vital information needed to understand school violence, implement conflict resolution programs, and create the peaceable classroom. Many of the sources were selected due to the limited information that could be located on conflict resolution from the library. The sources were analyzed based on the following criteria:

- Publication date (recent),
- author's ability to provide factual rather than opinionated information,
- accuracy of the article when compared to other articles,
- consistency and clear presentation of the facts,
- author's ability to provide adequate examples of conflict resolution programs currently, implemented in schools.

Chapter Two

Analysis & Discussion

Overview on School Violence

“Violence in America has reached epidemic proportions. Today, all Americans are touched directly and indirectly by violent acts.” (Bullock & Gable, 1995, p. v)

According to the U.S. Justice Department in 1995, U.S. residents age 12 or older experienced approximately 38.4 million crimes. Seventy-four percent (28 million) were property crimes, 25% (9.6 million) were crimes of violence, and 1% were personal thefts. (U.S. Department of Justice, 1997, p. 1)

If schools are a microcosm of society, this indicates why violence is having such a significant impact on the quality of public education. Therefore, one of six national education goals recommends that “By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.”(Hoffman, 1996, p. 3)

Violence is a growing concern for urban, suburban, and rural schools nationwide. “The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that each day some 100,000 children carry guns to school. Each hour, more than 2,000 students are physically attacked on school grounds. And every hour approximately 900 teachers are threatened and nearly 40 are physically attacked. More than 400,000 violent crimes are reported in and around our nation’s schools each year with many crimes going unreported.” (Lantieri, 1995, p. 386) According to National Network of Violence Prevention Practitioners school violence is present but hard to identify as a result of:

Incomplete data, reporting inconsistencies, and the absence of a comprehensive tracking system make it difficult to fully understand the extent of school violence.

School violence information is generally based on self-reported data or data collected from school incident reports and student/teacher surveys.

Categorization of violent acts, such as assaults, are often based upon a school's interpretation of the act committed and not on a standard definition. (National Network of Violence Prevention Practitioners Sample Fact Sheet, 1996, p. 2).

However, despite the difficulty in tracking school violence, students, teachers, administrators and the general public, all agree that violence is prevalent and on the rise in United States schools. Student survey results obtained from the National Network of Violence Prevention Practitioners reflected the following:

Only 50% of students (grades 3-12) felt very safe in or around school.

20% of students in grades 3-12 feel that threats and the use of weapons are major problems in their schools.

Nearly one fourth (22%) of students in grades 3-12 are somewhat worried or very worried about being harmed while at school.

Approximately 160,000 students miss classes each school day due to fear of physical harm (National Network of Violence Prevention Practitioners Sample Fact Sheet, 1996, p. 1).

School district survey results revealed that:

82% of more than 2,000 school districts polled reported an increase in violence in their schools since 1988.

During the 1992-93 school year, 78% of responding districts (91% urban, 81% suburban, and 69% rural) identified student vs. student assaults as the leading school related violent acts. Sixty-one percent reported weapons in schools as the next largest problem (National Network of Violence Prevention Practitioners Sample Fact Sheet, 1996, pp. 2-3).

In addition, the National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey, revealed that between 1990-91 and 1993-94 the proportion of teachers indicating that physical conflicts among students was a serious problem rose from 6.5 percent to 8.2 percents and the problem of student possession of weapons had increased from 1.2 percent to 2.8 percent.

Teachers report problems on the rise in the areas of robbery and theft, and vandalism of school property as well. (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996, p. 1)

The general public's results from "The 27th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/ Gallup Poll of Public's Attitude Toward the Public Schools revealed that a vast majority of U.S. citizens believe violence in public schools is increasing, not only in the nation's schools (89%) but in the local schools (67%) as well (Elam & Rose, 1995, p. 53).

The following chart illustrates the percentage of the general public who believes that violence has increased, decreased, remained the same or simply did not know.

Public's Attitude	In Local Public Schools	In the Nation's Public Schools
Increased Violence in Public Schools	%	%
Increased a great deal	37	68
Increased some	30	21
Declined some	5	2
Declined a great deal	1	1
Remained about the same	25	6
Don't know	2	2

Source: Stanley M. Elam and Lowell C. Rose, "The 27th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitude Toward the Public Schools." Phi Delta Kappan (September 1995) p. 53.

Causes of Violence

While educators, administrators, and the general public recognize that school violence is among the most serious issues facing our society, few are able to reach a consensus on the causes of violence.

Lewandowski and Forsstrom-Cohen (1986) believe that it is generally accepted that there is no single cause and that violence is a heterogeneous phenomenon.

Lindquist and Madnar (1995) theorize that children's behavior should be considered in view of the society in which they live. Factors such as poverty, abuse, disintegrating home environments, the culture of violence, materialism and pressures to achieve may all combine at one time or another to make children behave the way they do. "Children learn what they live." Children's behavior cannot be understood without some consideration of the world into which they have been born.

Maginnis (1997) suggests that violence is a problem that begins at home and spreads to the community. Much of the increase in violence in this country and in the schools is due to "changing family situations." These changes include a lack of parental caring and supervision, lack of discipline on the part of parents, lack of parental concern regarding student behavior and student whereabouts, poor family discipline, and a lack of connection with an extended family. Results from The 27th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools revealed that the general public believes that several factors contribute to school violence. The table below reveal factors which contribute to school violence, national totals, the percentages of public without children in school, public school parents, and nonpublic school parents.

**Attitudes toward causes of violence in public schools
United States, 1995**

Question: "What, in your opinion, are the major causes of student violence in the public schools?"

Causes for violence in public schools	National	No children in school	Public school parents	Non-Public school parents
Lack of parental control/discipline/supervision/involvement values	24%	26%	18%	21%
Lack of family structure/problems of family life/poverty	20	22	16	31
Drug related	13	13	13	9
Pupils' attitude/boredom/disrespect/lack of self-esteem	6	5	8	6
Gang related	5	5	7	4
Integration/segregation problems; racial disputes	4	3	6	6
TV/movies/pop music/news media	3	3	3	3
Availability of guns/weapons	3	3	2	1

Source: Stanley M. Elam and Lowell C. Rose, "The 27th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* (September 1995) pp. 53-54.

Many researchers have developed theories on the causes of school violence however, the American Psychological Association revealed the most compelling results on the psychological roots of school violence in the publication entitled: Violence and Youth: Psychology's Response. Researchers from the American Psychological Association conclude that many factors contribute to antisocial behavior in children. These researchers say that, "biological factors, child-rearing conditions, ineffective parenting, emotional and cognitive development, gender differences, sex role socialization, relations to peers, cultural milieu, social factors such as economic inequality and lack of opportunity, and media influences" (APA, 1993, p. 19) all contribute to antisocial behaviors in children. The APA

researchers believe that it is difficult to distinguish between the roles that biology, heredity, and the environment play in determining behavior. However, the APA researchers are confident in saying that “much of the social violence we are witnessing today is learned behavior and if violence is learned, it can be unlearned” (APA, 1993, p. 19).

Studies conducted by the American Psychological Association indicate “the strongest developmental predictor of a child’s involvement in violence is a history of previous violence” (APA, 1993, p. 17). Research concludes that children who witness criminal history or antisocial personality in a parent, experience parental rejection, and inconsistent and physically abusive parental discipline all contribute to aggressive behavior. In addition, to children having a previous history with violence, family factors and child rearing practices also contribute to the development of antisocial behavior. For example, children who experience continual physical punishment by parents will show higher incidents of aggressive behavior (APA, 1993, p. 19). The APA concludes that “abuse at the hands of parents leads children to think and solve problems in ways that later lead to their developing aggressive behavior patterns and to their continuing the cycle of violence” (APA, 1993, p. 19).

Effects of Media Violence on Children

Indeed, lack of parental supervision, history of violence, cognitive development, biological, and emotional factors all have a significant effect on children developing antisocial behavior. However, the media also has an intense influence on the development of antisocial and aggressive behavior in children.

A release by the American Medical Association (1996) revealed the following facts regarding media violence and children:

Children spend more time learning about life through media than in any other manner. The average child spends approximately 28 hours a week watching television, which is twice as much time as they spend in school.

The average American child witnesses more than 200,000 acts of violence on television including 16,000 murders before age 18.

While the level of violence in prime time television is about 5 acts per hour, the level of

violence in children's Saturday morning programming is about 20 to 25 violent acts per hour.

Forty-six percent of all television violence takes place in children's cartoons. Children's programs were least likely to depict the long-term consequences of violence (5%) and they portray violence in a humorous fashion (67%) of the time.

Children living in poverty watch even more television than average---some up to seven hours a day. By the time a poor child graduates from high school, he or she may have watched as many as 22,000 hours of television. (AMA, 1996, p. 1)

According to John P. Murray (1998) of The School of Family Studies and Human Services, children begin watching television at a very early age, sometimes as early as six months, and are intense viewers by the time that they are two or three years old. The general pattern of viewing is one of a steady rise in the number of hours viewed from early childhood through preadolescence and then a sharp drop in viewing during the adolescent years (Murray, 1997, p. 1). This amount of television viewing definitely has an effect on some children's behavior. Bandura and his colleagues (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961, 1963) investigated the cause and effect relation between television/film violence and aggressive behavior of young children by conducting an experimental study. In the study, a young child was presented with a film, back-projected on a television screen of a model who kicked and punished an inflated plastic doll. The child was then placed in a playroom setting and the incidence of aggressive behavior was recorded. The results of this study indicated that children who had viewed the aggressive film were more aggressive in the play room than those who had not observed the aggressive model.

Hoffman (1996), author of School, Violence, and Society explains that this type of behavior occurs because the entertainment industry claims that images portrayed in the movies and television are not real, however, children believe them to be real.

Thus, more children are prone to engage in the behaviors witnessed in the media. According to Hoffman, children's exposure to media violence influences children's violent or aggressive behavior

by demonstration (modeling), reward (reinforcement), and practice (rehearsal). Joyclyn Elders (1994) believes that this type of learning occurs because by portraying violence as the normal means of conflict resolution the media gives youth the message that violence is socially acceptable and the best way to resolve problems.

The Media Scope National Television Violence Study revealed three primary types of harmful effects associated with viewing violence:

Learning aggressive attitudes and behaviors

Becoming desensitized to real world violence

Developing a fear of being victimized by violence (Kalin, 1997, p. 4).

Learning aggressive attitudes and behaviors. The first step in learning aggressive attitudes and behaviors is accepting violence as a way to solve problems. On television, violence is the attractive, effective, and preferred solution to most conflicts. Because heavy viewers watch so many violent acts on television, they come to see violence as a normal and accepted way of life (Kalin, 1997, p. 4).

Becoming desensitized to real world violence. Children who are heavy viewers of violence on television may lose the ability to empathize, protest and to become distressed by real life acts of violence. Children who watch a lot of television are less aroused by violent scenes than are those who only watch a little. They are less bothered by violence in general and less likely to see anything wrong with it (Kalin, 1997, p. 4).

Developing a fear of being victimized by violence. Dr. George Gerbner of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Communications believes that one of the real dangers of pervasive TV violence is viewers' growing perception that the world is a mean and dangerous place. In their 1994 TV violence profile, Gerbner and his colleagues found that long-term, regular exposure to television can contribute to people's sense of vulnerability, dependence, anxiety, and fear (Kalin, 1997, p. 4).

Effect of Violence on Administrators, Teachers, and Students

The previous discussion clearly indicates that violence is spreading rapidly in schools and numerous causes can be linked to violence. However, the impact that violence has on principals,

teachers, parents, and students is astronomical. Secretary of Education (1994) Richard W. Riley revealed in a forum on youth violence that, "Violence creates an environment where children cannot learn, teachers cannot teach and parents are reluctant to send their children to school." (Childhood Education, Winter 1993-94, p. 96)

According to The 1984 Bauer Report an effective learning environment is linked to a disciplined school environment. However, the violence that is transpiring in U.S. schools has resulted in school environments that are not conducive for successful student learning. School violence continues to have a tremendous impact on classroom instruction, student achievement, teacher and student moral, confidence levels and student concentration.

Significant levels of school violence result in students being frightened to attend school. Studies indicate that students who perceive the school environment to be unsafe may not attend school regularly. As a result, students' concentration and academic achievement may also decrease. Teachers are also affected by the physical, psychological, and verbal abuse which they receive from aggressive students. Thus, teachers suffer from increased stress levels, reduced classroom effectiveness, and increased attrition rates. Hoffman (1996), indicates that one in five teachers decides to leave teaching because they are tired of the hassle of trying to teach in environments that are not conducive to learning. In addition, school violence results in the loss of valuable instruction time. According to the report, "Violence in the School House" teachers sometimes spend 30% to 80% of their time on discipline. School violence also results in high in-school suspensions, regular suspensions, and expulsion rates. A survey of 64 principals in Boston, Lowell, New Bedford, Springfield and Worcester, Massachusetts, revealed that 64 percent of elementary school principals suspended or expelled at least one student in 1997 for behavior ranging from fist fighting to carrying knives (Daley, 1997, p. B9). Schools also lose parental confidence because parents question the schools' ability to combat violence successfully and effectively. But, more importantly school violence prevents all students from being able to receive the education that they rightfully deserve.

Implementation of Conflict Resolution Programs

Violence is indeed having a major impact on public education. School administrators are not simply discussing the statistics on school violence or the causes for antisocial behavior in students. Administrators must now discuss how they can successfully create drug and violence free schools by the year 2000. This situation renders no simple solution. However, one way in which administrators are addressing school violence is by implementing conflict resolution programs. Conflict resolution programs have been promoted as a way of teaching children to settle disputes nonviolently. According to Crawford and Bodine (1996) authors of Conflict Resolution Education there are valid reasons for every school to implement a program to teach conflict resolution:

The problem-solving processes of conflict resolution (negotiation, mediation, and consensus decision making) can improve the school climate.

Conflict resolution strategies can reduce violence, vandalism, chronic school absence, and suspension.

Conflict resolution training helps students and teachers deepen their understanding of themselves and others and develop important life skills.

Training in negotiation, mediation, and consensus decision making encourages a high level of citizenship activity.

Shifting the responsibility for solving nonviolent conflicts to students frees adults to concentrate more on teaching and less on discipline.

Behavior management systems that are more effective than detention, suspension, or expulsions are needed to deal with conflict in the school setting.

Conflict resolution training increases skills in listening, critical thinking, and problem solving skills basic to all learning.

Conflict resolution education emphasizes seeing other points of view and resolving differences peacefully-skills that assist one to live in a multicultural world (Bodine & Crawford, 1996, pp.3-4).

Stomfay-Stitz (1994) defines conflict resolution as a method or strategy that enables people to interact with each other in positive ways in order to resolve their differences. Conflict resolution education also teaches the skills needed to engage in creative problem solving. Parties to disputes learn to identify their interests, express their views, and seek mutually acceptable solutions. According to Johnson and Johnson (1996) conflict resolution programs are either cadre or total student body programs. The cadre approach emphasizes training a small number of students to serve as peer mediators. The total student body program emphasizes training every student in the school to manage conflicts constructively. Levy and Maxwell (1989) categorizes conflict resolution programs as: (a.) curriculum-based programs that are designed to teach students about conflict and alternatives to violent conflict resolution and are preventive in nature and (b.) peer mediation programs.

According to the article entitled "Providing Opportunities for Children and Youth," (1997) effective conflict resolution programs achieve the following goals:

Enable children to respond nonviolently to conflict, using the conflict resolution strategies of negotiation, mediation, and group problem solving.

Develop educators' competence to manage behavior in school without coercion, using a program that teaches students responsibility and self-discipline.

Mobilize community involvement in violence prevention through education programs and services, such as expanding the role of youth as effective citizens beyond the school into the community (1997, pp. 11-12).

Types of Conflict Resolution Programs

Crawford and Bodine (1996) theorize that there are four general approaches to conflict resolution education: process curriculum, peer mediation, peaceable classroom, and peaceable school which are defined as follows:

Process Curriculum: An approach to conflict resolution in which a specific duration of time is devoted to teaching the foundation abilities, principles, and one or more of the problem solving processes of conflict resolution as a separate course, distinct curriculum, or daily lesson plan (LeBoeuf & Delany-Shabazz, 1997, p. 2).

Mediation Program: A conflict resolution education program in which selected individuals (adults and/or students) are trained in the principles and foundation abilities of conflict resolution and in the mediation process in order to provide neutral third-party facilitation to assist those in conflict to reach a resolution (LeBoeuf & Delany-Shabazz, 1997, p. 2).

Peaceable classroom: Is a whole-classroom methodology that includes teaching students the foundation abilities, principles, and one or more of the three problem-solving processes of conflict resolution (LeBoeuf & Delany-Shabazz, 1997, p. 3).

Peaceable School: A comprehensive whole-school methodology that builds on the peaceable classroom approach by using conflict resolution as a system of operation for managing the school as well as the classroom. Conflict resolution principles and processes are learned and utilized by every member of the school community-librarians, teachers, counselors, students, principals, and parents (LeBoeuf & Delany-Shabazz, 1997, p. 3).

Elementary teachers who use the process curriculum approach often use the daily lesson plan method. The process curriculum can be integrated into the existing curriculum, however, many teachers choose to teach it separately. An example of the process curriculum is The Program for Young Negotiators. This process curriculum program was developed by Jared Curhan. The Program for Young Negotiators (PYN) aims to build the capacity of young people, their teachers and other mentors to use negotiations skills as a powerful means of achieving their goals. The Program for Young Negotiators (1997):

Prepares: Young people to participate as effective leaders, decision makers and citizens.

Promotes: The use of collaboration, positive communication and joint problem solving.

Fosters: An environment in which people constructively work through differences and adversity.

Challenges: The assumption that disputes are resolved only when one side wins at the other's expense (Programs for Young Negotiators, 1997).

PYN's ten part negotiation course offers innovative role-plays, case studies, games, videos and discussions to help students:

- (a.) Discover new methods of negotiation, collaboration and leadership.
- (b.) Explore how empathy, trust and active listening improves communication with others.
- (c.) Identify goals and practice effective ways of achieving them.
- (d.) Understand that to satisfy their own interest, they need to respect the different views of others.
- (e.) Analyze real life conflicts and develop creative options for solving problems in their own lives and in their communities (Programs for Young Negotiators, 1997).

Evaluation of PYN indicates that the program:

Led to positive changes in the ways students interact with their parents, friends, and teachers.

Motivated and encouraged students to participate in class.

Decreased the incidents of violence in PYN classrooms (Programs for Young Negotiators, 1997).

The Peace Education Foundation (PEF), based in Miami, Florida is another example of the process curriculum approach. The PEF's mission is to educate children and adults in the dynamics of conflict and to promote peacemaking skills in homes, schools, and communities throughout the world. This mission is served by providing educational materials, training and innovative programming that make nonviolent conflict resolution not merely a passing interest or fad but a lifestyle. PEF offers grade-level specific classroom-tested curricula for Pre-K through grade 12. While each curriculum is presented in a developmentally appropriate format, PEF curricula as a whole have a unified scope, sequence of content and sequence of skills. The content of the PEF conflict resolution curriculum teaches a range of social competency skills that are grouped into five components: community building, understanding conflict, perception, anger management, and rules for fighting fair. According to Crawford and Bodine (1996) teachers facilitate the process of the PEF conflict resolution curriculum by using five strategies:

Model: Profess the attitudes expected of students and practice the associated behaviors.

Teach: Teach the students what to do and why. Break the skills into understandable parts

and give them the chance to practice through role play. The goal is for students to learn the techniques so they can repeat the vocabulary and techniques when prompted.

Coach: Assist students in using the techniques appropriately in real-life situations. Offer support and corrective feedback when needed. The goal is for students to practice what they have learned.

Encourage: Remind students to use their skills. Express confidence in their ability to succeed. Recognize student's appropriate use of skills. The goal is for students to behave appropriately without depending on adults.

Delegate: After students become proficient, let them teach or coach less experienced students. The goal is for students to demonstrate their competence and acknowledge the value of habitual use of the skills (Bodine & Crawford, 1996, p. 18).

School peer mediation is a mode of student conflict management. Two trained peer mediators work as a team to encourage problem solving between disputants. Disputants are not forced into mediation; they must decide if they want the mediator's help. Peer mediation programs began in the early 1980s with the help of community mediation centers. Conflict Managers which is one of the most prominent programs has served as a model for other programs around the country. The Conflict Managers program can be implemented on the elementary or secondary level. Initially, teachers are trained in mediation and conflict resolution skills. Once this process is completed teachers begin to train a group of students to manage conflicts among their peers. The student mediators receive 15 hours of training which emphasizes the following concepts:

- active listening

- teamwork

- learning specific steps in the mediation process

- role-playing (Fredrickson & Maruyama, 1998, p. 1)

At the elementary level, trained mediators settle disputes on the play ground. Peer mediators are trained to use this conflict resolution process:

Step in. If you see a conflict brewing, introduce yourself and ask both parties if they want to solve their problem.

If they agree, go to the area designated for solving problems. Explain and get agreement to the five basic ground rules: a. Agree to solve the problem; b. Don't call each other names; c. Do not interrupt; and d. Tell the truth.

Decide who will talk first. Ask that person what happened and how he or she feels, repeating back what is said using active listening skills. Do the same with the other party.

Ask the first person and then the second person for alternative solutions.

Work with the students to get a solution that they both think is good.

After the agreement is reached, congratulate the parties and fill out a Conflict Manager Report Form (Fredrickson & Maruyanna, 1998, pp. 1-2).

Despite the fact that few research studies exist on the effects of peer mediation, evidence suggests that peer mediation programs can have a positive impact on schools. Peer mediation programs can result in the following:

- A stronger sense of cooperation and school community.

- An improved school environment with decreased tension and hostility.

- Increased student participation, self-esteem and leadership skills.

- Students learn communication, critical thinking, and problem solving skills (Conflict Management & Peer Mediation Programs for Schools, 1997, p. 3).

Fredrickson and Maruyanna (1998) indicate that there are three vital elements to a good program: good mediation training, a mediation team that represents the student body, strong staff support.

Mediation Training

The majority of schools that implement a peer mediation program use representatives from community mediation centers or staff coordinators to train the students. However, if staff members are used, they must be properly trained in mediation. According to the National Association for Mediation in Education (1993) those who train the students should be trained mediators and have experience in that role. In addition, NAME (1993) suggests that elementary and middle school peer

mediators receive 12-15 hours of training. NAME suggests the following training session content:

Conflict--Discussion of what it is, different styles of dealing with it, and the types of conflict that exist.

Communication styles--Non-verbal communication, assertion messages, and "I" statements.

Active listening skills--Good/bad listening techniques, open-ended questions, neutral language, etc.

Mediation process--Learning what it is, the steps involved, confidentiality, etc.

On-going/follow-up training--bias awareness, cultural diversity, issues of power (NAME, 1993, pp. 8-9).

Who Mediates. The majority of schools who start peer mediation programs choose the cadre approach. Fredrickson & Maruyama (1998) indicate that there is a variety of ways to choose a mediator: a. the student body nominates peers, b. the faculty and staff nominate their peers, c. student volunteers are solicited, or d. some combination of the first three approaches is used. Peer mediation programs that are successful make a conscious effort to train a diverse group of mediators.

Importance of Staff Support. In order for a peer mediation to have any positive effects on the students the faculty and administrator support is vital for a productive program. Fredrickson and Maruyama (1998) advise that a trainer should not begin a program unless at least 75% of the school staff votes to have a peer mediation program, and the rest agree not to sabotage the program. Current evidence suggests that effective peer mediation programs can be very beneficial to staff because the programs can free them from having to deal with so many disciplinary issues (Johnson, Johnson, & Dudley, 1992). By supporting their school's peer mediation program, staff will likely find themselves in a better classroom environment.

In the peaceable school, the classroom is the place where students gain the knowledge base and skills needed to resolve conflict creatively. The classroom is also where the majority of conflicts are addressed. Thus, the peaceable classroom is the building block for the peaceable school (The Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention, 1997, p. 12).

Bodine and Crawford (1996) explain that six skills are fundamental to the achievement of a peaceable school: building a peaceable climate, understanding conflicts, understanding peace and peacemaking, mediation, negotiation, and group problem solving.

Building a Peaceable Climate. Responsibility and cooperation are the foundation for all other skills in the peaceable school. Teachers must understand that effective behavior is the responsibility of the student. Once students understand this they will begin to make responsible choices guided by their rights and responsibilities.

Understanding Conflict. In order for students to be successful with conflict resolution they must understand the nature of conflict. Students need to be introduced to programs that provide information and activities that yield understanding of the nature, causes of conflict, the possible responses to conflict, and its benefits.

Understanding Peace and Peacemaking. Students should be taught to observe peacemaking and peace breaking behaviors within the school and classroom. Students can be introduced to these ideas through activities that help students understand and practice the concept of peace.

Mediation. Students need to gain skills in assisting other students in conflict. They can gain these skills by participating in activities that cover the mediation process. These activities will teach students the skills necessary to act as a neutral third party.

Negotiation. Students discover how to resolve their conflict unassisted by stating their individual needs, focusing on their interest, and generating options for mutual gain.

Group Problem solving. Students learn group problem solving to help them deal with conflict involving groups in the schools. Their responsibility is to achieve a consensus decision that can resolve the conflict (Bodine & Crawford, 1996, p. 44).

Research on Conflict Resolution

Research indicates that conflict resolution training can have a significant effect on students' behavior. One peer mediation study conducted by Powell, Muir-McClain, Halasyamani (1995) in an elementary Baltimore, Maryland school district clearly indicates the impacts that conflict resolution

has on students. The study represents a two-year time span. The school was selected because of its location in a neighborhood with high drug trafficking and violence.

Initially, the project coordinator presented the entire student body with an overview of the conflict mediation concept through classroom presentations and assemblies. Student mediators were then trained. Mediators were nominated by peers, teachers, and administrators. The students consisted of both boys and girls and represented diverse social and academic levels. Twenty-three girls and twenty-one boys from the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades were trained to be mediators. They were given two hour sessions for two weeks. During the sessions they were taught listening and communication skills, problem identification and solutions, leadership, teamwork, and the conflict mediation process. The mediators were required to patrol in pairs in the hallways, cafeteria, and the play ground. Upon witnessing an argument mediators asked the disputants if they wish to solve the conflict through mediation. If they agreed, the mediators guided them toward a solution.

Powell, Muir-McClain, and Halasyamani (1995), revealed that during the two years of the project, student mediators helped to resolve 311 incidents, which included threats and harassments, personal property disputes, name calling, line cutting, rumors and gossip, and physical contact such as kicking, pushing, or bumping. Disputants signed agreements in 289 (93%) of the incidents. Follow-ups by the project coordinator indicated that 275 (95%) of the agreements were honored for the remainder of the school year. Additional changes after program implementation included:

Faculty attendance increased from 92% to 95% and student attendance from 91% to 93%.

Disciplinary suspensions fell from four the year before the project to one during each of the two project years. Referrals to the principal's office declined from 103 before the project to 93 and then 80 during it.

Overall, fewer incidents of fights, hitting, and name-calling occurred (p. 428).

Additional studies on conflict resolution revealed that conflict resolution training: (a.) empower students to solve their own problems, (b.) improve academic performance, (c.) decrease disruptive behavior, (d.) decrease physical violence, and (e.) increase student leadership (National Institute for Dispute Resolution, 1997, p. 3).

The following effects of conflict resolution on behavior were presented in a bulletin for the National Institute on Dispute Resolution:

Students empowered to solve their own problems:

“Students trained in conflict resolution spontaneously apply their training to school and non-school conflict situations to handle conflict more constructively. Eighty-five percent adopt negotiation as their primary approach to conflict, rather than threats or violence.”

[David Johnson and Roger Johnson, University of Minnesota, 1994]

Improved academic performance:

“The integration of conflict training into instructional units can increase academic achievement. When training was integrated into literature classes, students scored significantly higher on achievement tests than students who did not receive the training.”

[David Johnson and Roger Johnson, University of Minnesota, 1994]

Less disruptive behavior:

“In a 1996 survey of 132 Ohio elementary schools that had implemented conflict resolution programs, 78 percent of respondents reported improvement in classroom management, 65 percent reported a decrease in the time spent by teachers dealing with student conflicts, 61 percent noted a decrease in student fights, and 59 percent reported a decrease in office referrals.”

[Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management and the Ohio Department of Education, 1997]

Less physical violence:

“83% of high school, 85% of middle school and 86% of elementary school respondents indicated that they have seen “a lot less or somewhat less” student violence and other hurtful behaviors since the mediation program was implemented.”

[New Mexico Center for Dispute Resolution, 1994]

Student leadership:

“The attitude of many ‘negative leaders,’ students who use their leadership talents to out negative behaviors and promote such behaviors to fellow students, has visibly improved due to participation in mediation training.”

[New Mexico Center for Dispute Resolution, 1994]

(National Institute for Dispute Resolution, 1997, p. 4)

The National Association for Mediation in Education (1994) estimated that there were approximately 2,000 conflict resolution programs in United States schools in 1992, but 5,000 such programs in 1994. The increase in conflict resolution programs requires adequate research in order for school administrators and teachers to determine if a program meets the needs of a school and is effective. But, according to Hedeem (1997) “Dispute resolution is a field in which research is hurrying to catch up with practice” (p. 2). Johnson and Johnson (1996) believe that the popularity of conflict resolution and peer mediation programs has resulted in numerous articles reporting claims about the programs’ impact. Johnson and Johnson (1996) theorizes that the articles tend to provide (a.) purely descriptive, anecdotal accounts of the programs’ impact on various dependent variables and (b.) descriptions of curriculum design and guidelines for developing a conflict resolution program. The obvious beneficial result of conflict resolution programs will ensure future expansions are presented but not supported by actual research data. Anecdotal reports such as quoting a student as saying, “Mediation pulled me out of the hole I was in, I’m a better person” are inspiring, but do not illuminate what peer mediation programs are doing, how they are doing it, and how broadly their effects can be generalized (Johnson & Johnson 1996). They believe with the given popular and widespread use of conflict resolution and peer mediation programs and the frequent testimonials about their effectiveness, a current assessment is needed about the quality and quantity of knowledge about their effectiveness.

Acker (1995) indicates that numerous conflict resolution programs have been developed however, few of these intervention programs have been empirically validated. “Even when the effectiveness of a particular approach toward prevention or treatment has been examined, the results often are less

than encouraging.” For example, a recent review of violence intervention programs indicated that no intervention program reported to date have produced results that last longer than one year (Acker, 1995, p. 9).

Powell, Muir-McClain, and Halasyamani (1995) in addition to other researchers believe that evaluation of conflict resolution and peer mediation projects are needed. These projects are being widely implemented at unknown cost and with unconfirmed benefit.

Cost of Conflict Resolution Programs

In addition to limited research on conflict resolution there is also limited information on the overall cost of conflict resolution programs. As a result, schools that are considering implementing the programs may have a difficult time gaining information on cost. However, once the costs of the programs are revealed, few districts who may want to implement the program will have the necessary funding available.

Powell, Muir-McClain and Halasyamani (1995) indicate in their research on the effect of conflict resolution that reported cost of a project per year for eight schools ranged from \$4,200 to about \$8,000. This was the final cost to the school. The majority of the cost for these eight schools was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. In addition, information obtained from the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies indicate significant cost to schools for program development. A training seminar conducted on July 21-25, 1997, consisted of four all-day sessions from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and cost \$1,500 for three educators. The package included 24 hours of training, training and organizational manual, two on site follow-up consultations (up to three hours, total), and telephone consultation for one year (Fresno Pacific University Center for Peace-Making & conflict Studies, 1997, pp. 1-2). According to Lantieri (1995) of *Resolving Conflict Creatively*, the average cost of implementation of a conflict resolution program is just more than \$33.00 per student per year. The Resolving Conflict Mediation program includes the following components. A K-12 classroom curriculum professional training an ongoing technical assistance and support for teachers, a student led mediation program, and parent training. Finally, information obtained from Conflict Resolution Unlimited indicates that training

materials are also extremely expensive. The following represent examples of some prices for conflict resolution materials:

Conflict Manager Training for Elementary School Students 1995 , Training Manual \$200.00

Mediation Skills for Elementary School Children 1995, Classroom Teacher's Guide \$150.00

Everyday Conflict, Creative Solutions 1991, Training Video (9 minutes) Leader's Guide, \$95.00

Elementary School Training Package Training Manual, Classroom Teacher's Guide, training Video with Leader's Guide and training aids for the program, \$295.00 (Conflict Resolution Unlimited, 1997, p. 1).

Solution for Reducing School Violence: Creating a Peaceable Classroom

The prices listed above clearly illustrate that, for schools with limited funding, conflict resolution may not be an option. The majority of information obtained revealed astronomical cost to schools without any guaranteed benefits. Many schools that are in need of these types of programs may be unable to implement them. For instance, many urban schools who are often confronting aggressive behavior from students, violence against teachers and students, but may be unable to afford such cost. The majority of these schools already have limited budgets and often have difficulty in simply providing necessary materials for instruction such as computers, software, manipulative, books, and playground materials. Therefore, one must ask what are the options for these types of schools.

One option that a teacher can begin to incorporate in the classroom is introducing children to the peaceable classroom. Bodine and Crawford (1996) define the peaceable classroom as a whole classroom methodology that includes teaching students the foundation abilities, principles, and one or more of the three problem-solving processes of conflict resolution. Conflict resolution education is incorporated into the core subjects of the curriculum and into classroom management strategies.

Bey and Turner (1996) authors of *Making School a Place of Peace* define five qualities which identify the various peacemaking skills and behaviors taught within the peaceable classrooms:

Cooperation: Students learn to work together and trust, help, and share with each other.

Communication: Students learn to observe carefully, communicate accurately, and listen sensitively.

Tolerance: Students learn to respect and appreciate people's differences and to understand prejudice and how it works.

Positive Emotional Expression: Students learn to express feelings, particularly anger and frustration in ways that are not aggressive or destructive, and they learn self-control.

Conflict Resolution: Students learn the skills of responding creatively to conflict in the context of a supportive, caring environment (p. 25).

Despite the fact that the peaceable classroom approach does involve training and money it can be implemented on a teacher-by-teacher basis. This approach requires the teacher to decide how she/he wants to teach her/his students about peace. Will she choose children's literature that centers around peace themes? Will peace be taught through the social studies curriculum? Will some of the room exhibits display themes of peace? Will students be taught to resolve conflicts peacefully?

Regardless of the method a teacher may choose one must understand that the ultimate goal of the peaceable classroom is to build an environment where children learn to live with one another in a respectful and empowering community based on the principles of trust and safety, responsibility, mutual respect and cooperation.

Creating the Peaceable Classroom

The remainder of this paper will focus on ideas for teachers to begin creating the peaceable classroom. Bosworth (1996) suggest the following tips for creating a peaceful classroom:

Tips for Creating a Peaceful Classroom

Have a genuine interest in your students.	Learn about students' culture(s). Offer praise and encouragement frequently. Attend to students as individuals, not just to the class as a whole.
Communicate classroom rules clearly.	Enforce rules fairly and consistently. Consider each incident's unique circumstances while making discipline-related decisions.
Be objective, not judgmental.	Try to adopt the students' perspective. Look at issues from a variety of perspectives.
Show that you are human.	Be prepared to admit your mistakes. Use humor, when appropriate.
Address problem behavior directly and immediately.	Unresolved conflicts and issues often resurface. Addressing a problem early lessens the chance that it will expand.
Adopt a collaborative approach.	Maximize student opportunities for choices within the classroom. Consider the perspective that this is "our" classroom, not "my" classroom (Peer Mediation, 1997, p. 8).

Source: Peer Mediation (1997). [On-Line]. Available: <http://www.wcresa.k12.mi.us/wayne-westland/progdescription.htm>

According to William J. Kreidler (1990) a peaceable classroom is based on cooperation, communication, emotional expression, appreciation for diversity, and nonviolent conflict resolution.

Kreidler suggests three steps to successfully implement the peaceable classroom.

Step one: Involve

Actively encourage students to assume some of the responsibility for establishing a caring community. Set standards: Engage students in establishing classroom standards by discussing:

How would you like to be treated in this classroom? How will you treat people?

Step two: Resolve

Kreidler (1990) suggests as students get specific about the types of behaviors that contribute to a peaceable classroom. Students should be allowed to brainstorm ideas that explore the concept of respect. Students will determine what respect doesn't look like and what respect doesn't sound like. Students may then create a class compact. A class compact is a set of guidelines for how class members should treat one another. Students should determine what rules would help maintain the class compact.

Step three: Evolve

Creating a caring classroom community is an ongoing process which can succeed when children can assess how they are doing. Teachers should hold community meetings two weeks after the compact. The class meeting should evaluate the compact and determine if the children are following the guidelines and if they are adequate.

Additional ideas for promoting peace

The Peace Table (Grade K-6). Students learn to work out their problems without the intervention of the teacher at the peace table--covered with a bright tablecloth and decorated with paper hearts, inviting pictures, and snapshots of kids. The peace table is a designated place where students can talk about a dispute, brainstorm ideas for working it out, and then agree on a solution. Guidelines for working at the peace table include no name-calling, put-downs, hitting, or interrupting (Bozzone, 1990, p. 4).

Children's Literature. The following books can be used to enhance the concepts of peace:

Book: Fry-Miller, Kathleen and Myers-Walls, Judith. Young Peacemakers Project Book.

Bretheren Press, 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120.

Summary: A book of peacemaking projects for children ages three to ten years. The projects are organized around the themes of "caring for the environment," "understanding people", and "making peace."

This book is an excellent resource for teachers considering teaching about peace. For example chapter 12 focuses on Holidays, one section concentrates on celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday. The following is an example of suggestions:

Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday

Learn about King:	Read about Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life. Find out and talk about things like the marches, sit-ins, jail, nonviolence, discrimination, and other important parts of his life. Listen to one of his speeches.
Birthday Celebration:	Plan a birthday celebration to remember Martin Luther King, Jr. Make a birthday cake. Decorate it to show some of the important things to remember on this day.
Party Activities:	Plan activities for the party and for the whole month of January. Some ideas are: singing songs of peace and justice; having each person share his or her dream of peace and injustice; or writing letters telling what you like about Martin Luther King, Jr.'s ideas and actions and how things have changed because of his life and work.
Community events:	Attend a local community event celebrating the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. Write to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent social Action, 449 auburn Avenue, N. E., Atlanta, Georgia 30312.
Learn about other outstanding black women and men:	Read and learn about other black people that have made great contributions to our world.
Talk about it:	How has Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life changed the world? What was his dream? What dreams and wishes do you have for the world? How can you help to make his dream and yours come true?(Fry-Miller & Myers-Walls, 1988, 107)

Book: Guinan, Kelly. Celebrating Peace.

Summary: Peace education. Easy-to-use activities for public school age children. Topics include self-esteem, feelings, communication, conflict resolution, cooperation, diversity, justice, protecting the planet.

Sample activity taken from Celebrating Peace:

Title: Our Diversity Makes Us Stronger

The teachers will discuss the definitions of stereotype, prejudice, and discrimination with students.

Students will then complete the exercise by identifying the behaviors as (S), (P), or (D) on each line.

Stereotype: Thinking everyone in a group is the same.

Prejudice: Unfair judgment of others because of stereotypes. Making a decision on whether you like someone before you get to know them.

Discrimination: People's action based on their stereotypes and prejudices. Not respecting the rights of other people because they are different from you.

1. ___ You dislike all people who wear purple socks.
2. ___ A dog bites you. You think that all dogs want to bite you.
3. ___ You avoid all people who wear braids.
4. ___ You refuse to give jobs to all people who have curly eyebrows.
5. ___ Nancy has black hair and is smart. You think that all people who have black hair are smart.
6. ___ You have not met Tom, but you know you won't like him because his hair is too short.
7. ___ You try to keep the new boy off the baseball team because he looks different than you.
8. ___ A girl with braces pushes you down. You think all people who wear braces are mean.
9. ___ You don't want people who wear white shoes to live in your neighborhood.
10. ___ All tall people are smart (Guinan, 1994, p. 134).

Book: Johnson, David W. And Johnson, Roger T. Teaching Children to be Peacemakers.

Interaction Book Company, 7208 Cornelia Drive, Edina, MN 55435, 1991.

Summary: A book designed to provide resources for teaching conflict resolution skills, assertiveness, effective negotiation and peer mediation in grades K-6, with activities and worksheets.

Title: Your Point of View

The activity addresses the issue of point of view. In resolving conflicts it is important to understand the other person's point of view. An example of the need to understand others' point of view is given below. The story is followed by questions which encourages to think about what has transpired in the story.

The Wise Men and the Elephant

Once upon a time, there were six wise men who lived in the same town. All six wise men were blind. One day, an elephant was brought to the town. The six men wanted to know what the elephant looked like. So they went to the elephant and started to touch it. The first one touched the elephant's big, flat ear. He felt it move slowly back and forth. "The elephant is like a fan," the first man cried. The second man felt the elephant's legs. "The elephant is like a tree," he cried. The third man was feeling the elephant's tail. "You are both wrong," he cried. The elephant is like a rope." The fourth man was holding the elephant's trunk. "You are all wrong," he said. "The elephant is like a snake." The fifth man was touching one of the elephant's tusks. "The elephant is like a spear!" he yelled. "No, No!" the sixth man cried. "The elephant is like a high wall!" He was feeling the elephant's side. "Fan!" "Tree!" "Rope!" "Snake!" "Spear!" "Wall!" The six blind men shouted at each other for an hour. And they never agreed on what an elephant looked like (Johnson & Johnson, 1991, p. 3.75).

1. Which blind man was right?
2. What was their conflict based on?
3. Were they really "wise"? How do you tell if someone is wise?
4. How could the wise men have discovered what an elephant really looks like?
5. What is the moral of the story? What does the story tell you about solving conflicts?(Johnson & Johnson, 1991, p. 3:76).

Teachers who are interested in gaining more ideas for activities on the creating the peaceable can obtain information from the following sources:

Drew, Naomi. Learning the Skills of Peacemaking. Jalmar Press, 45 Hitching Post Drive, Building 2, Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90272-4297, 1987.

A classroom-tested activity guide for elementary-age children on communicating, cooperating, and resolving conflict.

Fry-Miller, Kathleen and Myers-Walls, Judith. Young Peacemakers Project Book II. Bretheren Press, 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120, 1989.

Peacemaking projects for elementary-aged children including activities on solar, wind, and water power, and substituting peace toys for war toys.

Haessly, Jacqueline. Learning to Live Together, At Home and in the World. Resource Publication, Inc., 160 E. Virginia St., No. 290, San Jose, CA 95112, 1988.

A book which addresses the importance of peacemaking activities in the family and stresses affirmation, respect for differences, cooperation, and creative resolution of conflict.

Kreidler, William J. Creative Conflict Resolution, More than 200 Activities for Keeping Peace in the Classroom. Good Year Books, Scott, Foresman, & Co., 1900 E. Lake Avenue, Glenview, IL 60025, 1984.

An approach to conflict management for grades K-6 including descriptions of suggested activities for implementing the approach with different grade levels. The classroom model is based on the Nonviolence and Children Program, and the Children's Creative Response to Conflict in New York.

Schmidt, Fran and Friedman, Alice. Fighting Fair: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for Kids. Grace Contriono Abrams Peace Education Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 19-1153, Miami Beach, FL 33119, 1986.

Schniedewind, Nancy and Davidson, Ellen. Cooperative Learning, Cooperative Lives: A Sourcebook of Learning Activities for Building a Peaceful World. William C. Brown Company Publishers, Dubuque, IA, 1987.

A resource book for teachers (upper elementary) for developing cooperative learning and values. It deals with valuing diversity and resolving conflict, competition and its repercussions, justice, and global interdependence.

In addition, to using the sources above, teachers may also want to create the peaceful classroom by using children's literature. Luke and Myers (1995) suggest that children's literature can present conflicts in such a way that children are able to visualize the conflict, empathize with the characters and appreciate nonviolent resolutions to disputes. "Providing opportunities for children to read and listen to stories that portray different types of conflicts and possible resolution helps them gain a broadened perspective and see the skills of peacemaking at work." (Luke & Myers 1995, p. 5).

Chapter Three

Conclusion

Violence is a growing challenge for United States Schools. Many theorize that the growth in school violence is largely due to changing families, communities, and students increased exposure to violence via the media and society. The problem is so serious that it is changing the structure of how schools address violence. School administrators recognize that they can no longer ignore the problem but must address it effectively and assertively. Thus, many schools have decided to implement conflict resolution programs. These conflict resolution programs include: process curriculum, peer mediation, peaceable classroom, and the peaceable school. Many districts have selected these programs because they have been linked to less physical violence in school, decreased use of verbal put downs, increase in students' self-esteem, leadership skills, and increased student initiative.

School administrators recognize the positive effects of conflict resolution programs on student behaviors. However, administrators also acknowledge that teachers must be adequately trained to manage aggression and teaching conflict resolution. However, many administrators question the reliability and the validity of the programs due to the limited documentation that exists. Thus, the following recommendations for future research, school districts, and the classroom should be considered:

Recommendations for future research include:

Additional research studies on the impact that conflict resolution programs have on reducing school violence.

Additional studies on the effect that conflict resolution has on students in urban settings.

Additional research on the cost to schools for implementation of conflict resolution programs.

Additional research on the effectiveness of the peaceable classroom.

Additional research on how to incorporate the peaceable classroom into the regular curriculum.

Additional information needed for school districts to effectively evaluate conflict resolution programs.

Recommendation to school districts:

School districts should develop early prevention and intervention strategies to address aggression and violence.

Schools should make an effort to involve families and communities in helping to reduce school violence.

The costs of conflict resolution programs are expensive. Therefore, school districts must develop alternative ways to fund conflict resolution programs. Districts should consider building partnerships with business to help minimize the cost of implementation of the programs.

Classroom applications:

All teachers must have a clear understanding of how violence affects students in the classroom.

Students should be encouraged to listen to one another when there are problems and work toward peaceable solutions.

The classroom should provide an avenue for students to understand conflict, how to respond effectively and appropriately, and ways to reduce classroom conflicts.

According to David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson (1995), administrators and teachers must clearly understand that:

“Conflicts occur all the time. They are a normal and inevitable part of school life.

Students disagree over who to sit by at lunch, which game to play during recess, when to work and when to play, when to talk and when to listen, and who is going to pick the paper up off the floor.

How conflicts are managed, not their presence, determines if they are destructive or constructive. In order to make schools orderly and peaceful places in which high quality education can take place, conflict must be managed constructively without physical or verbal violence” (1995, p. 13).

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