Crunching Conflicts: A Closer Look at Conflict Resolution in the Classroom

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Inquiry Abstract:

My experiences in a first and second grade multiage classroom have confirmed my belief that conflicts are inevitable at this stage of children’s social development. Although I strongly believe that conflicts are essential in developing a child’s social and emotional being, the amount and level that these conflicts had been dramatized to among my group of students made me uneasy. In an attempt to better understand why we were having these disagreements, we began “crunching” conflicts together.

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Inquiry Brief

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Teaching Context

My placement in the Professional Development School at Penn State University is in a self-contained first and second grade multiage classroom at Park Forest Elementary School. Multiage classrooms are very unique settings to teach in given that students are working at two different grade levels. Both my first and second grade students exhibit a wide range of academic abilities within their grade level, making the learning spectrum even wider. Not only are the students diverse academically, they are also at different developmental stages both, socially and emotionally.

Out of twenty-one students, eleven are first graders and ten are second graders. The group of second graders spent their entire first grade year together in the same classroom and looped with my mentor teacher. In our classroom, there are two autistic children who have a part time and full time aid, and one ELL child who is working hard to learn the language and culture of the school building. Separated into five leveled reading groups and displaying a wide range of math and writing abilities, the students have many different strengths and areas in need of improvement. Nine of our students get additional attention from school personnel outside of the classroom, including the counselor, ESL teacher, and other specialists. Two learning support paraprofessionals, a part-time paraprofessional, my mentor teacher, and I are present to support the students in the classroom on a daily basis.

The physical setup of the classroom includes a large meeting rug at the front of the room, a reading center with chairs and bean bags, two half-circle reading tables, a
technology area with four computers, a sink and art supply shelf, and four student table sets in the center.

Wonderings and Questions

After witnessing continuous disputes between students in the classroom, I became frustrated with my inability to help the students resolve their conflicts. Noticing little results from my own efforts, I decided to turn to the students for answers. My core wondering was “How will introducing and practicing conflict resolution skills in the classroom affect the way students deal with conflicts that arise during the school day?”

Several sub questions arose alongside my main wondering that made me investigate even further into my inquiry.

- What activities will truly inspire these students to use appropriate strategies when resolving conflicts?
- Will practicing good conflict resolution skills in the classroom result in a reduced number of conflicts the students have during the school day?
- Will practicing conflict resolution skills on a daily basis increase student comfort level in dealing with conflicts on their own?

Inquiry Process

Before I began the inquiry process, I took time to really pinpoint the activities I thought would best suite my group of students, as well as, the data collection methods that would reveal the most about the process overall. I didn’t want to overwhelm the students or myself at any point during my inquiry, so I wove the investigation into the events of our regular school day in hopes of making it a routine experience for all of us. The projected timeline of events began with a student survey that focused on the use of I-
messages (Appendix A), a teacher survey that dealt with overall conflict level in the classroom and student ability to cope (Appendix B), a parent survey that addressed student communication of school conflicts at home (Appendix C), and a teacher checklist tallying the amount of conflicts addressed throughout the school day (Appendix D). After I gathered this information from the students and adults in the room, I had a discussion with the students about conflicts and how they can be related to an escalator. People can go up the conflict escalator by making the disagreement bigger, or they can find ways to go down the conflict escalator by slowing things down and calming the disagreement.

After we talked about the conflict escalator, I introduced conflict crunchers during morning meeting. In order to “crunch” conflicts with the whole class, I had each student write down a conflict they had at one point during the year and place it in the Conflict Cruncher basket. As a class, we would pick a conflict from the basket and “crunch” it by breaking the situation down into three parts: how might each person be feeling or thinking, when did the situation start to escalate, and what could have been done to deescalate the conflict. When the class successfully completed this three-step process during morning meeting they earned a sticker on the conflict escalator chart (Appendix F). After the class had lots of practice “crunching” conflicts together, I moved the students towards a more individualized method of conflict resolution by adding a new job to our classroom job chart. Two student Peace Patrol officers were in charge of keeping an eye out for conflicts during the school day when they were on Peace Patrol. As a Peace Patrol officer you wear an easily identifiable peace badge and help peers “crunch” conflicts by going through a list of events similar to the ones practiced at morning meeting. There is also a clipboard that has a checklist you must fill out when helping
peers settle their conflicts (Appendix E). After the students rotated through Peace Patrol jobs and had sufficient practice in going through the conflict resolution skills existing on the checklist, I introduced Cookie Cruncher and Kind Heart awards. Cookie Cruncher awards were given to any child demonstrating good conflict resolution skills, which might include I-messages, “talking it out”, or coming to an agreement of some sort. Kind Heart awards were given to children who displayed a random act of kindness during any part of the school day. At the end of the day, students who received a Kind Heart or Cookie Cruncher award exchanged it for a small prize from the prize box. Throughout the entire inquiry process, I was constantly reminding students of the conflict escalator and how to make our classroom a peaceful community. The students’ reactions to all of the conflict crunching activities that were implemented had interesting results and gave me even more incentive to continue inquiry through my teaching this year.

Data Collection and Analysis

Before I began collecting data on the students, I wanted to get insight into how the other adults in the room felt about conflict in the classroom. The teacher survey I gave allowed me to understand how my mentor, an experienced teacher, views student ability to resolve conflicts at this age. “This is certainly the age to teach and practice conflict resolution skills, but not expect mastery quite yet. 1st and 2nd graders will begin to solve problems on their own.” My mentor’s comments helped me to prepare appropriate activities and data collection methods for my inquiry.

I collected data in a variety of ways. The first thing I wanted to do was interview the students to see how they felt about using I-messages to resolve conflicts (Appendix A). An I-message is a statement like the following. “I feel ____, when you____, I need
you to _____.” Since I-messages are promoted school-wide, and the students are familiar with the process, I thought it would be appropriate to use this as a means of getting an idea of how students felt about facing conflicts. I interviewed each student by asking five questions directly related to the use of I-messages in school. The students were allowed to respond to the four questions by saying either no, sometimes, or yes (a lot). All of the students confessed to using I-messages in school either sometimes or a lot; Only five students felt comfortable using I-messages, while six didn’t feel comfortable at all; fifteen students believed that I-messages worked only sometimes and three said they never worked; fifteen students admitted to walking away from a conflict to avoid using an I-message and two had not. Initially, this data didn’t tell me much, except that the students overall comfort level and confidence in using I-messages was not very high.

My next step in data collection was a daily teacher checklist filled out by four adults everyday for one week (Appendix D). My mentor, two paraprofessionals, and I tallied the amount of verbal disputes, physical disputes, tattling, initiated I-messages, and heard I-messages that occurred each day during the week of February 18. These totals served as baseline data for my inquiry, and included the following results. There was a total of 16 verbal disputes, 11 physical disputes, 21 tattles, 17 I-messages initiated by an adult, and 17 I-messages used by a student that an adult witnessed. These results were gathered over a five-day school week and reflect the classroom atmosphere prior to inclusion of any conflict resolution skill building activities.

After I had interviewed the students and collected my baseline data, I began working with the class on “crunching” their conflicts during morning meeting. Their ability to break conflict situations down into three parts: how might each person be
feeling or thinking, when did the situation start to escalate, and what could have been
done to deescalate the conflict, allowed them to “go down” the conflict escalator and
complete the class sticker chart (Appendix F). Soon after, I launched our new classroom
Peace Patrol job, as well as another piece of data that would be collected and analyzed.
When on Peace Patrol, students were responsible for filling out a checklist while going
through the conflict resolution process with their peers who were having a conflict. This
checklist was comprised of four objectives; asking both students what’s wrong, having
both students use an I-message, asking both students for an idea to resolve the conflict,
and offering the students an idea to resolve the conflict. As an observer of the Peace
Patrol process, I graded the completion of the checklist with a set rubric I created on
Taskstream, an online resource for educators. The rubric had specific criteria under four
categories (Appendix E). In general, level four and three indicated a successful process
that was effective in having the students cooperate and resolve their conflict, while a
level two and one signified an unsuccessful resolution process. Depending on the
amount of conflicts the students had and the time of day they took place, the
number of completed Peace Patrol checklists I gathered over the course of two and
a half weeks varied. Out of the seventeen checklists that were filled out, eight of
them met level four criteria, four were labeled level three, two were level two, and
three were level one. Overall, more than half of the checklists were filled out with
minimal problems, which means that the students came to a solution by taking
turns expressing their feelings, using I-messages, and offering an agreement.

Another surprising occurrence took place outside of the classroom when an
ELL student from our class witnessed a conflict between two kindergartners in the
hallway. Being on Peace Patrol that day, the student ran up to the children and began going through the conflict resolution process that is represented on the Peace Patrol checklists with the students. A little confused and astonished, his ESL teacher called our room immediately to inform us of his eagerness to resolve someone else’s conflict. This incident gave me even more incentive to continue working with the students on conflict resolution skills.

After *crunching conflicts* and Peace Patrol jobs became a normal part of our routine, I brought Cookie Cruncher and Kind Heart awards into the picture. As with most positive reinforcement opportunities, the students responded well to the small prizes they could exchange their awards for. Having both awards allowed the children who didn’t find themselves in conflict situations where they couldn’t receive Conflict Cruncher awards the opportunity to also be acknowledged and awarded.

In order to obtain information that could be closely compared to my baseline data, I interviewed each student with the exact same questions from the initial interviews I held and had the teachers tally verbal disputes, physical disputes, tattling, initiated I-messages, and witnessed I-messages daily during the week of April 1st. Overall, five verbal disputes were tallied, eleven physical disputes, and twenty-four tattling incidents occurred. The adults in the room initiated ten I-messages and overheard twelve. The results were very different in comparison with the baseline data taken a month earlier. The final student interviews I administered had the following result. Thirteen students were very
comfortable using I-messages; sixteen children believed that using I-messages worked sometimes, while three believed that they always worked. In comparing the initial and final teacher checklists and student interviews, as well as, all of the other pieces of data and evidence, I was able to make some claims.

**What I Have Learned**

**Claim A:** *Students are able to identify what a conflict is and the need for resolution.*

When I asked the students to write down a conflict they had during the school year to put into our Conflict Cruncher basket, they were very willing and honest in their responses. As a whole class, the students were all very involved in the crunching process and offered creative solutions to the conflicts that were presented, which is clearly represented by the completion of the conflict escalator sticker chart during morning meeting. Also, out of the fifteen parent surveys that were returned, thirteen parents had listened to their child talk about a conflict that happened in school, which shows that the children are identifying the disputes they have during the school day. When the Peace Patrol job was introduced, I reminded the students that it was their job to look out for conflicts and to fill out the Peace Patrol checklists when they helped out in any situation. The job I gave them also served as an examination to see whether or not they were able to identify conflicts that were in need of attention and if they were comfortable enough to respond to the situation by retrieving the Peace Patrol checklist. Just a few days after the introduction of Peace Patrol, I began hearing the students call out, “we need Peace Patrol over here,” and “where are the Peace Patrol officers.” The fact that the students, on Peace Patrol or not, now responded in this manner to conflicts that arose in the classroom demonstrates that the students were well aware, or became well aware, of what a conflict
was. The continuous completion of level three and four Peace Patrol checklists over the past two months demonstrates the students’ ability to identify and address conflicts in the classroom.

**Claim B:** *Introducing and practicing conflict resolution skills in the classroom does not necessarily reduce the amount of overall conflicts that arise, but does affect the manner in which the students resolve them.*

Before I started this inquiry process, I was looking for a way to decrease the conflict level in the classroom. Once I began my research, it occurred to me that this might be a far-reaching goal. I realized that the students did have legitimate reasons to go through the “crunching” process, and having them talk through this procedure was very helpful. The students interviews reveal that after introducing and practicing conflict resolution skills in the classroom, the students became more comfortable using I-messages. The data went from five students feeling comfortable using I-messages to thirteen, and the number of students that admitted to using I-messages *a lot* on a daily basis increased as well. The teacher checklists also show a decrease from sixteen verbal disputes to five, which could mean either that the students are using more conflict resolution skills to solve disputes, therefore the adults in the room don’t notice the conflict, or that the students are not having as many conflicts during the school day. In overseeing the Peace Patrol officers “crunch” conflicts and complete level three and four checklists, I realized how civil the students are when they are faced with having to talk through their own conflicts.

**Claim C:** *Students are able to resolve their own conflicts with minimal help from an adult.* After looking through all of my observations and data, I am confident in saying
that first and second grade students are very much capable of resolving their own conflicts with little help from an adult. Just the presence of an adult seems to make a difference in how students begin to talk through their disagreements. The twelve out of seventeen Peace Patrol checklists that were effective really demonstrates how successful children can be, not only at solving their own conflicts, but helping each other settle disputes. The amount of initiated I-messages, or the number of times an adult had to tell the students to use an I-message, decreased from seventeen to ten over the course of one month, which also demonstrates the students ability to independently resolve conflicts.

**New Wonderings**

After constant observation, data analysis, and making claims, I am still left with unanswered questions and wonderings concerning conflict resolution in the classroom. Some of my new wonderings include:

- Would introducing Peace Patrol jobs and conflict crunching skills at the beginning of the school year minimize peer conflicts in the long run?

- Do Peace Patrol jobs and the process of filling out a checklist influence the way the students view the seriousness of a conflict? (This wondering stems from the reactions I got from many of the students during the Peace Patrol checklist process, which included giggling and smiling.)

- Are there any major differences or trends in the way first and second graders handle verbal and physical disputes?

**Future Practice**

The inquiry I’ve been involved with this school year has been a great learning experience. The process of researching, collecting data, and consistently making observations is a great way to understand something that is unfamiliar in the classroom setting. Realizing the potential children have in becoming independent problem solvers and their enthusiasm for helping peers solve conflicts has been an eye-opening
experience this year. In any classroom setting I am in, I will aid children in the process of conflict resolution rather than fix it for them, because I’ve learned that with little teacher assistance, students are able to solve problems. In my teaching, I will use the process of inquiry to better understand something that is confusing or frustrating, whether it involves my students, classroom environment, fellow colleagues, or my own teaching.
## Appendix A

*Student Surveys: Initial and Final*

### #1 Do you have conflicts in school?

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<th>Final</th>
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<td>never-6</td>
<td>never-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes-10</td>
<td>sometimes-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes (a lot)-3</td>
<td>yes (a lot)-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### #2 Do you use I-messages in school?

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<th>Initial</th>
<th>Final</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>never-0</td>
<td>never-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes-13</td>
<td>sometimes-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes (a lot)-6</td>
<td>yes (a lot)-8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### #3 Do you feel comfortable using I-messages?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Final</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>sometimes-8</td>
<td>sometimes-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes (very)-5</td>
<td>yes (very)-13</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### #4 Do you think using I-messages works?

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>never-3</td>
<td>never-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes-15</td>
<td>sometimes-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes (a lot)-1</td>
<td>yes (a lot)-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### #5 Do you ever walk away from conflicts because you don’t feel like using an I-message?

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>never-2</td>
<td>never-9</td>
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<tr>
<td>sometimes- -</td>
<td>sometimes- -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes (a lot)-15</td>
<td>yes (a lot)-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B
Teacher Survey

Date_______  Name____________________

1. Do you feel that the conflict level this school year has been low, moderate, or high? 
   -Please provide any reasons as to why you think the conflict level has been this way.

2. Do you feel that the students are sincere when they respond to a student who is using an I-message or another conflict resolution skill? 
   (not a lot, sometimes, most of the time)

3. Do you think the students in the class need help resolving conflicts they have? 
   (not a lot, sometimes, most of the time)

4. Do you think the students are capable of resolving their own conflicts in an appropriate and fair manner? 😊
Appendix C
Parent Survey

Dear Parents,

As you may have heard, I am completing an inquiry research project over the next couple of weeks that deals with conflict resolution in the classroom. In an attempt to better understand each student in the area of conflict resolution, I am asking you to please consider filling out the following survey. Your participation would be very useful in my research and much appreciated!
* Please note it is not necessary to mention any names.

Sincerely,
Elise Wolf

1. Do you talk to your child daily about how his/her school day went?
   - no
   - yes

   Comments:

2. Does your child talk positively about the school day?
   - never
   - rarely
   - sometimes
   - frequently
   - always

   Comments:

3. Have you and your child ever talked about a conflict that he/she had in school?
   - no
   - yes
5. Does your child have any siblings?

   no  

   yes  

   How many?  

   How old?  

6. Does your child ever have scheduled play dates?  
   (a friend comes over or your child goes to a friend’s house to play)

   no  

   yes  

   About how many over a one month period?

   1  2  3  4  5  more

Additional Comments:

Thank you for your participation!
Appendix D

Teacher Checklist

Date: _______________  Name: _______________

* Keep in mind that we’re looking for children to settle their own disputes, not eliminate conflicts all together. If you hear children settling conflicts in an acceptable manner, using either an I-message or just “talking it out”, that’s a good thing!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did I….</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Settle a verbal dispute</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(name calling, unkind words, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settle a physical dispute</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(pushing, nudging in line, fighting over an object, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a student come to me and “tattle”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(“He/she said or did….”)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate an I message</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(“You need to go and give him/her an I message…..”)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hear an I message being used by a student</td>
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</table>

If you heard students using good conflict resolution skills to settle a problem, briefly describe it below. Depending on the situation, these might include, using an I message, walking away, coming to an agreement, or telling the teacher before the conflict escalates.

Overall, how did you feel about the conflict level in the classroom today?  
(lunchtime Sue?)
### Teacher Checklist results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Verbal Dispute</th>
<th>Physical Dispute</th>
<th>Tattle</th>
<th>Initiated iMessage</th>
<th>iMessage Heard</th>
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| Total | 16 | 11 | 21 | 17 | 17 |

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Appendix E
Peace Patrol Checklist and Rubric

**Peace Patrol Checklist**

* Ask **both** students **what is wrong?**

* Ask **both** students to **use an I-message**

* Ask **both** students to **think of an agreement**

* Offer an agreement idea to the students

**Peace Patrol Rubric**

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<td>The process of completing the checklist was not effective. Students were consistently talking over each other and the teacher needed to step in.</td>
<td>The process of completing the checklist was somewhat effective, but disorganized. Students were trying to talk over each other for the duration of the time.</td>
<td>The process of completing the checklist was effective. The students listened to each other for the most part, but attempted to talk over each other at some point.</td>
<td>The process of completing the checklist was very effective in having the kids cooperate and listen to each others' responses. Students took turns talking and didn't interrupt each other.</td>
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Appendix F
Inquiry Brief

Elise Wolf

Rationale

Inquiry Rationale

My experience this year in a first and second grade multiage classroom have confirmed my belief that conflicts are inevitable at this stage of children’s social development. Although I strongly believe that conflicts are essential in developing a child’s social and emotional being, the amount and level that these conflicts have been dramatized to this school year among my group of students has made me uneasy. The children learned how to use I messages at the beginning of the year, and I strongly believe that they have an innate sense that distinguishes right from wrong, but these factors don’t always come into play when they find themselves in the middle of a conflict. There are an infinite number of factors that may affect how each child handles a conflict, but, as for appropriate reactions, there isn’t as broad a range to work with.

Throughout the year, I have noticed students quarreling over spots in line, computers, pencils, crayons, markers, chairs, books, toys, and even playmates. You name it; they fought over it. These conflicts consumed a great deal of my time and energy, and shifted my focus from teaching successful lessons to helping students resolve a conflict. Some of the consequences included loss of valuable learning time, unfinished work, and hurt feelings. As a result of these observations, I became interested in seeing how I could lessen the amount of time and effort I put into resolving student conflicts and increase overall student effort in this process.

Context

In a multiage classroom students are already working at two entirely different grade levels. Both my first and second grade students exhibit a very wide range of academic abilities at their grade level, which makes the spectrum even wider. This is also true of the social and emotional developmental stage they are at. Although I’ve seen some students take huge strides in these particular areas, there are still some that display behavior that suggests otherwise. I strongly believe that, developmentally, the students in my classroom are at a point where they have a hard time controlling their emotions in “tougher” social situations. The students have responded well in the past to direct communication from the teacher in dealing with conflicts when they arise, and show an understanding of appropriate conflict resolution skills, so I am hoping that I can help bring them to the next stage; fairly resolving conflicts on their own.

Question
How will introducing and practicing conflict resolution skills with the whole class affect the way certain students cope with conflicts that arise in the classroom?

Sub questions

What activities will truly inspire these students to use appropriate strategies when resolving conflicts?

Will using peer mediation skills help the students “see” things from a different perspective when they are involved in a conflict?

Will introducing and practicing appropriate conflict resolution skills change the way students react to conflict at all?

Will rewarding students for using kind words/actions and good conflict resolution skills affect the classroom atmosphere in terms of conflict level at all?

Method

Before introducing any inquiry related activities to the class, I will interview each child on conflict resolution and have a week-long checklist observation completed by the adults in the room. Next, I will be working with the whole class during morning meeting sessions to introduce and practice using conflict resolution skills. Conflicts we will address will come straight from the students and myself in hopes of creating a more meaningful lesson. During these discussions we will be using a conflict escalator to help the students visualize the idea that conflicts can escalate and deescalate. Further into my inquiry, I will introduce a new Busy Bee job called the Peace Patroller. After modeling this job to the class, every day students will rotate through this job and learn to make sure the needs of each student in a conflict are being met, or that each student explains his/her position and they come to a peaceful resolution. We will continue working on individual conflicts during morning meeting and peace patrol jobs, while adults in the room, including myself, are still completing weekly checklists. Towards the end of my inquiry, I will begin giving out kind heart and star awards. Kind heart awards will be given out to students who are caught using kind words/actions, and star awards can be given to students who resolve conflicts in an appropriate manner (STAR= Stop, Think, Act, React).

Data Collection

- Initial student interviews and teacher surveys
- Daily reflection on lessons and responses from students (journal writing)
- Weekly teacher checklists
- Discussions with peers about daily activities and outcomes
- Final student interviews and teacher surveys

Timeline:
**Week of February 11**
- Interview children during morning work
  - questions found on Student Interview sheet #1

**Week of February 18**
- Provide adults (Carrie, Sue, Cheryl) with Teacher Checklist #1
  - ask to complete checklist daily for entire week
- Finish up student interviews

**Week of February 25 - March 3**
- Introduce Conflict Escalator to whole class during morning meeting
  - present a personal conflict
  - work with students to complete escalator graph
  - have students write down one conflict to add to conflict bin
  - explain that conflict bin can be added to any time there is a conflict
  - pull and complete one conflict escalator activity every morning for week
  - remind students of the conflict escalator daily when conflicts arise
  - star sticker on escalator graph when class works nicely to complete
- Have adults complete Teacher Checklist two-three times a week

**Week of March 17 - March 24**
- Introduce Peace Patroller Busy Bee during morning meeting
  - explain and model steps that are to be taken by Peace Patrollers
  - stress the importance of the job
- Continue Conflict Escalator work on available mornings
- Have adults complete Teacher Checklist two-three times a week
- Introduce Kind Heart awards and Star Awards (*keep track of who receives them)
  - Kind Heart awards can be given by any adult in the classroom to any child who used kind words/actions
  - Star awards are given to children who resolved conflicts in an appropriate manner. (Star = Stop, Think, Act, React)

**Week of April 1**
- Have adults complete Checklist daily for entire week
- Administer Final Student Interviews during morning work
- Begin data analysis

**Week of April 7**
- Finish data analysis
- Write first draft of Inquiry paper

**Week of April 14**
- Write final draft
- Plan/prepare for final presentation
Elise Wolf
Annotated Bibliography


This book pinpoints certain ideas and activities I’ve thought about implementing in the classroom to experiment with during my inquiry project. It talks about how peer mediation has proven to be very useful in schools, and what sorts of things the teacher should be looking for and doing when using peer mediation programs. I am using this resource to help me introduce a “Peace Patrol” busy bee job in the classroom to make sure I touch on the basic social and moral problem-solving skills including perspective taking, brainstorming alternative solutions, evaluating solutions, and implementing a plan. I will talk about each of these skills when I introduce the job, so that the children may use the options when it’s their turn to be on Peace Patrol.


I’m using this resource differently than the others by allowing it to help me understand the nature and reasoning behind children’s behavior. It talks a lot about how children are often confronted with social problems because of the need to collaborate and work together toward an outcome. These types of statements force me to think about why I pair certain students together to complete activities and made me realize that partner work in my classroom is very important for the students that I’m working with in letting them work on conflict resolution skills. Throughout my inquiry, I’ll make an effort to include group/partner work in my lessons.


This source was very interesting to read, and provided a helpful overview of possible conflict resolution activities to implement in the classroom. The article first made the need for conflict resolution skills apparent by providing statistics on bullying, as well as stats on depression and mental health issues that result from bullying in schools. After the article talked about how many students lack the vocabulary and emotional awareness necessary to resolve conflicts, it summarized a study done by an educational center in Philadelphia (Previous Peace Center) that gave direct instruction in conflict resolution to a group of kindergarten and first grade students. Some of the activities the article described included a verbal check-in, which is a time that allows students to express their feelings during the day, a peaceful being, which is a life-size silhouette cutout that the students write examples of positive social behaviors on, a conflict resolution circle, which is a plastic ring the students hold onto when resolving conflicts, and peace journals, which gave students the opportunity to draw pictures.
portraying peaceful beings. Out of all the above methods, I really liked the idea of a conflict resolution circle, because it can really serve as a tangible reminder of the conflict resolution skills the students are learning. I think I might try this out in my own classroom.


This book is an excellent resource for me because a lot of the philosophies surrounding community, student choice, and teacher control are congruent with the way our classroom is run. Kohn emphasizes how crucial conflict is to student learning and growth. One way he does this is by discussing how some teachers go out of their way to highlight, and even create conflict situations where kids have to think/feel their way out. This is very similar to what I plan on doing in my inquiry. I also think reading this resource is beneficial to me because it makes me comfortable with the fact that conflict is inevitable and it helps students become active participants in their own social and ethical development. As a class, we will be highlighting conflict situations and working our way through them to solve them in a reasonable manner.


This website is compiled of very useful resources for educators. It has links to research based sites as well as teachers’ ideas and activities in science, social studies, math, and language arts instruction. I will use this website for its Classroom Management and Discipline, Character Ed and Anti-Bullying, and Just For the New Teacher sections, which feature an array of ideas and tips associated with conflict resolution in the classroom.


This was a very interesting reading that focused on cultural literacy. It talks about a first grade teacher who brought in a variety of literature that focused on social issues to read to her class, which was very much used to only hearing stories with happy endings. In introducing these stories, her students began to expand their understandings of the purposes of literacy and see how literature relates to their interactions with others. After reading over this source, I would like to find some books that will ignite my students thinking and understanding of tough social issues. After reading these, the class can discuss ways to resolve the conflicts.

This training session was a really great experience for me and the other two interns who attended, because we get to hear tons of new ideas and ways of thinking about things from both new and experienced teachers. Since the topic was conflict resolution in the classroom, my mentor thought it would be very beneficial for me to go and listen to how other teachers deal with conflict in their classrooms. The overall gist of the morning session I attended was that conflict at the elementary level is inevitable and that community building is one of the most important steps one can take to eliminate the need for constant monitoring of these conflicts. Community building creates a level of comfort in the classroom that can foster social skills in younger children, which can then help enhance conflict resolution skills. An activity that was most interesting to me was when the group brainstormed a list of initial thoughts when hearing the word conflict. We all agreed that the majority of the words on our brainstorming list were negative at first glance, but when we went through each of them, we realized that most of them could be both positive and negative. In general, this workshop made me realize that there is no correct or ideal way to deal with conflict in the classroom, nor is conflict always a bad thing; it helps students explore their feelings, come to mutual understandings, and can teach them essential social skills they will need for life. I plan on taking the things I learned at this conference with me into the classroom and really embracing the community building activities we already do in our classroom, because I know it’s directly related to my inquiry.


This website was recommended by my mentor, and it posts newsletters and articles monthly that are dedicated to teacher concerns. There is an entire collection of articles that surround the topic of conflict management, including Beyond Coping: Helping a Child Who Struggles With Anger, Teaching Children To Care, Seeing the “Inflexible-Explosive Child” in a New Light, and tons more. Reading these each month gives me new ideas and ways of thinking about the children who are consistently involved in conflicts.


This book talks about the effects of childhood bullying, teasing, and violence and ways to prevent and/or deal with it. It discusses numerous studies that were done at different grade levels and how those played out. I believe that the idea of teasing and violence goes hand in hand with my inquiry project and I particularly like this resource because it has an entire section on using stories and drama to increase awareness of these occurrences in school. As part of my inquiry project, I’d like to incorporate literature and drama to increase my students’ awareness and understanding, and this resource has proven to be very helpful.

This one-page summary of “peace-making” strategies, which was put together by a focus group of teachers from early childhood programs and elementary schools, was really a great find. They emphasized the need for *consistency* in the school, home, and community when sending the message of respect and kindness in order to make learning more meaningful for children, as well as good *communication* between the school and families. Next, the article describes classroom strategies, which include *letting children in on the secret*, a *class mission statement*, *Peace Tables*, and a *Peace Patrol*. I liked the idea of *letting children in on the secret*, which would be informing the students that you are purposely providing them with limited materials so that they can practice sharing. I also like the suggestion of having a *Peace Patrol* job that allows the students to help each other identify and solve problems during a conflict, and I plan on using it as part of my inquiry.