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February 17, 2011

Statement of Purpose

**Classroom Conflict Resolution Skills For Teachers:**

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Student conflict is a daily part of classroom life. From squabbles over toys and “who hit who” in primary school to arguments about issues and beliefs in secondary, conflict is an inevitable part of student interaction. However, conflict does not have to end in damaged relationships and hurt feelings. It can be resolved using rational approaches and, in some instances, be used as a constructive method for learning (Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management, 1999; Martin, 2009). Conflict resolution skills are an important part of any teacher’s toolbox and allow educators to maintain peace and order in their classrooms and, when applicable, transform conflict into learning opportunities. This Classroom Conflict Resolution Skills for Teachers unit aims to impart such skills to educators.

The amount of time a teacher spends handling student conflict each day can vary by student age, class size, and school environment. Whether it is very little or, seemingly, every minute, classroom conflict can waste precious time and sometimes be physically dangerous for students and teachers. The inability to effectively deal with classroom conflict can have (at least) two negative consequences. First, it can result in negativity between and among classmates and significant loss of teaching time. Second, the unprepared educator may miss a valuable opportunity to use the conflict constructively as an educational tool. While conflict resolution is increasingly a part of teacher training curricula, is not yet universal (Association for Conflict Resolution, 2007; Gerard, 1996). An introduction to or refresher on the basics of conflict resolution will enable teachers to better handle disagreement in their classrooms and in their lives as a whole.

Educators are held to high standards due to their influence over the hearts and minds of our children and the importance of the work they do. The ability to rationally address and mitigate conflict between students and to do the same in their personal lives fits in well with teachers’ positions as citizens of high esteem. Likewise, a greater understanding of the complexities of conflict resolution align with several guidelines of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; specifically, that “Teachers Have an Understanding of How Students Develop and Learn,” “Teachers' Mission Extends Beyond Developing the Cognitive Capacity of Their Students,” and “Teachers Call on Multiple Methods to Meet Their Goals” (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2002).

Despite the complex nature of conflict and the sometimes apparent obstinacy of the conflicting players, each conflict can be rationally dissected and resolved to the general satisfaction of all involved. In this way, conflict resolution skills can be taught to educators as a linear process through which they identify, assess, prioritize, and resolve clashes and disagreements in the classroom (Association for Conflict Resolution, 2007). And, while these skills may be more useful to teachers whose subjects are prone to debate and argument, conflict occurs in every classroom, regardless of subject. When it does, it is crucial that the teacher deal with it effectively, not only for resolving the issue at hand, but also for setting an example to her students that there are practical ways of addressing differences.

From this unit, teachers will learn how to recognize the different types of conflict, how to dissect conflict into manageable components, and how to resolve conflicts through listening and negotiation. By the end of the unit, each teacher should be able to demonstrate effective conflict resolution skills through mock practice.

**References**

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