

Celebrating 35 Years of Head Start

# HEAD START® BULLETIN

ENHANCING HEAD START COMMUNICATION



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ★ Administration for Children and Families ★ Administration on Children, Youth and Families

July 2000

Issue No. 68

## Conflict Management

By Kathryn Fernandez



**M**ost of us think of conflict as a bad thing: shouting, put-downs, hurt feelings, tears. No wonder most of us go out of our way to avoid it.

But in thinking this way, we're often confusing conflict with aggression and hostility. The fact is that most conflicts are simple disagreements that are easily resolved by talking. Or perhaps they're not even worth talking about — we just move on.

This issue of the *Head Start Bulletin* reviews conflict management skills and illustrates how they can be used effectively in those situations where conflict can be prevented or resolved in a mutually satisfying way. The importance of conflict management in Head Start, and how it is reflected in the Program Performance Standards, are also discussed.

Disagreement, or conflict, is a fact of life. We interact daily with people who have their own perceptions, beliefs, cultures, and values — and we don't always see “eye to eye” with each other. Conflict is thus a natural part of human relationships.

Conflict also plays an important role in child development. To get along with other children, as well as with adults, children must learn to understand and control their emotions, express themselves clearly, understand another person's per-

spective, and negotiate compromises. These are skills they acquire as they interact with their peers and learn to resolve for themselves the conflicts that inevitably arise. Parents and caregivers can help by modeling constructive behavior and by setting the example that a disagreement can be dealt with respectfully and in a positive and friendly manner.

Conflict management skills also benefit parents and caregivers in their interactions with their peers, with family and community members, and with each other.

Sometimes conflict exists around “non-negotiable” issues. The child jumping from the top of the jungle gym will not be happy with the staff member who puts an end to that game — but safety issues are non-negotiable. While this and other such situations may create a great deal of conflict, they are unlikely to be resolved to the mutual satisfaction of all parties. Not all conflicts can be resolved through discussion or by negotiating a “win-win” solution.

While strong leadership is an essential element of a strong Head Start program, there are numerous instances where conflict management techniques can be used to prevent or resolve disagreements. Effective leaders often see conflict as a source of vitality — bringing diverse views to the table can lead to new and creative ways of approaching tasks and problem solving. Conflict presents opportunity for change and growth, and can thus be a positive and constructive experience.

Understanding the elements of conflict and developing skills to manage and resolve conflict effectively will help us all to weather these times of change, and the stress that change often brings.

*Kathryn Fernandez is a 1999–2000 Head Start Fellow in the Head Start Bureau's Training and Technical Assistance Branch.*

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The Head Start Bulletin is published six times a year by the Head Start Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Department of Health and Human Services.

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The Bulletin is a service of the Head Start Bureau’s Training and Technical Assistance Branch. Its purpose is to enhance communication among the Head Start Bureau, Head Start programs, and interested national, regional, and state organizations and agencies.

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The Head Start Bulletin is prepared under Contract No. 105-96-2010 with PaL-Tech, Inc.

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# Conflict Resolution: Understanding The Elements

By Kathryn Fernandez

**T**o manage conflict effectively, we must first understand what conflict is. Once we have that understanding, we can gain the knowledge and skills to prevent conflict or deal with it effectively when it arises.

This article provides a brief overview of conflict and strategies for: (1) preventing conflict; (2) assessing and resolving conflict; and (3) negotiating a “win-win” solution. Much of the information has been excerpted from the Head Start “Moving Ahead” Skills and Competency-Based Training Program. Other articles in this issue of the *Bulletin* provide more detail on these issues; the Resources section lists sources of additional information.

## What is conflict?

Conflict can be viewed as a difference in perspectives: what you see, think, feel, and believe may be different from what I see, think, feel, and believe. Conflict is thus a part of all human interaction, and it can have a positive influence. We can learn from one another and benefit from a variety of perspectives on issues. In terms of our Head Start programs, the diversity of perspectives within each center helps to generate ideas, facilitate change, and generally make the program more responsive to the needs of children and families. If managed wisely, conflict is a source of vitality and an opportunity for positive change.

The most positive experiences in managing conflict require a safe and supportive organizational climate in which relationships are based on trust and mutual respect. Only then can people feel comfortable and “safe” in expressing differences of opinions and working toward a “win-win” resolution for everyone.

## Creating a Supportive Environment

To cultivate a supportive environment in which people feel free to disagree and are encouraged to work constructively toward a mutually acceptable compromise, try the following:

- **Inspire with insights, reminders, and maxims** — Post phrases, quotations, and cartoons as reminders of good conflict resolution habits wherever staff members gather; distribute relevant articles found in newspapers and magazines.
- **Encourage “Skill of the Month” activity** — Since new behavior is reinforced when everyone focuses on it at the same time, staff can select one specific conflict resolution skill to work on each month, such as paraphrasing, calming down, brainstorming, naming one’s feelings, or responding to anger or frustration.
- **Encourage reflection** — Encourage individuals to reflect on their personal behavior in private journals.
- **Open up discussions** — Supply staff with a video on personnel management, and facilitate a follow-up discussion on conflict

(see page 4)

## Conflicts Have Value

Conflicts have value in a number of ways. They:

- **Focus attention on problems that have to be solved.** Conflicts energize and motivate us to solve our problems.
- **Clarify what you care about, are committed to, and value.** You only disagree over wants and goals you value. And you argue much more frequently and intensely with people you value or care about.
- **Help you understand who the other person is and what his or her values are.** Conflicts clarify the identities of your friends, co-workers, and acquaintances.
- **Clarify how you need to change.** Conflicts clarify and highlight patterns of behavior that are dysfunctional.
- **Strengthen relationships by increasing your confidence that you can resolve your disagreements.** Every time a serious conflict is resolved constructively, the relationship becomes less fragile and more able to withstand crises and problems.
- **Keep the relationship clear of irritations and resentments so positive feelings can be experienced fully.** A good conflict may do a lot to resolve the small tensions of interacting with others.
- **Release emotions that, if kept inside, make us physically and mentally sick.** Addressing a conflict a day keeps depression away!
- **Add fun, enjoyment, excitement, and variety to your life.** Being in a conflict reduces boredom, gives you new goals, motivates you to take action, and stimulates interest.

*Adapted from David Johnson and Roger T. Johnson’s article “Peacemakers: Teaching Students to Resolve Their Own and Schoolmates’ Conflicts” published in the February 1996 issue of Children.*

## Definitions of Key Terms

**Collaboration:** A desire or need to create or discover something new, while thinking and working with others. It is a process of joint decision making among parties. It involves: different views and perspectives, shared goals, building new shared understandings, and the creation of a new value or product. Collaborations may address a single issue or a short-term concern.

**Conflict:** A situation where people on the same team have different overall goals.

**Conflict Resolution:** A process to resolve disputes between people with different interests. This resolution process can have constructive consequences if the parties air their different interests, make trade-offs, and reach a settlement that satisfies the essential needs of each.

**Goal:** A desired future condition, including measurable end results, to be accomplished within specified time limits.

**Mediation:** A process through which a third party assists the disputants in finding a mutually acceptable solution. In mediation, the role of the third party is to assist disputants in considering or exploring all the parameters of a conflict (interests, facts, possible solutions). The mediator is not authorized to impose a solution upon the parties; rather the mediator uses a series of joint and confidential private meetings to help the parties determine whether a set of solutions exists to which each party can say yes.

**Negotiation:** Direct talk among the parties about a conflict, conducted with the goal of achieving a resolution. The distinguishing characteristic is that the talk involves the parties themselves without the direct assistance of a third party.

**Process:** A series of actions by which something is produced. A set of interrelated activities that is characterized by receiving inputs and adding value to produce a desired output.

resolution topics, such as conflict de-escalation techniques, family origins of conflict styles, and community mediation resources.

- **Model proper behavior** — Be a good model for attitudes or skills you support before suggesting others adopt these behaviors. Nothing is more persuasive to staff than your own commitment to, and personal observance of, positive communication and conflict management skills.
- **Start small** — “People don’t resist change. . . they resist being changed.” Allow for different levels of readiness and acceptance of this shift in thinking. Set the stage for resolving conflict in every possible way, but allow people to find their own way in their own time.
- **Influence the organization** — Consider how you might exert influence on resolving conflicts at organizational levels:
  - **Build in rewards and punishments** — What type of disputing behavior gets rewarded by your program? Are those who sweep problems under the rug until they spill over into everyone’s work ever helped to see the effects of their “avoidance”? Do those who “name” a problem get treated as if they created the problem instead of appreciated for their courage in bringing it to the surface?
  - **Look at who you hire** — Does the program hire problem solvers? How well do job candidates understand the nature of conflict, and can they demonstrate experience working cooperatively with others to solve problems?

Could your job descriptions be written to include a desire for abilities such as listening, flexibility, priority setting, and handling emotions, along with other related skills?

- **Finally, plan for “outbreaks”**— Are you prepared to handle simmering staff tensions that could erupt? What support can you count on? How can you prevent future eruptions? Since we learn best through experience, a crisis can be a unique learning opportunity for everyone when it is handled constructively.

## Conflict-Prevention Skills

While conflict can be a positive influence, it is not necessarily something that people want to face every day. As the saying goes, too much of a good thing is — well, too much! The following skills can help you *prevent* conflict or assist you and your team in *managing* or *resolving* conflict:

- Help the team focus on the task and stay on track.
- Be mindful of other people’s styles.
- Make suggestions on how to proceed.
- Help negotiate.
- Ask questions to clarify expectations, issues, and possible directions to take.
- Help find needed resources.
- Provide constructive feedback.
- Share observations.
- Coach staff.
- Help team members plan how to implement their agreement.
- Help team members evaluate their efforts and make needed changes.

Additional ways of preventing or managing conflict include:

- Setting ground rules for discussion.
- Teaching reflective listening skills to team members.
- Teaching mediation skills.

## Separating Interests from Positions

One of the most important steps people can take in learning to prevent or resolve conflicts is to become aware of and sensitive to the difference between *interests* and *positions*. *Interests* are the needs, concerns, and values that motivate each person. They represent *why* a person wants something, and they get at underlying issues. *Positions* are the actions a person will take to meet his or her needs and achieve a desired *outcome*.

The ability to separate interests from positions is key to resolving conflict for these reasons:

- Focusing on positions often creates a competitive, even combative, struggle in which each party is determined to win.
- Separating interests from positions assists parties in focusing on the underlying issues rather than dealing with ideological or situational reactions.
- Focusing on interests rather than positions increases communication and the possibility of agreement.
- Identifying interests requires taking a step in defining and analyzing the conflict: such a step is necessary to reach a resolution.

### Tips for Separating Interests from Positions

- Change your focus.

- Clearly state your interests rather than your position.
- Ask questions to elicit and clarify the other parties' interests—the needs, concerns, and values that motivate their position.
- Express your understanding of the vision or purpose of the group.

In Head Start, we have some fundamental common interests and values related to the well-being of children and families. Keeping our “eyes on the prize” can often help us to get past positions and back to the fundamental interests at stake.

## Reaching a “Win-Win” Solution

Traditional methods of negotiation—holding discussions to arrive at a compromise that is acceptable to everyone—are based on power relations in which one party wins and another loses. The “win-win” strategy involves collaboration and negotiation. It is based on interests rather than positions. It can lead to agreements that satisfy all parties.

Use these principles to reach a “win-win” solution:

- View participants as problem solvers.
- Separate the people from the problem.
- Be soft on the people, hard on the problem.
- Focus on interests, not on positions or the bottom line.
- Help participants create multiple options for mutual gain.

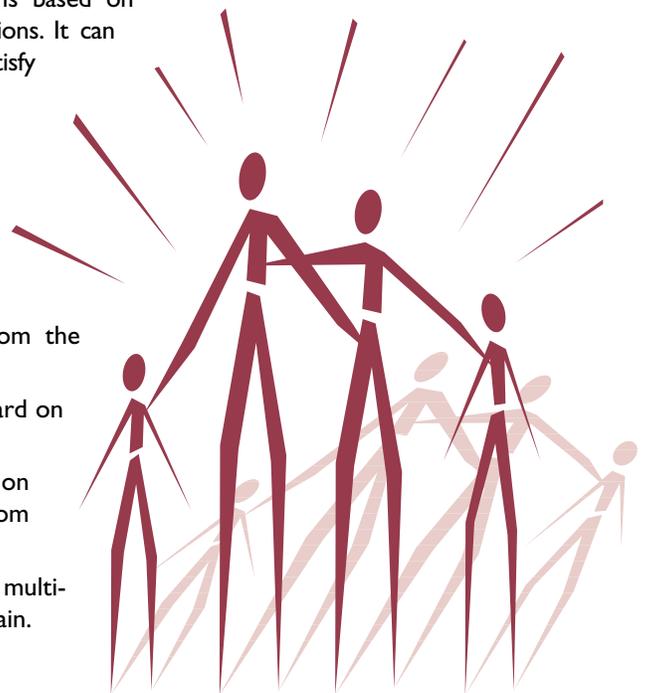
- Use objective criteria.
- Reason and be open to reason; yield to principles, not to pressure.

## Assessing and Resolving Conflicts: A Sequential Process

Like most problem-solving processes, the conflict management process can be broken down into steps. The Head Start *Moving Ahead* training program identifies a six-step sequential process for assessing and resolving conflicts:

**Stage 1 — Define the Problem:** Clearly define the nature of the conflict and the fundamental issues. Show appreciation for what is working well.

**Stage 2 — Clarify the Needs:** Clearly identify the needs of everyone involved. By taking everyone’s perspectives into account, you are likely



## Creating a “Win-Win” Problem-Solving Environment

These days, more and more people are spending a majority of their time at work. And since many people end up spending as much time with their co-workers as they do with their families, the opportunity to work in a supportive environment that encourages growth is invaluable.

One way that people grow is through overcoming challenges and developing good problem-solving skills. And if work environments support new ideas and encourage constructive criticism in an open, blame-free setting, problem-solving skills are encouraged and nurtured. As leaders and professionals, we can facilitate and support a “win-win” problem-solving workplace by agreeing on specific ground rules and helping each other to follow them.

Ground rules can be simple or elaborate, depending on the needs of the group. At a minimum, your rules should include the following:

- Look for and highlight good points.
- Abstain from put-downs.
- Listen. Do not interrupt each other. Do not speak too long or too often.
- Volunteer yourself only.
- Agree on confidentiality, when necessary.

Expect the group to discuss issues and find resolutions. Ask every member of the group to support the following approach:

- Agree to be active listeners.
- Give every participant time to explain the challenge as she or he perceives it.
- Allow emotions to be expressed in a non-violent manner.
- Agree to be open to new ideas and flexible to creative solutions.
- Find a solution that addresses the consensus of the group.

Attempts to create a work environment that fosters “win-win” problem-solving will reduce group apathy and inspire creative solutions. The group will see opportunities rather than problems.

to develop solutions that benefit everyone.

**Stage 3** — Generate Possible Options: Generate a range of possible solutions. This will help everyone involved analyze the plausibility of different options and their potential viability.

**Stage 4** — Evaluate Proposed Options: Develop criteria that can be used to examine and evaluate each option. Example of questions: Do all members understand the solution? Is it realistic? Are all members of the team committed to the idea? What could go wrong? What are the potential benefits?

**Stage 5** — Develop an Action Plan: Choose an effective solution, ask these questions to develop an action plan:

- What small steps can the team take to achieve the best results?
- Who will take the lead for each step? Who else will be involved?
- What is the time frame for each step?
- What criteria will be used to evaluate the plan's effectiveness?

**Stage 6** — Develop a Contingency Plan: Develop a written contingency plan in advance in case you encounter unforeseen circumstances in implementing the action plan.

While each conflict is unique, this basic framework can make the process of understanding and resolving the conflicts much easier.

Moving toward understanding conflict and using it to increase personal and workplace growth are the first steps to seeing conflict with insight and perspective. As educators and adminis-

trators, we need to step out of old beliefs, ideas, and habits and see with new eyes. Using our new-found conflict resolution skills, we can identify different types of conflict, examine and better understand them, and find a “win-win” solution for everyone involved.

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# What Is Mediation?

By Kathryn Fernandez

**Mediation is the process of resolving disputes and conflicts with the help of a neutral third party, a mediator, who facilitates the process. It allows individuals to bring their problem to the mediation table in order to cooperatively work out their differences. The goal of mediation is not to determine guilt or innocence, but rather to work out differences constructively.**

While mediation programs and mediators may differ in their approach, most use the same basic process.

## Mediation Process

### → Step I: Introduction and Ground Rules

*In this first phase, parties demonstrate a willingness to solve the problem and agree to follow certain ground rules, such as:*

- Be truthful and sincere.
- Listen (without interruption) as each party speaks.
- Show respect. Use language that clarifies but does not blame.
- Emphasize the importance of confidentiality.

### → Step II: Discussion

*During the discussion phase, disputing parties:*

- Share their perceptions about what happened and their feelings about the conflict.
- Brainstorm possible solutions.
- Discuss what they would do differently in similar situations.
- Explore solutions that are “win-win.”
- Reach agreement on a “win-win” resolution to the dispute.

### → Step III: Closure

*During closure, the mediator:*

- Congratulates disputing parties on their efforts.
- Reminds them of the significance of honoring their agreement.
- Reiterates the vision of the group or program.

## Benefits of Mediation

Although no conflict resolution process guarantees resolution, there are several benefits to mediation:

- It is less expensive than litigation.
- It usually facilitates rapid resolution.
- It can address power imbalances by having a third party observe and assist in the exchange of information.
- Participants are usually satisfied with the process and the results.
- There is a high rate of compliance when a mediator is used.

Mediation offers parents, directors, and administrators a model for promoting people's abilities to make decisions about their lives, for fostering respect and cooperation, and for encouraging the use of fairness rather than power in decision making.

## Guiding Principles for Conflict Resolution

*The following is a list of guiding principles for conflict resolution. This list is not exhaustive, nor are the items listed in order of importance.*

- Empowerment
- Cultural competence
- Collaboration
- Respect
- Infusion of skills to all stakeholders and others within community
- Systems approach/worldview
- Learning community
- Upstreaming — solving problems closest to source of differences
- Community ownership
- Community partnerships

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# Conflict Management and Program Performance Standards

By Frankie Hoover Gibson

Shared decision making is an essential element in all Head Start programs and must be consistently practiced. Because shared decision making is the basis of Program Governance and requires ongoing work and commitment, it is important that all staff and parents, the governing body, and the Policy Council/Committee (policy group) understand its importance and function.

In the Program Performance Standards, Program Governance (1304.50) is the first part of the Program Design and Management section. The Program Governance structure exists in a Head Start program to support the delivery of quality services to children and families and to support the meaningful role of parents in shared decision making.

The governing body and the policy group, working with management staff, are responsible for program planning and development; they also provide guidance and oversight during implementation. Many opportunities to discuss issues arise during joint training, regularly scheduled business meetings, and frequent committee meetings. When ideas are exchanged, people don't always agree. In fact, conflicts can arise that seem insurmountable. For these times, it is important to have dispute resolution procedures in place.

## **Performance Standard 1304.50(h): Internal Dispute Resolution.**

*Each grantee and delegate agency and Policy Council or Policy Committee jointly must establish written procedures for resolving internal disputes, including impasse procedures, between the governing body and policy group.*

**Guidance:** The governing body and relevant policy group of each grantee or delegate agency have the responsibility for writing and following their own procedures for resolving internal disputes. It is important to develop and formally adopt these procedures on a proactive basis. Therefore, agencies should:

- Consider using community resources to assist in developing resolution procedures and in resolving disputes;
- Set procedures for seeking outside assistance from community-based organizations for the negotiation, mediation, or arbitration of disputes that threaten to disrupt services to children and families; and
- Ensure that new policy group members are made aware of the process.

Some examples of when written dispute resolution procedures may be needed:

- The Policy Council voted to approve the hiring of Head Start Director A. The governing body voted to approve the hiring of Head Start Director B.
- The management staff has proposed changing a portion of the home-based option of the program to center-based. The policy group approved this recommendation. The governing body disapproved it.
- The grantee's management staff proposed delegating a portion of the program to another agency in the community to expand service area coverage. The Policy Council rejected this recommendation. The governing body approved it.

- The governing body has proposed a new policy group composition and procedures for electing the parent representatives and selecting the community representatives. The current policy group does not agree.
- The governing body and the policy group reviewed the previous procedures for implementing shared decision making. The policy group requested additional responsibilities for itself. The governing body does not agree.
- The governing body and the policy group reviewed the personnel manual used for staff in all of the agency's programs. The policy group recommended several additions for Head Start staff. The governing body wants all staff to be under the exact same manual.

Your program's written internal dispute resolution procedures should be reviewed and discussed annually by the governing body and the Policy Council/Committee. If there is no written procedure currently in place, the governing body and the relevant policy group are required to develop one. Using community resources, or even an outside consultant with expertise in this area, to facilitate the development is possible. Always remember that open dialogue during the process will help ensure that all involved parties feel responsible for the successful development of internal dispute resolution procedures. When the governing body and Policy Council/Committee jointly develop a resolution process, it often lessens the likelihood of ever needing to put the procedure in motion. The more opportunities that the governing body and the policy group have to interact and share ideas and a common vision, the less likelihood that there will

be disagreement on final decisions affecting the program. When there is an issue where the two groups disagree, it can be much easier to resolve if they are familiar with each other.

Ongoing training is required for policy groups. Including governing body members whenever possible is another strategy to help the two groups communicate. Is your program using the video-based training package *Linking Our Voices*, and the training guide *Fostering Program Governance* as baseline training? Contact your Quality Improvement Center (QIC) for additional resources and ideas from other programs on what and how to develop an internal dispute resolution procedure.

Remember that ongoing, open communication among all parties with an interest in creating a successful Head Start program is an essential ingredient for providing quality services to all children and families!

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# Lessons Learned

The following list offers helpful ideas to Head Start programs for avoiding unnecessary conflicts that could lead to formal mediation:

## Head Start Director

- Don't hide issues, weaknesses, or problems. Put issues "on the table" for honest discussion and problem solving.
- Learn to agree to disagree. We don't all have to think alike.
- Don't shy away from dealing with difficult or unpopular personnel issues and decisions.
- Continue to discuss problems and resolutions. Don't pretend the incidents didn't happen.
- The Board of Directors (governing body) and Executive Director can't wait until there is a crisis to get involved. There must be regular communication and support among these staff members.
- Be aware that the community will have its own perspective, and be prepared to answer the public's questions about the conflict.
- Separate friendships from business decisions. This applies to parents, Policy Council members, and staff.
- Head Start dynamics are changing. Don't continue to do things just because they have always been done that way. Be willing to take an honest look at procedures, keep what is working, and change what is not.
- Going along with demands or needs that really are not crucial may help to show "good faith."
- An "outsider" coming in to assist with conflict resolution is only helpful when he or she gets to the root of the problem and the underlying issues that people may not be discussing.
- Determine the philosophy of the grantee and the program regarding parent involvement and the Policy

Council. Do their actions match their philosophy?

- Be clear about the role of the Policy Council and Parent Committees. Provide thorough, ongoing, formal, and informal training. Be willing to revisit procedures.
- Know the regulations.

## Policy Council Chair/ Governing Body Chair

- Listen to what is being said by all parties.
- Set up ground rules for handling conflict (in bylaws or standing rules).
- Communicate any way possible: one-on-one or through a third party, if necessary. If you are not being heard, sometimes it's easier to put it in writing.
- Have patience
- Talk to your Board/Council and examine the issues. Ask: Have we started talking about the real issues yet (the ones that are tucked away), or are we still peeling away layers of minor issues?
- Keep out of "fight mode." Sort out the issues that are important to all parties and decide which are priorities. Agree on an overall goal—what's really important.

## During Mediation

- Make a list of your desired outcomes.
- Sit and talk and avoid yelling.
- Seek common ground with the other party.
- Listen and validate the other party's issues. It may not be an issue for you, but if it's an issue for anyone it needs to be dealt with.

## After Conflict Resolution

- Keep lines of communication open.
- Take small steps — don't overdo it.
- Work closely with the other party.
- Ask questions or admit it if you don't understand something.
- Don't be scared to say something even if feelings get hurt. Talk it out. Problem solve.
- Solve one problem at a time.
- Take time off.

## Executive Director

- Miscommunication and misperceptions among Head Start staff can arise from many different sources.
- Sometimes a crisis is the only way to accomplish meaningful change.
- Parent involvement must be a way of thinking and acting, not simply conforming to regulations.

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*This article is reprinted with some modification from the Spring 1997 issue of the Head Start Bulletin on Managing Change/Managing Conflict.*



# Following the Sun: An Adventure in Future Search and Appreciative Inquiry

By Linda Maslowski & David Nelson

*Have you ever noticed while driving past a field of sunflowers that all the large blooms face the same direction?*

If you took a day to watch, the field of yellow and black blooms would follow the sun as it travels across the summer sky. This phenomenon is called the heliotropic principle: plants turn to face their source of light and energy.

Human organizations and groups operate in a similar fashion. Unlike machines that can be programmed to ignore the environment, people and organi-

zations are influenced by where they direct their attention. This is one of the principles that Future Search and Appreciative Inquiry share. When groups seek to grow through positive experiences, the process and the results reflect a proactive approach.

Both Future Search and Appreciative Inquiry are participatory change models committed to relationship building and results planning. Both also focus on planning for the future, not problem-solving for the present.

These models were used in organizing a three-day Child Care Partnership Forum, which was sponsored by the Washington Head Start-State Collaboration Office to continue efforts to achieve quality, affordable, accessible child care in the state. Six community teams, each representing one of the state's districts, sent leaders from stakeholder groups that included Head Start, child care, subsidies, licensing, resource and referral, and local health jurisdictions. A comparable group representing state agencies also participated in the gathering. All teams were at various stages of collaborative efforts; many of these groups had been meeting regularly at the local level for years, while others were formed fairly recently.

As always, new members had come in and out of the groups, changing their histories, experiences, and dynamics.

A variety of adult-learning techniques for communication and future designs were incorporated into the conference format, including one-on-one dialogue, small and large group activities, flip charts, gallery walks, report outs, interviews, skits, and lots of laughter and positive language. Time was allotted for local teams to work together, and for like-work (stakeholder) groups to do the same.

A luncheon and inspirational keynote speaker kicked off the event. Marti Isler, Director of the Early Childhood Initiative, United Way of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, set the tone by reflecting on her experiences, both accomplishments and challenges, and enlightening the group with her learnings from several years of working to pull together early learning programs. Participants began the work session energized and believing that the results are worth the monumental efforts that effective collaborations may take.

## Discovering Common Ground

Future Search helps members of organizations or collaboration partners to determine commonalities and create self-managed plans to move toward their desired future. Participants engage in a series of open dialogues on where they've been, where they are, and what they want to do.

Experience indicates that, as collaborative partners, we assume that people who meet regularly know one another, understand each others' particular agencies and jobs, have the same goals, and communicate effectively. But these assumptions are not necessarily true.

The three-day event provided an opportunity for collaborative partners to get much better acquainted. As one participant summarized: "We have been



meeting for years and only after participating in this forum do I really feel I know each partner and understand what each of us does.”

Sharing personal and professional milestones with members of local or state teams began a process in which each member gained recognition for his/her individual contributions. Construction of a “river of culture” allowed each individual to perceive clearly where he/she has participated in a history that spans a century of Head Start, child care, and early intervention services. At the end of the day participants created a large, colorful, visual mind map identifying current trends and resources affecting early care and education issues. These activities allowed members to appreciate the past and the present as we worked toward planning a future together.

## Appreciative Inquiry and Building Future Scenarios

Appreciative Inquiry provides a framework for participants to become energized about change and to inspire collaborative action that serves the whole system. Stories are discovered through interviews that are used to create new, more compelling images of the organizations and their futures.

Day Two of the forum began with participants interviewing each other to identify individual and organizational strengths. Asking participants to recall successful endeavors and to identify what supported the accomplishment helped each person internalize a “positive core” on which to build future plans. One question that worked especially well in inviting thoughtful ideas and discovery was: “Describe a time you experienced a creative partnership with several different agencies while feeling alive and engaged. Who were the

different partners? What made it work?” Practicing this process prompted one participant to say, “I will never look at an interview the same — this exercise will forever change how I will work with people.”

Taking into account the past experiences, present trends, and forum learnings, each team collaborated on a dramatization depicting its desired future for early care and education services in 2007. In visualizing their future, teams were to be creative and not base plans on current bureaucratic and fiscal realities. A key component of this activity was having each group describe steps to be taken to achieve this Year 2007 outcome. Each presentation reflected the goals the team wanted to pursue. This process also provided a transition to the final day’s activities.

## Outcomes and Action Planning

Each team began Day Three by constructing “constitutional propositions” — key values important to all members — on topics such as funding, wages, professional development, continuum of care, collaboration, comprehensive services, and accessibility. The following examples illustrate the dynamic, energetic statements written. Collaboration: “A gathering of equals passionate about meeting our community’s needs and willing to actively commit resources and time.” Funding: “Like public education, the continuum of care is an entitlement.”

As positive and future-oriented as the Future Search and Appreciative Inquiry processes are, groups still want to discuss hurdles they are encountering in the present day that may keep them from achieving their envisioned future scenarios. Like-work groups discussed the hurdles and made suggestions for overcoming them. Although solutions

take time to develop, participants concluded this activity feeling hopeful and confident that these hurdles would not halt their progress.

The six communities each created a “back-home” plan with various degrees of specificity, including outcomes, success criteria (indicators), measurements, activities, and first steps (quickest wins). Several of the teams determined that they needed to bring additional stakeholders into the process, most specifically community businesses. All groups are expecting to hold follow-up meetings to build on the momentum gained during the forum. The State Collaboration Office Director, Terry Liddell, has prepared a summary of the results and will follow up on how communities are implementing their plans.

Building and sustaining an impetus for change require large amounts of positive outlook and social bonding. Consequently, the gathering was about hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, joy, and planning. The more positive the process, the more creative and positive the outcomes. Together we kept our attention on the positive possibilities of communities working together to build even better communities.

A community will thrive when all families enjoy quality, affordable, and accessible child care. This is possible by building strong relationships among child care service providers; Head Start agencies; education, health and local, state, and federal funding agencies; and businesses. This was the sun that attracted all of us, and that we will pursue.

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# The Magic of Dialogue

By Daniel Yankelovich

In philosopher Martin Buber's classic work *I and Thou*, he suggests that in authentic dialogue something far deeper than ordinary conversation is going on. The I-Thou interaction implies a genuine openness of each individual to the concerns of the other. In such dialogue, "I" do not, while talking with you, selectively tune out views I disagree with, nor do I busy myself marshaling arguments to rebut you while only half attending to what you have to say. Nor do I seek to reinforce my own prejudices. Instead, I fully take in your viewpoint, engaging with it in the deepest sense of the term. You do likewise. Each of us internalizes the view of the other to enhance our mutual understanding.

Buber voiced the stunning insight that, apart from its obvious practical value for problem-solving, dialogue expresses an essential aspect of the human spirit. He knew that dialogue is a way of being. In Buber's philosophy, life itself is a form of meeting, and dialogue is the place where we meet. In dialogue, we penetrate behind the polite superficialities and defenses in which we habitually armor ourselves. We listen and respond to one another with a kind of authenticity that forges a bond between us.

By performing the seemingly simple act of responding empathetically to others and in turn being heard by them, Buber observed, we transcend the constricting confines of the self. Instead of saying, "you or me," you hear yourself saying, "you and me." The act of reaching beyond the self to relate to others in dialogue is a profound human yearning. If it were less commonplace we would realize what a miracle it is.

## Missing Skills

If the yearning for dialogue is universal, why is it so rare? Because it calls upon

skills that impose a rigorous discipline on participants. Most people have not taken the time and effort to develop these skills. The reason is not lack of motivation. People have ample incentive to acquire the skills of dialogue. They have not done so for several reasons:

- Models are lacking. Television, for example, resorts to the conflicting debate format when presenting politics and other serious subjects because of its entertainment value.
- The skills of dialogue have not been clearly identified, so people who wish to acquire them do not know what they are.
- There are no obvious consequences of failure to develop the skills. If you tried to swim or ski without knowing how, your lack of skill would be swiftly and dramatically obvious, perhaps fatally so. If you fail at dialogue, it is not at all obvious that the reason is lack of dialogic skill, or even that a failure has occurred.

Significantly, success at dialogue is much more self-evident than failure. When dialogue is done well, the results can be extraordinary: Long-standing stereotypes dissolved, mistrust overcome, mutual understanding achieved, visions shaped and grounded in shared purpose, people previously at odds with one another aligned on objectives and strategies, new common ground discovered, new perspective and insights gained, new levels of creativity stimulated, and bonds of communication strengthened.

I do not want to overstate the benefits of dialogue. Though I believe it sometimes has almost magical properties, it is not a panacea for all the problems that ail us. Faith in the ability to talk to solve problems is very

American, and to some cynics, a sign of our cultural naïveté. It's easy to poke fun at serious, well-meaning attempts at dialogue that miscarry, as many unfortunately do.

As our society becomes increasingly fragmented and pluralistic, we're likely to misunderstand one another more and more. Ordinary discussion is not powerful enough to break through these misunderstandings. We will need increasingly to resort to the more potent resources of dialogue. All of us will need to know how to initiate and carry out spontaneous dialogue.

Constant readiness is the key to success. You never know when an opportunity for spontaneous dialogue will arise. If you are not ready to take advantage of it, the opportunity will pass you by. Worse yet, you may get drawn into a dialogue that will turn sour, leaving the bad taste of failure.

Constant readiness means that you know the strategies for doing dialogue successfully, and feel comfortable in applying the most important ones. (See "Strategies for Successful Dialogue" on the next page) For example, you understand the core requirements for dialogue — treating the other as an equal in every respect (part of what Buber meant by "thou"), being willing and able to bring everyone's assumptions — including yours — into the open without becoming judgmental.

Should the need arise you must be psychologically prepared to perform an act of empathy — which requires both self-confidence and the lowering of defenses. If you are in full battle gear, as many of us are these days in our encounters with a self-absorbed world, it is easy to interpret an act of empathy as a loss of face, a deficit of macho. I suspect that most opportunities to initiate dialogue are lost because partici-

pants are not psychologically prepared to take this first critical step.

You must also be prepared to confront misunderstandings through focusing on assumptions — both your own and others. Misunderstandings arise from many sources — from friction between subcultures to differences in interests. The most complex of all are transference-driven distortions. When you misunderstand people from other subcultures, you may be transferring to them attributes, feelings, and beliefs that are part of your own subculture. When you misunderstand people from within your own subculture, you may be transferring to them interests and feelings more appropriate to the ghosts of your past than to them.

## Test Yourself

Are you ready for dialogue? Test yourself by asking yourself some searching questions. Suppose, for example, you are an executive in a meeting attended by people of varied ranks within your organization — some who report to you, others who hold a higher position. A discussion is in progress regarding a project that did not work out according to plan. Lots of criticism is being bandied about. Are you prepared to volunteer that you accept some responsibility because of erroneous assumptions you had made, and then to make them explicit? If not, you may want to do more to prepare yourself for dialogue.

Or suppose you are a married man and you have just had a quarrel with your wife. You tell a friend, who then asks you, “After your quarrel, did your wife feel you had listened fully and sympathetically to her side of the story?” If your answer is “no” or “I’m not sure,” the chances are you are not

quite ready to enter into dialogue with your wife.

Or suppose you are a woman with a younger sister whom you habitually treat as not quite equal to you in experience or smarts. Ask yourself if your attitude toward her reflects the person she is today, or whether you are still reacting to her as she was in the past. To prepare yourself for dialogue with her, you may want to divest yourself of some of the baggage of the past.

One should not underestimate how difficult it is to break ingrained habits of not-listening, to break out of your wall of guarded reserve in order to offer acts of empathy, or to develop the skill of digging out your own and other people’s transferences in a non-judgmental fashion. But I’m convinced that everyone can learn to do dialogue, and that each one who does gives a gift to us all.

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*Daniel Yankelovich is the author of [The Magic of Dialogue](#). This article first appeared in [Spirituality and Health](#); it is reprinted with permission.*

## Strategies for Successful Dialogue

The following is a checklist of strategies for successful dialogue. Yankelovich’s book, *The Magic of Dialogue*, explains each one in detail.

1. Check for the presence of all three core requirements of dialogue — equality, empathy, and openness — and learn how to introduce missing ones. This is the bedrock strategy; without it you do not have dialogue.
2. Focus on common interests, not the divisive ones.
3. Keep dialogue and decision-making separate and compartmentalized.
4. Clarify assumptions that lead to subculture distortions.
5. Offer your own assumptions before speculating on those of others.
6. Use specific cases to raise general issues.
7. Focus on conflicts between value systems, not persons.
8. When appropriate, express the emotions that accompany strongly held values.
9. Initiate dialogue through an act of empathy.
10. Be sure trust exists before addressing transference distortions.
11. Where applicable, identify mistrust as the real source of misunderstandings.
12. Err on the side of including people who disagree.
13. Encourage relationships in order to humanize transactions.
14. Expose old scripts to a reality check.
15. Minimize the level of mistrust before pursuing practical objectives.

# Preventing, Preempting, and Resolving Conflicts in the Workplace

By Christina Sickles Merchant

**L**ike most businesses, Head Start programs already have dispute resolution procedures in place for disputes like violations of equal opportunity and safety laws. These procedures are often spelled out by law, a contract, or a regulation.

The focus of this article, however, is on the minor, low-level disputes and disagreements for which Head Start programs (and most other organizations) seldom have established dispute resolution procedures. Although such disputes are common and affect more people in the organization than, for example, an OSHA (Occupational Safety & Health Administration) violation, they are often overlooked by managers.

Providing procedures to remedy low-level disputes in organizations can also be a way to improve the delivery of services, overall workplace morale, and general effectiveness. The following steps introduce a framework for analyzing and addressing a Head Start program's unmet dispute resolution needs.

1. *Recognize that an "informal" system is already in place.* As disputes arise and nothing is done about them, they may "go away" on their own, or they may accumulate and grow into major problems.
2. *Assess the cost of doing nothing.* The accumulation of unresolved grievances can lead to a climate of disgruntlement and dissatisfaction.
3. *Identify the current "culture of conflict."* Where low-level resolution efforts are not encouraged or attempted, a culture of "dispute denial and avoidance" is created. The messages informally circulated within the organization include the ideas that disputes are "bad"; they must be ignored, avoided, or denied; they do not warrant official recognition or attention; and they will get one in trouble. The products of such a "default" dispute resolution system are often dissatisfaction, dysfunction, and complaints.
4. *Collaboratively assess conflict and its costs.* An assessment should be made of the number, types, and nature of disputes that occur at the lowest organizational level. Examples include personality clashes and professional practice disagreements. It is important to include people in the assessment who have different views of how dispute resolution is currently conducted.
5. *Identify conflict management goals.* One positive result of an assessment is that participants are often able to identify common goals. Targeting simple, clear, and measurable conflict management goals in a Head Start program is critical to any improvement effort.
6. *Collaboratively design an early intervention approach and evaluate it.* With goals identified, a Head Start program design committee should develop initial procedures to intervene early and preemptively in low-level disputes. Start small with a tentative approach. Try a pilot combination of measures and assess whether it is effective. Always evaluate efforts and be prepared to adjust.

*Christina Sickles Merchant is a dispute resolution practitioner, designer, and consultant for workplace disputes. This article is reprinted, in part, from the Spring 1997 issue of the Head Start Bulletin on Managing Change/Managing Conflict.*

## Are We Doing Dialogue Yet?

Most people talk about the four D's — dialogue, debate, deliberation, and discussion — interchangeably. Fortunately, practitioners of genuine dialogue have learned how to distinguish dialogue from other forms of conversation. The most revealing distinctions are those that contrast dialogue and debate. The following list is adapted from the writings of Mark Gerzon.

### Debate

1. Assuming that there is a right answer and that you have it
2. Combative: participants attempt to prove the other side wrong
3. About winning
4. Listening to find flaws and make counter arguments
5. Defending assumptions as truth
6. Critiquing the other side's position
7. Defending one's own views against those of others
8. Searching for flaws and weaknesses in other positions
9. Seeking a conclusion or vote that ratifies your position

### Dialogue

1. Assuming that many people have pieces of the answer and that together they craft a new solution
2. Collaborative: participants work together toward common understanding
3. About exploring common ground
4. Listening to understand, find meaning and agreement
5. Revealing assumptions for re-evaluation
6. Re-examining all positions
7. Admitting that others' thinking can improve one's own
8. Searching for strengths and value in others' positions
9. Discovering new options, not seeking closure

## Conflict Management and Young Children *Helping Children Deal with Everyday Problems*

Anyone who has ever worked with children knows that they often disagree. Whether it is about sharing their favorite toy, pushing, name calling, or the general unfairness of life, children often come running to their teachers looking for help in resolving conflicts. And most of the time, teachers are more than willing to help the children resolve their conflicts.

What teachers might not realize is that it might be more helpful to refrain from resolving a minor conflict between children through an adult-directed solution (assuming that the conflict has not turned harmful to either child involved). In her article "Peer Conflicts in the Classroom," Edyth Wheeler notes, "Recent theory and research . . . suggest that peer conflict contributes to children's development and represents an important form of social interaction." Often, preschool children are quite capable of solving conflicts on their own.

That doesn't mean that teachers don't have a role to play in conflict management. There are many things teachers can do to help children understand and control their feelings of anger and frustration, including helping them develop conflict management strategies.

### Strategies for Teachers

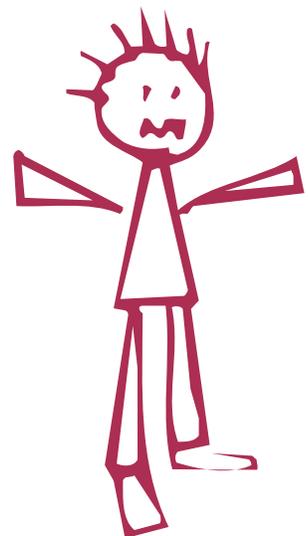
Some of the steps that teachers can take to support children in learning to manage and resolve conflict include:

- Creating a safe emotional climate. Foster a classroom where emotions are accepted and anger is not shamed.
- Modeling responsible anger management. If conflicts arise between teachers or adults, model behavior through negotiation, mediation, or some other conflict management strategy.

- Helping children to develop self-regulatory skills. As children grow out of toddlerhood, they begin to be able to regulate and describe their feelings.
- Encouraging children to label feelings of anger. One activity that can help children is the Anger Thermometer. In her article "Preventing Violence through Anger Management," Mary Drecktrah describes the activity: "Children color in the picture of a thermometer to show how upset they are, write or tell what caused the anger, and think of ways to handle the situation next time." Children can color anywhere on the thermometer from annoyed to enraged. This experience helps children think and talk about how angry or frustrated they are and is especially useful for children who have a hard time expressing their emotions.
- Encourage children to talk about anger-arousing interactions. Create a space in the classroom where children can have privacy and feel comfortable talking about a problem calmly. A teacher should be visible in case adult intervention is necessary.
- Use books and stories about anger to help children understand and manage anger. There are many children's books that can help children learn to deal with conflict and stressful situations.
- Communicate with parents. Talk with parents about the conflict management strategies being used in the classroom and provide information on labeling anger and using words to describe emotions.

### References:

- Drecktrah, M. & Wallenfang, A. (1999). *Preventing Violence through Anger Management. Early Childhood News, November/December 1999, 24-31.*
- Wheeler, E. (1994). *Peer Conflicts in the Classroom. ERIC Digest.*



# It Might Be More Than a Classroom Conflict

Children are often labeled as “problem children” when they have a difficult time getting along with their peers. Instead, what you might be witnessing is a child who needs additional help trying to cope with a very stressful home environment.

**Children living in multi-stressed environments might exhibit such behaviors as:**

## Developmental Differences

- Developmental delays, especially in language, fine and gross motor, and social skills.
- Developmental lags or regression to previous stages.

## The Daily Program, Routines, and Transitions

- Sleep problems, including difficulty falling asleep and waking up, and nightmares.
- Too tired to participate in activities.
- Difficulty using utensils (forks, knives, spoons).
- Short attention span, quickly moving from one activity to another.

## Interactions with Other Children

- Intrudes in other children’s play.
- Has trouble reading social cues from peers.
- Has difficulty playing and negotiating with peers.

## Family Relationships

- Forms strong bonds with siblings and/or takes care of younger siblings.
- Shows frequent, repeated ambivalent avoidance behavior towards parents.

## Mental Health

- Moods change quickly and without notice.
- Unable to relax.
- Appears to lack self-esteem; does not want to try new tasks; seems to be afraid of failing.
- Seeks attention and physical contact indiscriminately.
- Clings to people and possessions.

## Behavior Issues

- Acts out to seek attention.
- Displays aggressive behaviors.
- Is extremely withdrawn or quiet.

Living with high levels of stress can take a toll on young children’s development in both direct and indirect ways. For example, children may not receive immunizations or medical care, they may not have safe places to play, or they may not have enough food at mealtimes. Parents’ energies are often focused on meeting the family’s most basic needs: food, clothing, shelter, and safety. There may be little time to focus on meeting the less obvious social and emotional needs of young children; therefore, children may not receive the emotional support they need to grow and develop.

The Head Start Bureau has responded to the needs of program staff in this area. *Responding to Children Under Stress: A Skill-Based Training Guide for Classroom Teams* suggests

practical strategies for dealing effectively with children who live in multi-stress environments. Participating in this training program can also provide ongoing support for classroom teams.

*To order copies of *Responding to Children Under Stress: A Skill-Based Training Guide for Classroom Teams*, contact the Head Start Publications Management Center at [puborder@hskids-tmssc.org](mailto:puborder@hskids-tmssc.org) or fax a request to 703-683-5769.*

## Negotiating with Toddlers

By Patricia D. Nixon

**W**e have all heard the term, “terrible twos.” What is it that makes this such an infamous time in child development? This stage can be challenging for caregivers and toddlers alike, as each toddler tries to find a balance between autonomy and dependence.

Differing opinions about how to handle toddler behaviors are common in group care settings, and as caregivers we need to have regular talks together to share ideas. Essentially,

we try to provide an environment that appreciates toddler individuality while providing support as toddlers work through conflict situations. Negotiating is a method of communicating we use with toddlers and model with each other, which teaches toddlers how to get their needs met while being respectful of the needs of others.

Fostering a healthy sense of self-esteem and nurturing a beginning awareness of and respect for others are two of the most critical components of quality child care. Every interaction, every connection, is perceived by each child differently. It is important, then, to consider individual children and where they are coming from, as well as their developmental stages. Often, this is best learned through observation and processing with other adults. Respect, responsiveness, and reciprocity are the three R's commonly used to describe an ideal relationship between caregiver and child, one that fosters self-esteem and builds relationships.

Younger children are often egocentric. Though we have all seen children show concern when they hear a friend crying, their general perception of the world is that it revolves around them. Sharing and being sympathetic are skills that may take years to learn and should be encouraged, not forced.

But children are also mirrors. They reflect back what they see and hear. Adults know this and are aware that they are role models. Starting with a healthy, open, respectful relationship, negotiating with toddlers becomes an important opportunity for learning, and guidance becomes a preventive measure rather than an aftermath.

Following is a list of 10 strategies to consider when negotiating with toddlers:

1. Be aware of each child and his or her means and methods of communication. Is Suzette pulling on Thomas' hair because she is frustrated with him, enjoying the power to make him yell, or learning that hair is attached? Does she have words to use? Is this the first time she has done this or the twelfth? This type of information provides parents and caregivers with a better perspective toward helping Suzette.
2. Know yourself and your own emotions. Adults have the same needs and feelings as children do. Model healthy acceptance of the child's emotional development by acknowledging that we have similar feelings. It is important to remember that a calm voice and reassuring manner can be effective tools in negotiating with an upset or excited child.



3. Be authentic — that is honest, real, and nonjudgmental — in adult-child interactions. Then children learn to trust and predict. When we are respectful, children perceive that they are worthy of respect, as are others.
4. Validate feelings. It is OK for children to cry or be afraid or feel frustrated. It may be beneficial to give labels to the emotions (for example, “Are you feeling sad? Do you want to come and sit with me?” or “It looks like you really want to use the toy that Darnell is using”). Often people just want their frustrations to be acknowledged, their feelings accepted. By encouraging children to express themselves verbally, we are also facilitating language development.
5. Address the behavior, not the child, when a behavior occurs that is not appropriate. For example, if a child is acting aggressively toward another child, try statements such as, “Hitting hurts people. If you are angry with Christiana, please talk to her.” (This is preferable to “You’re being a bad girl. You know not to hit!”) Redirection is often helpful too (for instance, “It is not safe to run in the classroom. Would you like to go outside and run?”).
6. Offer real choices whenever possible. Allowing children to make a choice shows them respect and empowers them. “Do you want your diaper changed?” is not a real choice. Instead, try “It’s time to change your diaper. Would you like to choose your new diaper or should I?”
7. Give notice on upcoming transitions. By giving a five-minute warning before cleanup time, you allow children to finish their play or make arrangements to do so later. There is security and com-

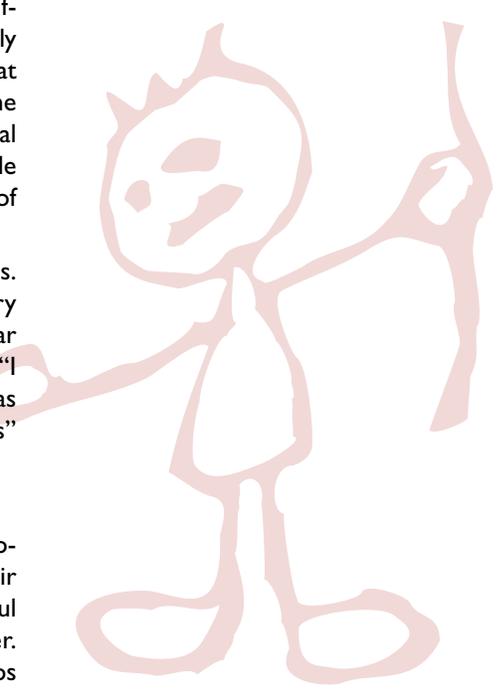
fort in knowing what will be happening next.

8. Explain rules clearly and concisely (several sentences are usually sufficient). Again, young children find security in predictability; therefore, it is important to have clear guidelines and as few rules as possible. Be prompt and consistent, and follow through with consequences. When this is not possible, use individualized consequences specific to the child and the situation.
9. Allow time for problem solving. This is a tricky area. It is difficult to watch children struggle. Our first impulse is to “make it better” and find the easiest solution. However, being supportive and allowing time for the child to work things out to his or her satisfaction have many benefits. Watch for the smile on a child’s face when he or she figures out how to put together a puzzle or solves a social problem on his or her own! Learning and self-confidence grow from moderately stressful situations — situations that challenge a child but that she or he can handle. By observing individual behavior, we learn when to intercede to prevent frustration or feelings of helplessness.
10. Acknowledge efforts and successes. Positive reinforcement can be very important to a child. When you hear a child who often bites say instead, “I don’t like that,” a comment such as “Twyla! I heard you use your words” can be very validating.

As challenging as this stage of development can be for toddlers and their caregivers, it is also a time of delightful exploration and fascinated wonder. Language is blossoming and friendships are blooming. Communication styles

and negotiation skills are an integral part of who we are. By facilitating and supporting this process with toddlers, we are contributing to their social and emotional development and well-being.

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## A Day Dedicated to Conflict Resolution

By K. Fernandez, S.Y. Bowland, M. Bantle, B. Malakie, M. Blakeway, and A. Vestal

The exchange of conflict resolution strategies and current diversity issues was invaluable to practitioners, attorneys, Head Start staff, and parents during a pre-conference day at the National Head Start Association (NHSA) 27th Annual Training Conference. Everyone who attended was committed to exploring current and future Head Start initiatives to help Head Start staff, parents, and children develop quality internal dispute resolution policies, systems, and skills.

The day focused on reports from successful conflict resolution models within the Head Start community. Dispute resolution resources in the areas of curriculum, literature, education, future funding streams, and new techniques being used in the field were presented.

The keynote speaker, S.Y. Bowland, a registered neutral with the Supreme Court of Georgia and faculty member of Columbia College, spoke on diversity issues and on encouraging young people to engage in different patterns of conflict resolution — patterns that focus on problem solving and compassion.

Presenters also focused on the critical challenge that faces our communities: expanding community capacity to use appropriate conflict resolution skills in schools, neighborhoods, and the community at large. Most Americans have limited interpersonal communication and problem solving skills. Unless alternative, more appropriate communication and conflict resolution skills are taught and modeled, we will continue to model and reinforce negative conflict resolution methods with our children.

### Models for Adults

Two conflict resolution models for adults were presented. The first originated in Kent County, Michigan, where a pilot project between Kent Co. Head Start and the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan (a non-profit community mediation program) found resources and created a dispute resolution program. Mary Bantle, Head Start Director, and Deb Zondervan, past Executive Director of the Dispute Resolution Center, discussed an implementation and curriculum guide they developed that taught appropriate conflict resolution skills to staff, parents, and preschool children.

The second project, the Orleans Community Action Committee Head Start in New York State, described its efforts in partnering with a community counseling center to reframe conflict and turn past negative experiences into positive growth for staff and parents. Bonnie Malakie, community counselor, and Kathryn Fernandez, Head Start Director

and 1999-2000 Head Start Fellow, described how this project worked and how to accept conflict to turn it into a growth opportunity.

The pre-conference day also highlighted other efforts around the country in the area of conflict management. Joanne Hartman, Associate Director of the National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM) described the benefits of partnering with a community mediation center. She offered answers to such questions as: How does a Head Start program and community mediation center begin a partnership? What are the challenges of such a partnership? Are there funding streams to support this partnership?

### Conflict Management and Young Children

Conflict management and young children was also an important topic for the day. Conflict and the way it is managed play a significant role in children's cognitive and social development. Research looking at conflict resolution education shows that young children are competent problem solvers and that the early childhood years are important ones for learning about resolving conflict. Marsha S. Blakeway, a Fellow from the National Peace Foundation, discussed an extensive array of early childhood educational resources that are available today. (Some of these are listed in the Resources section of this Bulletin.)

Two models developed specifically for use with young children were also presented. The first was the PEACE Project (Promoting Empathetic Attitudes, Communication and Emotions), a two-year study developed by Anita Vestal, a Head Start Research Scholar. This study is designed to assess how training in conflict resolution, peace education, and violence prevention impacts Head Start teachers and the children in their classrooms. Anita described a Head Start center where the environment supports staff as well as parents and children. Problems are solved collaboratively, and there is a process in place for resolving conflict as it arises. Facilitators are available to mediate issues. Feelings are recognized and respected. Active



and reflective listening is the norm. In a peaceful classroom, teachers facilitate recognition and acceptance of feelings and promote acts of kindness, generosity, and empowerment. Peaceful centers and classrooms share the vision for peace in the homes of the children and involve parents in peace-building efforts.

Mardy Burgess from Children's Creative Response to Conflict (CCRC) presented the second model. She described her work with a Head Start program in Alexandria, Virginia, where staff discovered how to build a classroom community that reduces conflict through activities that teach affirmation, communication, cooperation, and bias awareness. Conflicts were seen as educational opportunities, and problem-solving techniques were practiced to find a proactive resolution to specific challenges.

## The Program Performance Standards

The pre-conference day also focused on issues specific to Head Start, primarily the Program Performance Standards and impasse policies. The Program Performance Standards define an impasse as a gridlock that occurs when the Grantee Governing Board and the Policy Council cannot reach agreement on an anticipated act. The standards state: "Each grantee and delegate agency and Policy Council or Policy Committee jointly must establish written procedures for resolving internal disputes, including impasse procedures, between the governing body and policy group" [1304.50 (h)]. Ron Hunt from the American Indian Head Start Quality Improvement Center (QIC) and Kathryn Fernandez discussed formats being used in different areas of the country.

**For more information on any of the topics discussed during this year's pre-conference session, the presenters can be contacted directly:**

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## Networking Opportunities

The conflict resolution work group is looking for new members who would like to exchange information and ideas through a listserv. This same group would like to organize another pre-conference day dedicated to conflict resolution issues at the 2001 NHSA Conference. If you are interested in becoming involved, please contact JoAn Knight Herren, Chief of the Head Start Bureau's Training and Technical Assistance Branch, at [jherren@acf.dhhs.gov](mailto:jherren@acf.dhhs.gov).

## Conflict Resolution for Head Start: A Pilot Program

By Deb Zondervan

In 1995, the Head Start Bureau launched an initiative to test and refine a conflict resolution training model for Head Start parents, staff, and children. Partners in the project included the National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM) and the National Institute for Dispute Resolution (NIDR), now the Conflict Resolution and Education Network (CREnet). Although no national funding was available for the project, Kent County Head Start and the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan were able to secure \$110,000 in local funding to pilot the program.

The challenge facing this community was to expand local capacity to use appropriate conflict resolution skills in schools, neighborhoods, and the community at large. The specific parent population served by Kent County Head Start dealt with overwhelmingly at risk. High rates of poverty, incarceration of at least one parent, and low educational levels were typical. These parents also had limited interpersonal communication and problem solving skills. Unless more appropriate communication and conflict resolution skills were taught to and modeled for Head Start parents, they would continue to model and reinforce negative conflict resolution methods to their children.

Michigan Family Resources/Kent Co. Head Start, like Head Start programs throughout the country, has made parent involvement a cornerstone of their Head Start program. Parent committees for individual Head Start sites, and a Policy Council for the entire county, are charged with setting programs' goals and budgets for the 19 Head Start programs in Kent County. Teaching parents to use effective communication and conflict resolution skills will increase their capacity to participate effectively in the management of Head Start programs, and will also benefit them as parents and community members.

A partnership between Head Start and the Dispute Resolution Center to train staff and parents to use and model appropriate conflict resolution skills is a natural bridge to extend these skills to preschoolers and their parents. Anticipated benefits of the project include: increased knowledge and use of conflict resolution (CR) skills by parents and Head Start staff; increased staff capacity to manage interpersonal disputes without third party intervention; increased parent use of appropriate CR skills within the Head Start Policy Committees, Policy Councils and the home; and a system-wide dispute resolution continuum for Head Start staff and parents, including both interpersonal conflict resolution and violence prevention skills, with an internal capacity for

providing mediation to back up interpersonal conflict resolution skills.

Two project goals were set and accomplished. The first goal was to train and coach Head Start staff and parents in the use of appropriate conflict resolution skills and strategies. These skills were to be used interpersonally and as a model for preschoolers. The purpose was to break ineffective, sometimes violent patterns and to teach Head Start preschoolers age-appropriate conflict resolution skills and concepts.

Looking at the preschool curricula available, project participants discovered that no existing curricula really fit project objectives. This led to a new curriculum being written based on four Key Learnings: emotions, communication, alternative solutions, and consequences.

The second goal of the project was to embed conflict resolution skills and values into the Head Start governing procedures, including the parent Policy Council and the parent committees that provide oversight to each Head Start program site. In an effort to realize this goal, parent policy council members received six hours of skills training during the first year of the program. The Dispute Resolution Center then worked with a policy council subcommittee to develop an internal dispute resolution process that incorporates mediation as a first step in dispute resolution.

Based on feedback from participants, trainers, and staff, program planners are revising the curriculum to make it more "user friendly." A training for trainers manual is also being created in the hope that Head Start staff will be able to continue the parent and staff training after the initial grant funding ends. Currently, several Head Start staff members along with a few parents are taking the full 40-hour basic mediation training from the Dispute Resolution Center, so that internal disputes may be mediated on site, if necessary.

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*Deb Zondervan works as a consultant for Girl Scout USA staff nationally and served as the executive director for the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan for nine years. Local funding for the pilot project was provided by the Frey Foundation and Spectrum Health Community Benefits. For more information on this project, please contact the Dispute Resolution Center at T: 616-774-0121 or at [www.igc.org/grcwestmich/](http://www.igc.org/grcwestmich/), or Mary E. Bantle, Executive Director, Michigan Family Resource, 1805 Bristol, N.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504. T: 616-453-4145.*

## RESOURCES

### The National Association for Community Mediation

The National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM) supports the growth and maintenance of community-based mediation programs and processes; presents a compelling voice in appropriate legislative, professional, and other arenas; and encourages the development and sharing of resources for these efforts.

Today there are more than 550 community mediation centers in the U.S. that help people, organizations, and communities in conflict. These centers deal with a wide variety of disputes, including interpersonal, family, neighborhood, and community conflicts. Centers also help with divorce and custody issues, juvenile and school conflicts, and parent and child disputes. Many centers work closely with and receive referrals from courts and other agencies.

*For a list of NAFCM centers or for more information, contact NAFCM at T: 202-667-9700 or visit their Web site at [www.nafcm.org](http://www.nafcm.org).*

### NIDR and CREnet

*"...for a more civil society"*

The National Institute for Dispute Resolution (NIDR) is a nonprofit corporation that receives funding from a growing number of supporters who understand the value of collaborative decision-making and alternative means of resolving disputes. NIDR advances the field of consensus-building and conflict resolution through a variety of efforts, including technical assistance and coaching; educational programs; consulting; demonstration projects; evaluation; and publications.

NIDR maintains the nation's largest database of individuals and

organizations in the field of conflict resolution. It also helps ensure the effectiveness of conflict resolution services through a focus on research, evaluation, and the documentation and dissemination of innovations in the field.

In 1995, the National Association for Mediation in Education (NAME) merged with NIDR to form the Conflict Resolution Education Network (CREnet). CREnet promotes the development, implementation, and institutionalization of school and university-based conflict resolution programs and curricula.

*For more information, contact NIDR at T: 202-667-9700 or visit their Web site at [www.crenet.org](http://www.crenet.org).*

### SPIDR

The Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR) was organized to perform three primary functions:

- Guard the standards and ethics of the field of dispute resolution and collaborative decision-making;
- Develop the intellectual and professional roots of the field and educate the public about various dispute resolution procedures that are available to clarify the expanding role of the conflict resolver; and
- Support its members and provide them with tangible and intangible membership benefits.

As a professional membership organization, SPIDR promotes the professionalism of conflict resolvers at local, regional, national, and international levels through its conferences, training institutes, chapters, and specialty areas. SPIDR is committed to producing and educating the present practitioners of this ancient art and, through its Youth Initiative, to support the future

development of peacemakers for the 21st century.

*For more information, contact SPIDR at T: 202-667-9700, or visit its Web site at [www.spidr.org](http://www.spidr.org).*

### Peace Education Foundation

The Peace Education Foundation (PEF) is a non-profit educational organization established in 1980. 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. It provides educational materials, training, and innovative programming aimed at making nonviolent conflict resolution a way of life.

PEF offers grade-level-specific, classroom-tested curricula for pre-K through grade 12, as well as training and implementation assistance. The general purpose of the PEF model is to teach social competency and conflict resolution skills and create a school environment based on trust, caring, and respect. While each curriculum is presented in a developmentally appropriate format, PEF curricula as a whole have a unified scope and sequence of content and skills. These curricula are being used in more than 20,000 schools around the world.

*For more information, contact the Peace Education Foundation at [www.peace-ed.org](http://www.peace-ed.org) or call T: 1-800-749-8838.*

## Ounce of Prevention

**T**he Ounce of Prevention Fund asserts that early preventive measures during childhood are essential in reducing violent behavior among the adult population. In *Safe Start: How Early Experiences Can Help Reduce Violence*, the Fund outlines several factors that contribute to violent behavior, provide evidence that early childhood interventions help to reduce crime, and highlight a number of these promising interventions.

For the purpose of this article, violence is defined as acts of physical aggression which are disproportionate to a given situation and, consequently, extend beyond the limits of social acceptance. Research has shown that there are certain factors which contribute to high levels of violent behavior in our communities and that there are known interventions which have been effective in addressing these factors.

### How does one prevent violent behavior?

The first answer to this question comes relatively easily for most: caregivers should help children understand the difference between right and wrong and between what is acceptable behavior and what is not. A second response—learning self-control—is not an ability a child naturally possesses; rather it is one a child must learn from parents and caregivers.

Emotional regulation, a more technical term for self control, refers to the ability to match emotional responses and behavior to the specific demands of a situation. As many parents are aware, given a newborn's seemingly constant inclination to cry at the slightest distress, an infant has a relatively small capacity for emotional regulation. Furthermore, when a child grows older, it becomes even more difficult as more self control challenges emerge. When they become toddlers, children begin to reach out to grab toys, crawl and walk; aggressive behaviors soon follow. They

grab others' toys and strike out at their playmates. Therefore, in order to help prevent these aggressive behaviors, caregivers must teach children how to respond appropriately when they are confronted with frustrating situations or with feelings of anger and jealousy.

Techniques offered by the authors include teaching children suitable ways to express their feelings and modeling appropriate behavior. When children misbehave, caregivers should be deliberate in discouraging the unacceptable behavior. Early experiences in learning self control contribute to helping children develop the capacity to form caring relationships as adults. Furthermore, it is important to start early because it has been shown that children who exhibit behavior problems are at a greater risk for becoming violent adults.

### What are some early risk factors for violence?

Several factors are related to the propensity for violence. These include child abuse or neglect, witnessing violence, brain damage, lead poisoning, and poor prenatal care and nutrition. Many children who experience one or two of these factors will not become violent adults. When a child experiences several of the risk factors, however, the likelihood that they may act violently as an adult increases.

Evidence shows that children who have been abused are more likely to abuse their own children. Furthermore, the majority of inmates in jail for violent crimes such as aggravated assault, rape and murder were abused or neglected as children. Early intervention can stop this cycle of violence. Positive parent/child relationships, not based around punishment and abuse, also help to protect children from other influential risk factors such as community violence, later abuse in life, and negative peer pressure.

Another risk factor contributing

to violent behavior is witnessing violence as a child. Though the long-term consequences are not yet clear, preliminary evidence indicates that children who witness violence are at a greater risk for becoming violent as adults. Likewise, suffering brain damage, either through physical injury or through prenatal exposure to alcohol and other drugs, plays a role in whether or not one behaves violently as an adult.

### What are some promising interventions that address the risk factors for violence?

Positive early interventions also play a role in whether or not a child grows into an adult likely to commit violence. Interventions such as home visiting, parent support programs, early childhood education and care, and support for children who witness acts of violence, attempt to support the healthy development of a child and reduce the risk factors associated with violent behavior. Community-based home visiting programs provide parents with advice, relevant information, and support, help them understand and respond to their child's behavior and help them foster their child's capacity for self control and caring. Another intervention, early childhood education and care, has been shown to be most effective when there is support for parents and when health care is provided as needed.

In a supportive environment of parent support programs, early childhood education and care and counseling services (for children who witness violent acts or are targets of violence), children can better develop the social and cognitive skills necessary to pursue healthy, non violent relationships.

*For more information on Safe Start, contact the Ounce of Prevention Fund at T: 312-922-3863.*

## HEAD START BUREAU UPDATE

## Head Start Family Literacy Project

By Trellis Waxler

Since its inception, Head Start has worked to enhance children's school readiness and parents' efforts to become self-sufficient and support their child's development and learning. Building on these efforts, the Head Start Bureau has launched a new initiative to support all programs in implementing comprehensive family literacy services, defined in Head Start's recent legislation as: (1) age-appropriate education services to prepare children for success in school and life experiences; (2) interactive literacy activities between parents and children; (3) training for parents in being the primary teachers for their children and full partners in the education of their children; and (4) parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

implement comprehensive family literacy services.



In partnership with the Head Start Bureau, ACF Regional Offices, and the Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Network, NCFL will:

- Conduct orientation workshops at the national, regional, and state levels on how comprehensive family literacy services can enhance the quality and outcomes of Head Start and Early Head Start children and families.
- Provide management training to leadership teams from local grantee agencies in how to plan and support integrated, intensive, and comprehensive family literacy services.
- Provide family literacy implementation training to teachers, adult educators, coordinators, family service staff, and other frontline workers and partners.

- Offer customized technical assistance to local grantees to assist in adaptation of family literacy strategies to specific community and program settings.
- Support more widespread and effective partnerships among Head Start, Even Start, and other family literacy, early care and education leaders, programs, and funding sources at the local, state, regional, and national levels.

The HSFLP will provide these services through: (1) a cadre of Certified Family Literacy Training Specialists, housed at NCFL and at several Head Start Quality Improvement Centers; (2) a nationwide network of promising practice family literacy sites that are representative of Head Start and Early Head Start program options and strategies; and (3) a variety of materials and resources that will be available in print, on an information hotline, and via the Internet.

*Trellis Waxler is an Education Specialist in the Head Start Bureau's Education Services Branch; T: 202-205-8422; E: [twaxler@acf.dhhs.gov](mailto:twaxler@acf.dhhs.gov). For general information on the family literacy initiative, call the PARADE Family Literacy Info Line at T: 1-877-FAMLIT-1. For specific information on the Head Start Family Literacy Project, contact Sharyl Emberton or Bonnie Lash Freeman, Project Co-Directors, at NCFL at T: 1-502-584-1133.*

The Head Start Family Literacy Project (HSFLP), a new five-year cooperative agreement with the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), will provide training and technical assistance to enhance the capacity of Head Start and Early Head Start grantees to



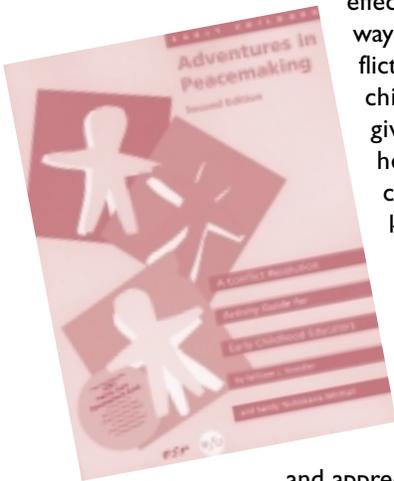
## Educators for Social Responsibility

**Educators for Social Responsibility** is a nonprofit organization providing innovative curriculum materials and teacher training programs that focus on issues of peacemaking and conflict resolution. ESR's work fosters social, emotional, and ethical development among children by helping them learn to care about others, resolve conflicts nonviolently, solve problems cooperatively, value diversity, make responsible decisions, confront prejudice, and take positive, meaningful action. The following two resources are available through ESR:

### Early Childhood Adventures in Peacemaking, 2nd edition

By William J. Kreidler and Sandy Tsubokawa Whittall

This unique activity guide uses games, music, art, drama, and storytelling to teach young children effective, nonviolent ways to resolve conflicts. It gives early childhood caregivers tools for helping young children develop key conflict resolution skills, including communication, cooperation, expressing feelings, managing anger, and appreciating diversity.



This newly revised edition contains:

- An introduction to developmentally appropriate practice, with sections on stages of child development in each skill-based chapter.
- Tips on setting up your classroom space and materials to minimize conflict and make the most of opportunities for social and emotional learning.
- Step-by-step instructions for incorporating core social and emotional skills into your daily routines.
- Strategies and suggestions for troubleshooting when things don't go exactly as planned.

- Additional activities and materials for parents that help them reinforce the themes, skills, and concepts of the Peaceable Program at home. A provider kit is also available containing many items to use in conjunction with the activity guide, as well as numerous children's books, cassettes, and more.

The cost of this publication is \$24.95 for nonmembers and \$22.46 for members. To order call T: 1-800-370-2515 or visit [www.esrnational.org](http://www.esrnational.org).

### Teaching Young Children in Violent Times: Building a Peaceable Classroom

By Diane E. Levin, Ph.D.

*Teaching Young Children in Violent Times* helps preschool through grade 3 teachers create a classroom where children learn peaceful alternatives to the violent behaviors modeled for them in society.

Part I of this guide explores the developmental roots of young children's thinking and behaviors on issues ranging from conflict to prejudice to violence, and provides a cultural context for the violence in children's lives. **D i a l o g u e s** between young children and teach-

ers are offered with a framework for teachers to extend children's thinking in developmentally appropriate ways.

Part II includes practical guidelines and activities for creating a Peaceable Classroom. Learn how to use puppetry, games, play, class charts, curriculum webs, and graphs to help young children resolve their conflicts peacefully and respect one another's differences.

The cost of this publication is \$21.95 for nonmembers and \$19.76 for members. To order call T: 1-800-370-2515 or visit [www.esrnational.org](http://www.esrnational.org).

### Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children

by Louise Derman-Sparks, A.B.C. Task Force

This curriculum offers suggestions for helping staff and children respect each other as individuals and con-

fronting, transcending, and eliminating barriers based on race, culture, gender, or ability. Chapters include: why an anti-bias curriculum; creating an anti-bias environment; learning about racial differences and similarities; learning about disabilities; learning about gender identity; learning about cultural differences and similarities; learning to resist stereotyping and discrimina-



## RESOURCES

tory behavior; and working with parents.

*The cost of this publication is \$8.00. To order, visit NAEYC's Web site at [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org) or call T: 800-424-2460 ext. 604.*

### Valuing Diversity: The Primary Years

by Janet McCracken

Looking to the next generation, our challenge is to support children's self-esteem and self-discipline, respect individual and group differences, teach children to resolve conflicts peaceably, and encourage cooperation. The ideas contained in this book will inspire teachers to find creative ways to value diversity within and beyond the classroom.

*The cost of this publication is \$5.00. To order, visit NAEYC's Web site at [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org) or call T: 800-424-2460 ext. 604.*

### Peacemaking Skills for Little Kids, Pre-K-2

By Fran Schmidt and Alice Friedman

This publication from the Peace Education Foundation is filled with fun activities, games, songs, and puzzles. It helps to teach the "I-Care" rules and important life skills like listening, cooperating, and sharing.

In this concept book, the first of a series of curricula by the Peace Education Foundation, peace education is seen as holistic, life-affirming, skill-building, and an on-going task of every human being. It focuses on teaching peacemaking skills to young children in four concepts areas: cooperative environment, similarities and differences in being human, feelings, and being responsible by solving problems.

*To order, contact the Peace Education Foundation's web site at [www.peace-ed.org](http://www.peace-ed.org) or call T: 1-800-749-8838.*

### Children's Creative Response to Conflict (CCRC) Comprehensive School Program

CCRC provides specially designed workshops including exercises that help participants examine conflicts and develop alternative solutions. This program is available for preschool settings to develop conflict resolution skills, bias awareness, and mediation.

*CCRC was established in 1972 by the New York Quaker Project on Community Conflict and has offered thousands of workshops nationwide and in Canada, Central America, and Europe. The chapter serving Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Northern Virginia is located at 7710 Carroll Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland 20912. The telephone number is (301) 270-1005.*

### I Can Problem Solve – Raising a Thinking Child

This article is available in a 1996 Justice Department Bulletin, Preventing Violence the Problem-Solving Way. It offers problem solving skills, parent education, and family strengthening practices.

*The article is available from the Justice Department by calling 1-800-638-8726.*

### You, Your Child, and Problem Solving

This pamphlet discusses the problem solving process, parent education, and offers activities for families at home. It is available in both English and Spanish.

*The pamphlet, #EC1451, can be obtained free by writing to Extension Experiment Station Communications, OSU, Corvallis Oregon 97331.*

### Second Step

The Committee for Children has developed this curriculum based on research. It offers activities and includes puppets, a sing-along tape, posters, activity sheets, and a video. The goals are to help preschool and kindergarten children develop language to counter conflict, air feelings, reduce anger, problem solve, and find ways to get along with others.

*To obtain a copy, visit the Committee for Children Web site at [www.cfchildren.org](http://www.cfchildren.org), or call 1-800-634-4449.*

### The Friendly Classroom for a Small Planet: Children's Creative Response

This guidebook for parents and service providers provides hundreds of activities and tips designed to nurture children's self-esteem and teach effective conflict resolution skills.

*Order from KIDSRIGHTS, 10100 Park Cedar Drive, Charlotte, NC 29210. T: 800-892-KIDS, (704) 541-0100. Fax: (704) 541-0113*

### Culture and Education of Young Children

This video, produced by South Carolina Educational Television, includes a discussion with Carol Brunson Day about respect for cultural diversity. It stresses using diversity to enhance children's learning.

*The cost of this video is \$39.00. Order from NAEYC through the Web site at [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org) or call T: 1-800-424-2460.*

## Send Us Ideas!

The purpose of the Bulletin is to serve the Head Start community, and we want to hear from you! Send us information on events and new initiatives you've been involved in, and send us photographs!

**Head Start Bulletin  
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*This photograph, which appeared on p. 9 of the Head Start Bulletin on Curriculum (No. 67), was taken by Willa Choper Siegel. Willa, who authored the article on individualization that appeared on p. 22 of that same issue, is an Education Specialist in the Head Start Bureau's Education Services Branch, T: 202-205-4011, E: [wsiegel@acf.dhhs.gov](mailto:wsiegel@acf.dhhs.gov).*

### Put us on your mailing list!

We'd love to keep in touch with what's happening in your programs and communities.

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