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Content Analysis of Conflict Resolution Curricula

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Content Analysis of Conflict Resolution Curricula

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and

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This is dedicated to Noah and Asher for their support and patience with Mommy while she continues her education. Appreciation for Joey’s love and encouragement throughout these past two years is immense. Also, there is gratitude for Dr. Carter’s time and instructional efforts for the completion of this project.
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ABSTRACT

Violence in schools in various forms has become recognizable. Awareness of this situation has resulted with proliferation of curricula for conflict education. The purpose of this study was to analyze conflict resolution curricula designed for five to eight year olds. The study examined three issues formulated from the review of related literature: time and space, skill building, and developmentally appropriate practices.

The findings included time and physical space requirements for conflict resolution curricula, the suggested skills needed to peacefully resolve conflicts, and an evaluation of the developmentally appropriate activities in the curricula for early childhood ages 5-8.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

―Little pig! Little pig! Let me come in!” –Not by the hair of my chinny-chin-chin.” The three little pigs is a story that kids hear from a very early age. In the story, the three little pigs face many different conflicts. They face the pressure of finding the right materials to build a strong sturdy house. They also face the conflict associated with the big bad wolf. The little pigs experience conflict much like the kids of today. Today’s children face many scary situations, such as violence and bullying while at school as well as domestic violence, neglect, abuse and poverty at home.

―Social scientists have proven that children are drawn into antisocial, delinquent behavior as a result of problems in their family environment‖ (Gottman, 1997, p. 28). In order to deal successfully with those complicated conflict situations, it is our job as teachers to educate them so they too have the knowledge and skill set to succeed.

In recent years, an increasing number of children have fallen victim to school violence and bullying. Bullying is a form
of anti-social behavior that is learned from family, peers, and even
the media (Cohn & Canter, 2003). The Center for Disease Control
reported that in the last 12 months, 1 in 5 (19.9%) students
reported that they experienced being bullied on school property
(CDC, 2010). The National Center for Education Statistics of the
U.S. Department of Education asks a representative sample of
about 50,000 school teachers to rate problem areas that occur
within their school. Since 1987 physical conflicts among students
has steadily risen as well as student possession of weapons and
verbal abuse of school teachers (Compton & Jones, 2003). The
society and culture we live in plays a major role in shaping how
our children view violence. Violence in children is often a
reflection of their environment. Children witness acts of violence
in movies, video games, and in their neighborhoods. According to
Kivel and Creighton (1997, p. 2), —Violence happens when the
social bonds of the community break down and violence between
those who know each other is tolerated, expected, condoned, or
extolled.” In order to change the cycle of violence, children need
alternative ways to transform conflicts peacefully. Along with
families and communities, schools play an important role in
reshaping how these children view the world and how they will come to handle violence. One way to educate children on how to handle conflicts that occur is conflict resolution education (CRE). The Association for Conflict Resolution (2002, p. 1) states that CRE models and teaches, in culturally meaningful ways, a variety of processes, practices, and skills that help address individual, interpersonal, and institutional conflicts, and create safe and welcoming communities. These processes, practices and skills help individuals understand conflict processes and empower them to use communication and creative thinking to build relationships and manage and resolve conflicts fairly and peacefully.

According to Jones (2003), CRE has four main goals: to create a safe learning environment, create a constructive learning environment, create a constructive conflict community, and enhance students’ social and emotional development. Within the domain, creating a safe learning environment, are initiatives that aim to decrease violence, decrease intergroup conflicts, especially those caused by negative responses to race and cultural differences,
and to decrease incidences of suspensions, absenteeism, and dropout rates. The aim of CRE in creating a safe learning environment may overlap with violence prevention curriculum. Both CRE and violence prevention curricula aim to decrease aggressive behavior, but CRE programs focus more on the skills needed to transform the conflict thereby decreasing the aggressive nature of the situation. CRE programs may also overlap with the goals of social and emotional development. The goal of CRE is to create constructive learning environments. In doing so, CRE overlaps with Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs by helping students develop the necessary skills to create positive social interactions and social norms (Collaboration for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2002). In creating a constructive conflict community, CRE programs strive to increase parental and community involvement within the schools. CRE also aims to connect the programs in the schools to the surrounding community, thereby decreasing violence and restoring social justice. CRE programs that aim to reduce violence and develop social justice typically overlap with peace education and restorative practices.
Years ago in a small rural community, Jane Elliot, a teacher in the local elementary school, received a student question regarding why someone shot and killed Dr. Martin Luther King Junior. At this point Ms. Elliot conducted an experiment. She put brown collars on all of the blue-eyed students. That day the students that were wearing the brown collars and the blue eyes were discriminated against. They were put down, ignored, and made fun of. The next day the teacher gave all brown-eyed students the brown collars and they were treated similarly to the blue-eyed students the day before. At the end of this discrimination simulation, the class...
improved their empathy, understanding, and compassion. The experiment also created a change that was unexpected, the academic performance of her students increased (Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2000). There have been many research studies that have studied the “Elliot Effect.” It has become apparent that many of the classrooms that are similar to the Elliot classroom are characterized by safety and a sense of belonging.

Many schools experience similar conflicts. Some of the most common are based on race or ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or perceived socioeconomic status. When children face these types of conflicts, it may be difficult for them to feel safe or connected to the school community. Evidence tells us that academic achievement requires an environment that promotes safety and connectedness (Lane-Garon, 2003). It is important for children to experience positive social interactions and feel a sense of belonging with connectedness.

“Just as academic growth cannot be fostered in a psychologically or physically unsafe environment, neither can social or emotional growth occur in an environment where a child experiences chronic academic failure” (Heydenberk &
Heydenberk, 2000, p. 3). The prefrontal lobes of the brain are the location of emotional control and working memory. Research has shown that improving attention span and memory, along with releasing the mind of distress, improves a child’s ability to learn (Lantieri, 2008). When children experience anxiety, frustration, or extreme emotional responses, the brain has less working memory available to process the information that they are trying to learn. CRE programs have a goal to educate students so they can connect in meaningful ways and become proficient in expressing their emotions constructively while they experience caring relationships and increase their ability to retain important information.

CRE also provides an alternative to the current traditional system of discipline. Expulsion, suspension, and other discipline methods that remove the child from the situation do nothing to show the child ways to constructively cope or transform the conflict. CRE has the potential to help transform conflicts because it gives those who feel powerless the skills needed for constructive problem solving, such as fulfilling unmet needs. Although it may be hard to see, conflict analysis has the ability to promote personal growth, generate personal insight and help establish and realize
personal values. Understanding conflict can also produce opportunities for these students to learn and create chances for mutual achievement. CRE programs increase skills in listening, critical thinking, and problem solving (Crawford & Bodine, 1996). These skills are necessary for proactively responding to conflict.

When the skills needed to peacefully resolve conflicts are omitted, children lose relevant education that they need. The denial of these skills does not further the likelihood that many of today's children will grow to become responsible citizens who can problem solve to meet everyone's needs, thereby maintaining peace in their community.

The need for CRE in the past has led to notable amounts of research related to this topic. Between 1988 and 2000, Johnson and Johnson, conducted 17 different studies on the effectiveness of conflict resolution. In 1991, Olweus researched the effectiveness of a Bullying Prevention program that he developed on Norwegian children ages 8-16. In 2000, Jones and Kmita examined the results of current research and evaluation of school-based CRE programs. In 2003, Burrell, Zirbel, and Allen conducted a meta-analysis on 43 studies of peer mediation programs.
It has been over a decade since research (1999) first examined student characteristics in the facilitation of CRE. There is a need for current research to be conducted in order to discern whether previous interventions have had any impact on diverse populations or socioeconomic status. There are hundreds of curricula on the market for CRE, SEL, bully prevention, violent prevention and peace education. Information regarding these curricula would provide perspectives on the current status of CRE. This awareness will, hopefully, make future selection of CRE programs more successful.

Program Analysis

This study involved a content analysis of multiple CRE program curricula. Included in the analysis were curricula that were designed for SEL, violence prevention, bully prevention, peace education, and restorative practices. These data sources were selected because they had components of conflict resolution in their programs.

Analyzing a wide variety of curricula assures a more complete picture of the CRE materials that are available for use in
and out the classroom. Further, with multiple curricula, conclusions from the research may also be used to represent some of the experiences of classrooms in other regions. The curricula that were examined were from various sources, including schools, the university library, and professionals in the field. Some are included on “best practices” lists while others were not included in recommendations. The study data were found in obtainable curricula which related to the skills that are needed for peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Chapter One has provided an overview of an important issue concerning children and educators today, conflict resolution education. Chapter Two will discuss the results from past research concerning CRE programs and other programs that are relatable to CRE. Chapter Three will include a description of the methodology used for this study. Results and discussion will be contained in Chapter Four, and Chapter Five will summarize this study and offer conclusions regarding its findings.
Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

The review of related literature begins with an examination of past research involving conflict resolution education. Three issues emerged from the research: time and space, skill building, and developmentally appropriate practices.

The review also includes literature examining SEL, peace education, violence prevention education, bully prevention education, and restorative practices. An investigation of recurring trends within the research is also presented.

Conflict Resolution Education

A review of related literature evidences the importance of conflict education at the elementary level to establish positive relationships and social norms. Morton Deutsch‘s (1973) research on conflict resolution tested factors that influenced the constructive or destructive nature of a conflict. Deutsch‘s conclusion, which he labeled Deutsch‘s crude law of social relations, was that —the characteristic process and effects elicited by a given type of social relationship (cooperative or competitive) tend also to elicit that
type of social relationship” (p. 365). Meaning that cooperation will breed cooperation, and competition will breed competition. In his research on cooperation and competition, Deutsch stated that “It is, of course, these very gains from cooperation which will create a web of interdependence that gives each side a positive interest in the other’s wellbeing” (p. 157).

Johnson and Johnson (1996) also focused on the effects of cooperation on conflict resolution by studying peer mediation. In mediation, “a third party helps disputants resolve conflicts by enabling parties to find their own solutions” (Picard & Melchin, 2007, p. 36). The results of this study showed positive results for efficacy in knowledge about conflicts, pro-social behavior, negotiation skills, and positive gains in classroom climate.

There have been multiple studies conducted that look at the effectiveness of peer mediation programs with positive results (Burrell, Zirbel, & Allen, 2003; Gentry & Benenson, 1992; Johnson & Johnson, 1996, 2001; Korn, 1994; Nance, 1996; Winston, 1997). This review briefly mentions peer mediation programs that show promise at the elementary level. The study examined curricula that were used with student's ages 5 to 8;
students this young have not typically developed the skills and aptitudes necessary to participate in curricula based solely on the mediation model.

Negotiation is another form of conflict resolution that is used in many schools throughout the USA. There are two programs that are generally mentioned when researching negotiation programs used at the elementary level; Talk It Out and Teaching Students to be Peacemakers (TSP). I will focus on TSP because it has the most information available. TSP is a program for K-12 students. The program begins in kindergarten and builds on skills with each subsequent year. Johnson and Johnson (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of 17 evaluation studies that examined the effectiveness of TSP in eight schools in two countries. Students ranged from K-9 grade and were from diverse backgrounds. The results indicated that students learned the conflict resolution procedures, retained the knowledge and were able to use the skills in conflicts in and outside of school settings. William Corsaro (2003) has conducted ethnographic studies of children for more than 30 years. In his comparative research he has found that —conflict contributes to the social organization of
peer groups, the development and strengthening of friendships, reaffirmation of cultural values, and individual development and display of self.” (p. 162). He has explained that most conflicts or disputes are taken over by adults and that children yield to those who have more power and authority. When children are left to handle their own conflict, Corsaro has witnessed, even at the kindergarten level, highly complex negotiations occur.

Negotiation as a conflict resolution tool has shown to be useful, but there are important limitations to negotiation techniques that should be noted. Students involved in negotiations should always have the ability to refuse. If there is a power imbalance, such as with bullying, negotiation could cause the power imbalance to increase, thereby causing more harm. Barbara Porro (1996) points out that prejudice, discrimination, bias, racism, and scapegoating are issues beyond the scope of negotiation.

From 1997 until 1999 an evaluation took place of the ICCCR program, the Peaceful Kids Early Childhood Social-Emotional Conflict Resolution (ECSEL) program and curricula for children ages two through six. The evaluation looked at 18 classrooms in Head Start centers in three cities: Boston, Dallas,
and Los Angeles. The results indicated that children in the intervention group showed increases in assertiveness, cooperation, and self-control. The results also indicated a decrease in aggressiveness and anti-social behavior (Sandy & Boardman, 2001).

The most evaluated CRE program that found was the Responding to Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP). The RCCP program was evaluated by Aber, Brown, and Jones (2003). The study included information collected on 11,160 first to sixth grade students in the fall and spring for two school years at public schools in New York City. The results of the study indicate a decrease in attitudes and behaviors that tend to predict aggression and violence. The results also showed possible student traits that would improve academic success. The study also indicated that students in classrooms where the program was not used as outlined or intended did worse on dependent measures than those who participated in the control group.

Orpinas and Horne (2003) conducted research on the Peaceable Place program that has been in use and developed by the Menendez Foundation. The curriculum aims to teach K-5 students
skills in anger management, respect, and effective communication. The research showed a 40% decrease among K-2 grade students self-reported aggression and 19% decrease in self-reported victimization.

Peace works is a conflict resolution curriculum that aims to promote pro-social behavior, enhance school climate, and teach parents constructive problem solving skills with anger management. This curriculum contains grade-specific curricula for grades K-12. The Peacemaking Skills for Little Kids is designed for kindergarten through second grades. The curriculum has six parts: communication building, rules for fighting fair, understanding conflict, the role of perceptions, anger management, and effective communication. A mixed methods approach was used to evaluate this curriculum. 10 semi-rural schools were used (eight elementary and two middle schools) throughout Miami-Dade county. The results of this study suggest that the use of the Peace works in classrooms improves conflict resolution behavior and that when implemented properly conflict resolution curricula are useful and beneficial (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, 1996).
In 2007, Heydenberk & Heydenberk studied 71 kindergarten and first grade students from low and middle socioeconomic backgrounds. The intervention was a social-emotional literacy and problem solving program. Students and their teachers received seven one-hour training sessions. Pretest and posttest results showed that after the intervention students could constructively resolve conflicts. The results also showed a decrease in verbal and physical aggression.

A review of related literature shows that SEL and CRE curricula have very similar goals and both aim to increase social and emotional intelligence, reduce classroom behavior and disruptions and increase conflict resolution. Most of the CRE programs that are used with lower elementary grade levels aim to educate children about emotional awareness and empathy. Related literature about SEL had some overlapping program characteristics.

Social and Emotional Learning

After noticing that children's behaviors were usually controlled by others doing the thinking for them, Shure and
Spivack (1974) decided to research what would happen if children were able to guide their own behavior. What they learned from their research was that children as young as four contained a set of problem-solving skills that could determine the proficient from the less skilled children. The skills that were identified helped the researchers develop the I Can Problem Solve (ICPS) curriculum. The curriculum can be used for preschool through 6th grades. The curriculum has two parts: pre-problem-solving and problem solving skills. After evaluating the program the developers found that the ICPS curriculum increased the skills learned through the program, reduced and prevents impulsive behaviors, and encouraged caring and sharing (Shure & Glaser, 2001; Shure & Spivack, 1982; Spivack & Shure, 1974).

There has been growing agreement that effective SEL should be integrated into the pre-K-12 curriculum (Gardner, Feldman, & Krechevsky, 1998; Goleman, 1995; Lieberman, 1995; Noddings, 1992). SEL is important for lifetime achievement (Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998), family success (Dix, 1991; Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996) and for future work achievement (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). The PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking
Strategies) curriculum was developed for use at the elementary grade levels to increase students’ social emotional competencies (Kusche and Greenberg, 1995). The PATHS curriculum is designed to help regular and special needs children develop problem-solving, self-control, and emotional awareness and regulation skills. The PATHS program was evaluated by Greenberg, Kusche and colleagues in 1995. The study sample included 286 children (167 males, 119 females). Sixty-seven percent of the sample size were in regular education classrooms and 33% were in self-contained special education classrooms. Two schools were assigned the treatment condition and two were assigned to the control. The results of this research showed that children who received PATHS learned significantly more vocabulary for naming feelings than the control group in both regular classrooms and the special education classrooms. The results also indicate that PATHS seems to influence children’s fluency and comfort in discussing their emotions. The evaluators also mentioned that although the children seemed to increase in their vocabulary words for emotions, the program had a smaller effect on the children’s knowledge of how their emotions work.
(Greenberg et al., 1995). Another study of the PATHS curriculum was conducted with over 6,500 students from 198 intervention classrooms and 180 matched comparison classrooms. The design was a pretest-posttest control group with random assignment of classrooms from schools in 4 U.S. locations with higher than normal crime rates (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999). The results of this study showed a decrease in aggression, hyperactive-disruptive behavior and improved classroom climate.

Longitudinal studies have identified risk factors that are likely to increase the chances of problem behaviors in adolescence and characteristics that may decrease the chances of delinquent behaviors in adolescence (e.g., Dryfoos, 1990; Hawkins, Catalano, & Brewer, 1995; Maguin & Loeber, 1996; Newcomb, Maddahain, & Bentler, 1986; Yoshikawa, 1994). The research indicates that social emotional skills along with other pro-social behaviors have a long-term effect on future academic success (Elias, Gara, Schuyler, Branden-Muller, & Sayette, 1991; Hawkins, Smith, & Catalano, 2004). The Raising Healthy Children program is designed to teach children social emotional skills so that potential problem behaviors
do not arise in adolescence (Haggerty & Cummings, 2006). The program is being evaluated by the Social Development Research Group (SDRG) at the University of Washington. The research began with 1,040 students from ten elementary schools that were matched and randomly assigned to the intervention program or the comparison conditions. The programs main focus is on the development of teachers. Teachers are educated on the tools and skills needed to provide students with an atmosphere of learning that does not focus on problem behaviors and disturbances. Research that has been previously conducted by SDRG on the RHC program show a reduction in children’s risk for later behavior problems (SDRG).

The Open Circle curriculum is used in classrooms in elementary schools throughout the Northeast. It was established in 1987 and has impacted the lives of over 200,000 children in diverse settings (Koteff & Seige, 2006). The program has been evaluated using students who received at least two years of the Open Circle curriculum in elementary school. The study looked at the ability of those students who received the intervention to adjust to the transition between elementary school and middle school.
The outcomes show promising results. The girls who received the Open Circle curriculum for at least two years showed an increase in self-assertiveness compared to those who had not participated in the program. Boys with at least two years participation in the program reported a higher degree of social skills and self-control.

Establishing a caring environment is important for children. Children need to feel like they are valued in order to form an attachment to the school and community. Students who feel secure and respected can better apply themselves to learning. In order to lay the foundation for SEL, teachers need to establish an environment of trust and respect. In SEL as well as in CRE programs, learning empathy is imperative. “Empathy, in its most basic form is the ability to feel what another person is feeling” (Gottman, 1997, p. 73). In order for CRE and SEL to be effective, students must be able to relate, understand and feel what their classmates feel. It is essential for those who are teaching CRE and SEL to recognize conflicts and model the behaviors needed to resolve the conflicts peacefully. If educators can communicate empathy and show emotional understanding, it gives credibility to the child’s experiences and helps them develop resiliency.
According to Rose and Gallup (2000), the American public supports attention to CRE, SEL and other curricula aimed to reduce aggressive and violent behavior in today’s schools. A 2000 Phi Delta Kappa Gallup poll found that 76 percent of respondents wanted more in-school education to promote racial and ethical understanding and tolerance, 85 percent wanted schools to offer more drug and alcohol abuse education.

Johnathan Cohen (2001) posited that social emotional intelligence involves the decoding of others as well as ourselves. That ability provides the foundation for problem solving, as well as the means by which we are enabled to grapple with a wide variety of learning challenges: how to modulate our emotional experiences; how to communicate; how to generate creative solutions; how to form friendships and working relationships; how to cooperate, and at the same time, become self-motivating (Shure & Glaser, 2001, p. 6).

In order for children to perform academically they need time and opportunities to think and evaluate their actions and feelings. Fray and Doyle (2001) looked at classroom meetings and the positive
effects that they have on children’s emotional intelligence. Giving these children the time they need for personal growth allows them opportunities to become self-aware and increase internal motivation. Lewis, Schaps, and Watson (1996) explained that –students work harder, achieve more, and attribute more importance to schoolwork in classes in which they feel liked, accepted, and respected by the teacher and fellow students” (p. 18). Wilson and colleagues (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of 165 published studies of outcomes of school based prevention programs. The findings suggested that regular SEL program implementation resulted in improved outcomes related to nonattendance, a factor that is important in determining how attached children feel to their school and community.

The No Child Left Behind act of 2002 contains several guidelines that are relevant to CRE and SEL. NCLB requires that schools offer students a broad array of services and development activities that are designed to compliment regular academic programs. One major concern of NCLB is closing the achievement gap between high and low performing children and preventing at-risk youth from dropping out. CRE and SEL
programs provide a foundation for these students to learn the skills needed to perform well in school as well as in life.

In the pamphlet, Social and Emotional Learning, published by IAE, Elias (2003) discussed the importance of teaching the whole child. According to Elias, social-emotional learning provides a way of teaching and organizing the school and classrooms so that children can learn the skills needed to manage life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, communicating effectively, being sensitive to others’ needs and getting along with others. “When schools implement high-quality social-emotional learning programs effectively, the academic achievement of children increases, incidences of problem behaviors decrease, and the relationships that surround each child are improved” (Elias, 2003, p. 7).

In order for CRE or SEL to become integrated into the classroom and school community, teachers need the opportunities to increase their emotional competencies so they are able to model these practices for their students. Teachers need the same emotional competencies as students. Daniel Goleman’s (1995) comment in his book *Emotional Intelligence:*
Whether or not there is a class explicitly devoted to emotional literacy may matter far less than how these lessons are taught. There is perhaps no subject where the quality of the teacher matters so much, since how a teacher handles her class is in itself a model, a de facto lesson in emotional competence— or the lack thereof. (p. 279)

Social and emotional intelligence is difficult to measure. Most of the research that I have reviewed contains information from a narrow pool of individuals and groups. There is a need for more research on the positive effects of social and emotional learning that is not conducted by the same pool of researchers.

Bully Prevention

Bully prevention programs also overlap a great deal with CRE. “Schools that have a solid conflict resolution program in place are ideally positioned to engage in bullying prevention as a next step” (Title, B. in Jones and Compton, 2003). Bully prevention programs have become, in many states, mandated. There have been a number of shootings and deaths that have occurred because students were being bullied while at school. The
majority of information used comes from the work conducted by Dan Olweus of the University of Bergen in Norway and was published in 1993. His work, *Bullying at School: What we Know and What We Can Do*, has called for schools to take responsibility for the safety of the children who are or have experienced being bullied. Olweus discovered many misconceptions to beliefs that we currently hold to be accurate. One misconception that was discovered through the research is that children need to solve their own problems. When children are experiencing being bullied there is a significant power imbalance and many times the children who are victims cannot solve the situation on their own. Peer mediation would not work in these situations because those who bully also know the art of manipulation. The next misconception is that victims should stand up to bullies. In some cases this may be true, but in most cases the victim has been specifically targeted because of their inability to fight back. Olweus found that although boys are more likely to bully, girls often use more subtle and indirect ways to harass their peers, such as slander, spreading rumors, and manipulation friendships. It has also been a belief that bullies have low self-esteem. According to Olweus’ research bullies may
actually have a higher self-esteem than previously believed. He found that bullies tended to have higher self-esteem and little anxiety and insecurities. It is the victims that usually have low self-esteem. According to Title, bullies suffer from overinflated self-esteem and narcissism. These bullies thrive on emotional control. The good news is that Olweus found that bullying is a learned behavior and that it can be unlearned. The evaluation of Olweus’ program was conducted in the United States in 12 elementary schools in the Philadelphia area (Black, 2003). This research showed significant decreases in self-reported bullying and victimization and a decrease in adult witnessed bullying throughout the school. Violence prevention programs also aim to decrease bullying behavior, increase social emotional skills and reduce aggression and violent behavior; in doing so, it teaches students how to peacefully resolve conflicts.

*Violence Prevention*

The Second Step program is used in the Duval County Public School (DCPS) system as a means to reduce violence. First published in 1988 by the Committee for Children, the curriculum aims to teach children empathy, impulse control, and anger
management. The information that is contained in the curriculum is based on over forty years of research in SEL (e.g. Bandura, 1973, 1986; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Eisenberg, Fabes, & Lasoya, 1997; Feshbach, 1984; Halberstadt, Denham, & Dunsmore, 2001; Kendall, 1993; Kendall & Braswell, 1985; Luria, 1961; Spivack & Shure, 1982). The curriculum is used from preschool through middle school (Grossman et al., 1997) and is used in around 20,000 schools (Duffell, Beland, & Frey, 2006). There are approximately 30 lessons that range between 30 and 45 minutes each. The curriculum is designed for use one or two times per week. A pretest-posttest design was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Second Step curriculum. 790 Second and third grade students were observed during the study (Grossman et al., 1997). The researchers were looking for a decrease in physical aggression and an increase in social behaviors among those who were in the control group. The observations conducted by the researchers confirmed that treatment effects were maintained over a six-month period.

Medford Public schools in Massachusetts have also used the Second Step curriculum. Teachers at Columbus Elementary
use self-assessment tools to evaluate their first grade students. The assessments show positive gains in student social and emotional development and behavior. Each year the school uses survey results from parents and teachers to assess the results of the program. The pretest-posttest assessments from these groups present a positive picture of students who demonstrate the needed skills to think before reacting to a conflict situation (Mindness, Chen, & Brenner, 2008).

*Peace Education*

There is evidence supporting the need for CRE programs to add components of Peace education or Human Rights Education (HRE) into existing curricula (Jones, 2006; UNESCO, 2002). Peace education is a responsive pedagogy that develops knowledge, skills and dispositions for peace-building, for transformation of conflicts to prevent or stop violent responses to them, as well as for resolution of conflicts” (Carter, 2008, p.141). UNICEF defines peace education as

The process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will
enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level (UNESCO, 2002, p. 6; UNICEF, 1999, p. 1).

According to Johnson and Johnson (2010) peace education must be based on research in order for it to survive and be effective. There are three main theories that validate peace education and CRE programs. Social interdependence theory indicates that domination is what exists in a competitive environment and consensual peace comes from an environment that fosters cooperation. Constructive controversy theory is based on the ability to have an open conversation about differing views. Integrative negotiation theory includes having the ability to make decision that will maximize the benefits for all. Kathy Bickmore (1997) stated that, "Children often don't understand peace as a dynamic equilibrium that depends on citizens' participation in (learned) processes for handling conflict” (p. 4). Schools can help children by showing them how to begin to see themselves as citizens (Adler, 1994).
When children begin to see themselves in this context, they can then begin to internalize the skills for managing conflict. “Like violence, nonviolence is learned behavior” (Bickmore, 1997, p. 4).

When children receive peace education in formal and informal settings, they develop an understanding of conflict situations, skills to nurture healthy relationships with people who are like and who may be different from themselves, knowledge and power associated with social and political systems, and skills to use in the resolution of conflicts (Deutsch, 1993).

Eleanor Roosevelt stated that, “It isn’t enough to talk about peace, one must believe in it. And it isn’t enough to believe in it; one must work at it” (Active for Peace, 2012). We are currently in a time when the world has been impacted by war and hard times; “During war and conflict we all feel powerless, especially young people” (Weber, 2006, p. 7). There may be those who do not feel that children would benefit from peace education as a part of a CRE program. The reality is that children experience violence in a number of ways. Refugee students in the United States have frequently experienced violence (Kinzie et al., 1991; Mollica et al., 1997) and research indicates that these students experience a great
deal of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms (Sack et al., 1999). Research also suggests that children in concentrated urban poverty experience daily exposure to violence (Greene, 1996). ‘...kids, now more than ever, need skills for living and working together in an increasingly interdependent world—skills in such areas as handling conflicts, managing intense emotions, and making wise choices for themselves and their community’ (Compton, 2003, p. 3). Although some believe that children are unaware of what is happening in the world around them, it is important to notice that they too have fear of terrorism, questions about the military, and uneasiness about what is happening around them. Children do not leave these fears and anxiety at the classroom door; they bring these issues and emotions into the classroom with them (Castle, Beasley & Skinner, 1996; Jarrin, 2002). During these stressful times teachers have the ability to calm fears and help develop an understanding about peace and conflict (Aldridge, Cellitti, McCorquodale, & Moses, 2003).

Peace education, as evident in UNICEF programs, includes a great number of skills that CRE programs also aim to increase:
cooperation, negotiation, communication, decision-making, problem-solving, coping with emotions, self-awareness, empathy, critical and creative thinking, dealing with peer pressure, awareness of risk, assertiveness, and preparation for the world of work (Baldo & Furniss, 1998). UNICEF also includes in their life skills category conflict resolution skills. (UNICEF, 1999)

Johan Galtung (1995), a world-renowned leader in conflict education, noted that peace studies are transitioning from research and knowledge to more skill building. Narrowing the focus from research to skill building makes it easier to compare and integrate peace education with CRE programs.

Peace education involves three different areas where conflicts occur: intrapersonal (within ourselves), interpersonal (within social settings), and systemic or structural conflicts (global). Most of the research available for conflict resolution focus on and aim to educate children on interpersonal relationships. Adding components of peace education to CRE programs would enhance CRE curricula that have narrow focus. Society as well as children may benefit from developmentally
appropriate curricula that increase the knowledge and skill sets needed to handle intrapersonal and systemic conflicts, as well as interpersonal conflicts.

Restorative Practices

As long as there are harmful responses to conflict, there will be opportunities for restoration. The current use of discipline does not address the needs of those who have been harmed and it does not help the ones doing the harming learn and practice empathy (Lerley & Claassen-Wilson, 2003). The goal of restorative practices is to repair the harm that was done when the wrong doing took place. It also aims to hold the offender accountable to those who they have directly harmed. Karp and Breslin (2001) stated that, “when school rules or the criminal law is broken, harm is defined not in terms of the technical infraction but by the effects on other members of the community” (p. 252). This gives those who have been harmed a voice in an undesirable situation. There are many restorative programs being used throughout the world. Most of these programs are derived from peacemaking strategies used by indigenous cultures and tribal courts.” Howard Zehr, a leader in this movement, established
three questions to guide restorative practices: What is the harm that was done? How can that harm be repaired? And who is responsible for this repair? Restorative practices are frequently used in the criminal justice system, but also have a place in the education system. Victim-offender mediation, group conferencing, and peace circles are among the most used types of restorative practices in schools. At the early grades it may be hard to conduct victim-offender mediations due to the developmental capacities of the students, but group conferencing and peace circles can be used to handle wrongs that have taken place among the younger students. An example of when restorative practices can be used is:

If one student ruins another child’s art project, the teacher might choose to sit down with the students at a later time to help them — make things right.” If the offender takes responsibility for what happened, and both students agree to participate, the teacher would help them come up with an agreement to repair the harm done. (Lerley & Claassen-Wilson, 2003, p. 203)

Minnesota public schools have implemented a variety of restorative practices within their elementary and middle schools.
From 1998-2001, the Minnesota Department of Education evaluated restorative practices in four school districts. The results showed a thirty to fifty percent decrease in suspension rates. One of the elementary schools in the study showed a reduction in referrals from seven a day to around one per day (Zaslaw, 2010).

Another restorative program that is showing promise is restorative justice in the Lansing School District (LSD). The program began seven years ago with one elementary school (von der Embse et al., 2009). The administrators of the LSD pilot program presented their findings to the Michigan Board of Education. After review of the results the program was added to the “model program” list.

Data submitted shows that the program includes over 1,500 students with 507 out of 522 cases resolved, 11 expulsions averted, and more than 1,600 suspension days saved. Long-term surveys indicate that 90% of the students reported that they have learned new skills to avoid or resolve conflicts (2009). The results from this case study are from all schools that reported, not just the elementary schools that participate in the program.

Research on restorative practices is minimal, especially in the lower elementary grades. —The amount of scholarly data about
restorative justice in schools is still limited due to the fact that within the pervasive culture of zero tolerance culture few schools employ it” (Glanzer, 2005, p. 105).

Many schools use a variety of programs to help decrease the risks of problem behaviors, violence, and dropout rates that may have a negative impact on student’s academic success. When schools use multiple programs to address these issues it becomes difficult to have a coordinated effort. When schools implement multiple programs, programs compete for instructional time and energy. When programs are poorly implemented, they do not tend to be sustained from year to year. If a program does not become ingrained into the system, it often times gets left on the shelf. These boarder line programs are not very effective and frequently lack the support that is needed to reinforce healthy behaviors. If the programs that are used are weakly coordinated, they will not succeed, and may therefore be viewed by teachers as nothing more than a fad in the education system (Payton et al., 2008). Every school is different and should find the program that works best for their community and environment. After reviewing the research it is evident that children can benefit from CRE programs. These
programs offer children a valuable lesson in self-discovery and evaluation. In life, as it is in schools, it is important to know your emotions and have the skills necessary to evaluate the emotion and proceed in the most effective way possible. More often than not children are unaware of the physical signs of emotions and may not think before they react. CRE programs should empower children to learn their body cues and make adjustments to how they respond. For example, if a child with anger issues learns that anger does not always have to be explosive, that child can learn the triggers of their anger, how to slow down and think before reacting, and decrease the chances that they react in a way that could potentially cause an unnecessary conflict.

Chapter Two reviewed research related to CRE, SEL, bully prevention, violence prevention, peace education, and restorative practices. Trends in findings noted throughout the many years of research were identified, along with possible explanations. The discussion has included many themes/issues that have emerged from the research. It now turns to three apparent issues: time and space, skill building, and developmentally appropriate practices. Chapter Three will describe the methodology used in this study
that is based in part on the methodology used in other related research.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The methodology used for this study consisted of a content analysis of multiple curricula that were designed to educate students on the knowledge and skills needed for conflict resolution (see Appendix A) as well as other types of character education. The analysis was divided into sections which are in accordance with the themes around issues discussed in Chapter Two. The themes are: time and space, skill building, and developmentally appropriate practices to name a few. Chapter Four will discuss the data in terms of these themes. Chapter Five presents the conclusions from this research.

Curricula were analyzed to determine if their lessons could be easily utilized in classrooms. Current teachers have discussed with the researcher in professional conversations how sufficient instructional time is an issue. Many conversations began with a statement similar to, “We just don’t have enough time.” In order to determine the temporal and physical requirements, analysis of each curriculum occurred with the stated time and space required
for instruction. If the outline of the lesson did not include the time and space needed, the average instructional time was determined by similar lessons in the same curriculum. This information is included below in Table 1.1.

Data were also coded based on the relationship between emotional intelligence and CRE. Jones and Compton (2003) outlined a six-step model that appears in many of the CRE and other curricula. The six-step model is:

1. Calm down; agree to solve the problem

2. No name-calling or put-downs.

3. Use “I messages” to express your feelings and needs.

4. Listen to the other person carefully.

5. Look for solutions that are best for both.

6. Choose the best solution.

These skills are essential preconditions for children to resolve conflict. This research project examined conflict resolution in early childhood. In order for conflict resolution
curricula to work for young children, they must be able to recognize what they are feeling (self-awareness), and then self-soothe (handle emotions). This involves being able to delay and control impulses which at times proves to be a difficult task for some young children. Using “I messages” is a skill that requires the ability to identify their feelings, have the necessary vocabulary, and an environment that they feel is safe enough to open up. In CRE curricula, it is important to not only listen for anger, or for rebuttal, but to really listen with empathy so that a need-fulfilling solution can be formed. In this section data coding was based on how many of the six steps from this model are included in the lessons within the curriculum.

Finally the research examined developmentally appropriate practices in each curriculum based on The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). According to NAEYC, developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) is a framework of principles and guidelines for best practice in the care and education of young children, birth through age 8. It is grounded both in the research on how young children develop and learn and in what is known
about education effectiveness. The principles and guidelines outline practice that promotes young children’s optimal learning and development (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2012).

The developmentally appropriate practices for early childhood, including kindergarten through second grade, focus on using activities such as stories, role-playing, posters of emotions, puppets, and dramatic play. There is a range of activities that can be used in this age group. In order to determine if the curricula were appropriate for early childhood, data were coded based on the types of activities in the curriculum and how well the activities follow DAP guidelines.

Chapter Three described the methodology used in accordance with three issues discussed in Chapter Two. The three issues discussed are: time and space, skill building, and developmentally appropriate practices. Chapter Four has the discussion of the findings.
Chapter Four

Data Analysis

It has been the purpose of this study to evaluate conflict resolution curricula, and to analyze the content of each curriculum based on three themes that were apparent from the literature. The three themes again are: time and space, skill building, and developmentally appropriate practices for ages 5 to 8. This chapter describes the findings from the analysis of the conflict resolution curricula in terms of the three themes identified in the literature. The analysis began with examination of each curriculum in terms of time and space suggested by the curriculum, six-step model of suggested skills identified as essential in SEL, and DAP for children ages 5 to 8 established by NAYCE.

The analysis began with examination of the CRE curriculum in terms of the time and space suggested by each curriculum. The total number of minutes and space suggested for each curriculum is given, along with the suggested space needed to implement the lessons. The results suggest that, in most of the
CRE curricula evaluated, the needed time per lesson is around 45 minutes. The results also suggest that the physical space needed is either a small section of the room, such as the classroom meeting space, or if the whole class is involved, then the space suggested does not exceed the size of the classroom where the students would normally work.

Table 1.1 summarizes the time and physical space suggested for each of the curricula.
TABLE 1.1 TEMPORAL AND PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CURRICULUM</th>
<th>AVERAGE TIME FOR A LESSON</th>
<th>PHYSICAL SPACE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EP1</td>
<td>40-45 minutes</td>
<td>meeting space for whole class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCK</td>
<td>20-25 minutes</td>
<td>sharing circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCR</td>
<td>varies depending on type of conflict</td>
<td>varies; small space to work on interpersonal conflicts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>40-45 minutes/10 lessons</td>
<td>classroom space is adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIO</td>
<td>20+ minutes/five main lessons</td>
<td>conflict corner/regular classroom space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR</td>
<td>40-45 minutes/12 lessons</td>
<td>small group not whole group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEI</td>
<td>20-40 minutes</td>
<td>classroom space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4S</td>
<td>Implemented throughout the day</td>
<td>classroom/peace space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNF</td>
<td>Activism through classroom projects</td>
<td>classroom space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAP</td>
<td>time not easily identifiable</td>
<td>classroom/whole school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the time and physical space suggested by each curriculum, the six-step model used by many CRE curricula was examined. The six-step model again is:

1. Calm down; agree to solve the problem

2. No name-calling or put-downs.

3. Use "I-messages" to express your feelings and needs.

4. Listen to the other person carefully.

5. Look for solutions that are best for both.

6. Choose the best solution.

The curricula that contain the six steps mentioned above are: Elementary Perspectives 1, Caring and Capable kids, and Creative Conflict Resolution. The results suggest that two out of the three CRE specific curricula contain all six components from the six-step model. Talk it Out, a conflict resolution curriculum, discusses "How to talk it Out." In this curriculum there are six steps that are similar to the six-step model mentioned above, but vary slightly. The six steps in this curriculum are:
2. Talk and listen to each other.
3. Find out what you both need.
5. Choose the idea you both like.
6. Make a plan. Go for it! (p. 10)

Strong Start, a social emotional learning curriculum, contains two of the four steps from the six-step model: calm down and listen carefully. Fostering Emotional Intelligence, a social and emotional learning curriculum, mentions one out of the six steps: listens carefully. Seeing Red, and anger management curriculum, contains four out of the six steps: calm down, no name calling or put downs, uses "I" messages, chooses best solution. Connect 4 Success, an SEL curriculum based out of Texas, mentions five out of the six steps: calm down, no name calling or put downs, listens carefully, looks for win/win solutions, and chooses best solution. That's not Fair and Activity Assemblies to Promote Peace, are both peace education curricula, both curricula contain two of the six steps: calm down and listen carefully. The evaluation of the curricula suggests that the two skills most important for children to
have in order to resolve conflict peacefully are self-control, and the ability to listen carefully. See Table 1.2. A list of all evaluated curricula can be found in Appendix A.

The third set of data collected in this study included information regarding developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood. See table 1.3. The analysis of this data suggests that, although some curricula contain activities that are suitable for ages 5-8, other curricula do not seem to be developmentally appropriate for early childhood. The evaluation of the curricula suggests that although the curricula may not use activities that are developmentally appropriate for early childhood, the teacher often times, can alter and tailor the lesson plan to accommodate activities and practices suitable for early childhood. Chapter four presented data from the content analysis of multiple curricula. It also provided discussion of these data. Chapter Five will offer a summary, conclusion, and recommendations derived from the results of this study.
### TABLE 1.2 SIX-STEP MODEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIX STEPS</th>
<th>CURRICULUM</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>calm down</td>
<td>EP1</td>
<td>CCK</td>
<td>CCR</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>TIO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no name calling or put downs</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses &quot;I messages&quot;</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens carefully</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looks for win/win solutions</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chooses best solution</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIX STEPS</th>
<th>CURRICULUM</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>calm down</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>FEI</td>
<td>C4S</td>
<td>TNF</td>
<td>AAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no name calling or put downs</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses &quot;I messages&quot;</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens carefully</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looks for win/win solutions</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chooses best solution</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Curriculum Titles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EP1-Elementary Perspectives 1</th>
<th>CCR-Creative Conflict Resolution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCK-Caring and Capable Kids</td>
<td>FEI-Fostering Emotional Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Strong Start</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIO-Talk It Out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR-Seeing Red</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4S-Connect 4 Success</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNF-That’s Not Fair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURRICULUM</td>
<td>DAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP1</td>
<td>yes/some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCK</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCR</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIO</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEI</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4S</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNF</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAP</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Five

Conclusion

This chapter offers a conclusion derived from the results of this research. Conflict and violence in schools are issues that have concerned past and present educators. The review of related literature in Chapter Two indicated three themes concerning conflict resolution curriculum. These themes are: time and space, skill building, and developmentally appropriate practices for young children ages 5-8. These three themes were formulated and findings from past research concerning them were discussed.

Past research has suggested that most people view conflict negatively and conflicts as difficult to handle (Beaty, 1995). The trend in how children learn to handle conflicts is in need of help if violence in our schools is going to change. This study provides information regarding young children and curricula designed to help them learn peaceful means of resolving conflicts.

Chapters Three and Four stated the methodology and findings of the research. The three themes derived from the review of related literature were used in the methodology, a content
analysis of conflict resolution curricula. In accordance with these three themes, the findings included information about the time needed for lessons and the physical space requirements suggested by the curriculum. The six-step model was also evaluated suggesting two skills that are needed to handle conflicts peacefully, self-control and the ability to listen carefully to others. The issue of developmentally appropriate practices was also discussed using the activities noted in each curriculum. As mentioned in Chapter Four, some of the curricula evaluated have a stated age range from K-6, but do not contain activities that are thought to be appropriate for younger children, ages 5-8. It can be argued that even though the curriculum may not be developmentally appropriate for early childhood, teachers have the ability to alter and tailor the lesson to include practices appropriate for the younger children in kindergarten or who may be considered immature for the age group.

It is recommended that further research be conducted to further evaluate CRE curricula, as well as other character education curricula, in early childhood and the elementary grade levels. According to many professional conversations conducted
by the researcher, high stake assessments and time limitations have all but eliminated instruction designed to improve the social and emotional skills of our nation’s youngest students.

Findings from this study should encourage teachers to take responsibility in helping to develop the skills necessary for children to peacefully resolve conflicts despite competing time constraints.
Appendix A

Curricula Used in the Study


Porro, B. (1996). *Talk it out: Conflict resolution for the elementary*


References


program: Social-emotional skills for violence prevention.

In M. J. Elias, & H. Arnold (Eds.), *The educator’s guide to emotional intelligence and academic achievement: Social-emotional learning in the classroom* (pp. 161-174). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.


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von der Embse, N., von der Embse, D., von der Embse, M., &


Yoshikawa, H. (1994). Prevention as cumulative protection:


Vita

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