The Effects of a Peace Curriculum on Reducing and Resolving Conflicts among Children Ages 3-6 Years

An Action Research Report

by Maria T. Morningstar

The Effects of a Peace Curriculum on Reducing and Resolving Conflicts
among Children Ages 3-6 Years

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Abstract

An important part of a child's development is learning how to relate to other children appropriately (Sidorowicz & Hair, 2009). The purpose of this study was to determine whether teaching children about peace would help them to reduce or resolve conflicts in the classroom. The study took place in a suburban Montessori classroom of 26 children, ages three to six years. The Research Methodology section of this Action Research report details the peace lessons and materials used in the peace curriculum. The data collection included observations of children's conflicts and resolutions, conferences with the children and teachers, and children's journal writings. The results of the study determined that, as the peace curriculum was implemented, there was a clear reduction in the number of daily conflicts among the children. Also, children involved in conflicts shifted from requiring a lot of teacher involvement to resolve their conflicts to needing little or no teacher involvement in the resolution. Suggested further research includes expanding the peace curriculum lessons over the entire year.   In addition, further lessons and work could be added.

We often think of children at school only in the happiest sense, playing and exploring together, finding joy in their discoveries, and enjoying time with their friends. But a classroom, like the world outside it, is a mix of personalities, with varying maturity levels, backgrounds, expectations, and abilities. Sometimes those personalities clash, that happy setting is disrupted by conflict, and the children involved in the conflicts need to navigate their way back to a peaceful setting. Fortunately, teachers of young children are in a special position to teach children the peacemaking skills they need to resolve their conflicts and manage their anger, both now and in the future (Walker, Myers-Bowman, & Walls, 2007; Drecktrah & Wallenfang, 2009). This action research explores the various types and sources of classroom and playground conflicts, and the effects of a peace curriculum in reducing and resolving those conflicts.

Setting and Participants

I conducted this action research in my classroom at a suburban Montessori school. This mixed-age class is comprised of 11 boys and 15 girls, for a total of 26 children, ages three to six years. Participants in the research are the students in the morning class session, which meets Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. When I began this action research, the children had been in class together this school year for approximately four months, beginning in September 2014. Because more than half of the children returned to this class from last year, many of them knew each other from the previous year.

In this class, the children do their school work on tables as well as individual rugs placed on the carpeted floor. They generally choose their own school work and work

areas every day. The children work individually, or in small groups of two or three, depending on the work they choose. They generally choose with whom they will work, and they are free to socialize with the other children in the class. On most days, the morning session begins with children entering the classroom, socializing a bit, and then choosing their works. The session usually ends with a brief circle time before the children either go to the playground for recess or stay inside to dance or do other physical activities.

The class is taught by a team of three certified Montessori teachers (including me), all of whom also taught this class last year. The teachers give the children individual and small-group lessons, though on occasion, a teacher gives a lesson to the whole class. In addition to providing academic guidance for the children, the teachers are responsible for role modeling, teaching, and maintaining peaceful behaviors among the students, since a vital part of childhood development is learning to relate to other children appropriately (Sidorowicz & Hair, 2009). Relating to others includes children learning how to resolve their conflicts. Young children may experience a variety of conflicts in their classrooms and on the playgrounds. Learning to resolve conflicts is important for children, since poorly managed conflicts can have many different negative impacts on individual children and the classroom as a whole (Wertheim, Love, Peck & Littlefield, 2006).

Literature Review

This section examines definitions of peace and conflicts, and how they vary when placed in different contexts. It is followed by a discussion of various types of conflict

behaviors, and an explanation of some of the factors affecting conflicts and resolutions. Next, ways of resolving conflicts will be explained. The final section examines ways of teaching children to make peace.

Definitions of Peace and Conflicts

There is no consensus on the definition of peace, and definitions tend to vary mostly due to context (Verbeek, 2008). Selecting various aspects of different definitions, Verbeek (2008) himself provided this definition: "Peace is the behavior through which individuals, families, groups, communities, and/or nations experience low levels of violence and engage in mutually harmonious interactions." Schools, including the children in the classroom and on the playground, fit into this definition as a type of community. In this definition of peace, peace is a process rather than a condition.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Oscar Arias Sanchez defined peace similarly: "Peace is a never-ending process, the work of many decisions by many people in many countries. It is an attitude, a way of life, a way of solving problems and resolving conflicts" (as cited in Verbeek, 2008, p. 1501). Walker et al. (2007) also found differences in peace definitions when they asked children from different areas of the world to describe peace. The children's descriptions appeared to depend on whether their community, local or national, was currently or had recently been engaged in conflict. Many children defined peace as the absence of war or violence, while others associated peace with quietness or calmness and privacy. Some drew pictures of traditional peace symbols, such as olive branches and, more personally, children and houses. Harris (2004) redefined these findings in terms of inner and outer peace. Inner peace is related to an individual's state

of being and thinking about others; outer peace relates to individuals, families, communities, the culture and the natural environment, and what is happening in connection with them.

In defining peace, elements of Walker et al.'s (2007) definitions are similar to Verbeek's (2008) in their references to low levels or total absence of conflict. Walker et al.'s (2007) definitions, however, are a little more expansive in that they include a more individualized peace related to one's sense of calm and tranquility. This individual state of being is most closely aligned with Harris's (2004) definition of inner peace. Harris's (2004) definition of outer peace, however, is only remotely related to Walker et al. (2007) and Verbeek's (2008); all refer to relationships between individuals and/or groups, but Harris's (2004) does not include any references to the absence of conflicts.

While all of these definitions of peace are valid and relevant, Verbeek's (2008) definition of peace will be used in this Action Research project. The researcher defines "peace" in the classroom and on the playground as the ongoing process of children attaining low levels of conflict and engaging in mutually harmonious interactions. The researcher chose this definition of peace because it most closely describes the type of environment the researcher seeks to attain for the children in the classroom.

Like peace, conflict has been defined in different ways by different researchers (Roseth et al, 2008). Dennis, Colwell, and Lindsey (2005) defined children's classroom conflicts as disagreements or oppositional interactions between individual children or between children and teachers. They also made the assumption that misbehavior and conflictive behaviors were frequently synonymous. Roseth et al. (2008) found that some

definitions of conflict were more related to when the conflicts occur. For instance, one definition identifies conflict as what results from competition for limited resources. In a classroom or on the playground, these limited resources could include materials, activities, friends, or even teachers' attention. Roseth et al. (2008) stated another definition of conflict as what occurs when goals between people are incompatible, such as when someone or some group opposes something about or done by another.

    For this research, aspects of these definitions will be combined into a single definition: conflict is a disagreement between children or between a child and a teacher due to incompatible goals, beliefs, or behaviors.

Conflict Behaviors

    Several researchers found that children, ages 3- 7, initiate and/or are victims of various types of conflict in the classroom and on the playground, disrupting the classroom for children and their teacher, and potentially involving harm. In preparing her study, Roseth (2007) found that conflict was frequently referred to in terms of aggressive behavior, including the potential for some kind of harm. The "harm" aspect was confirmed in several later studies (e.g., Fujksawa, Kutsukake, & Hasegawa, 2008; Roseth et al., 2008; Westlund, Horowitz, Jansson, & Ljungberg, 2008). These studies found the harm to be physical, verbal, and/or emotional. The physical or physically threatening harm included hitting, kicking, pushing or pulling, wrestling, threatening gestures, chasing, snatching or grabbing, destruction of property, and displacement, such as cutting in line or taking someone else's seat in line or on circle. Verbally aggressive behaviors included verbal threats, yelling, and calling names, even if the target was not present.

The emotional harm included social exclusion and humiliation. Roseth et al. (2008) also found aggressive competition as a type of conflict among young children. The aggressive competition was defined as an agonistic event in which a child shows resistance (e.g., facial expression, posture, tone of voice), physical aggression, or verbal aggression in opposition to the influence attempt, anger, aggression, or argument of another child.

Factors That Affect Conflicts and Resolutions

Children's genders, ages, and language abilities may be factors in conflicts. Regarding gender, data shows that boys are more disruptive to the classroom than girls (Westlund et al., 2008). Boys are reported by teachers to be more aggressive, more frequently aggressive, and to generally prefer more physically aggressive play, including teasing, pushing, and trying to take objects from their peers (Allen, 2009; Fujisawa et al., 2008; Sidorowicz et al., 2009; and Westlund et al., 2008).

Reasons for conflicts among children tend to differ by gender. Sidorowicz et al. (2009) and Dennis et al. (2005) found that the sources of boys' conflicts frequently varied from the sources of girls' conflicts. Boys have more conflicts over actions, in particular breaking rules or trying to establish dominance or status over another child, whereas girls have more conflicts over words, particularly those that cause hurt feelings and/or are related to relational issues, e.g. not getting invited to a birthday.

There are conflicting results between studies of aggressive behavior at various ages. Westlund et al. (2008) found that aggressive tendencies and conflicts decrease with the ages of children; that is, there were fewer aggressive tendencies and conflicts among the older children (5 – 6 years) in the study's age group, 3 - 6 years, than with the

younger children (3 – 4 years) in the group.   The results of the Dennis et al. (2005) study,

however, contradict this. Dennis et al. (2005) found no statistically relevant differences

in conflicts from one age to the next in a group of children ages 3 - 5. Dennis et al.

(2005) suggest that this aspect of their findings could be due to the small sample of

younger children participating in their study. There was minimal evidence regarding

language issues, though Verbeek (2008) found that boys with language impairments had

more aberrant types of conflict, such as escalated screaming and out-of-control physical

episode, than those without language issues.

When children are in conflict and disruptive to the class, other children respond in

a somewhat surprising way, according to a Fujisawa et al. (2008) study. The research

found that when dealing with a child who has socially disruptive behavior, children who

have socially positive behavior in a classroom become more – not less – cohesive as a

group. That means that a child with socially disruptive behavior can play a positive – not

always negative – role with respect to the cohesiveness of the socially positive children in

the classroom. Fujisawa et al. (2008) surmise that this counterintuitive effect is due to

the fact that the children with socially positive behavior come together more closely in

order to mitigate the conflict's damage to social relationships with others. In other

words, the "positive" group wants everybody to get along, so they bond more closely in

the event of others' disruptive conflict behaviors.

It is clear from these findings that different types of conflicts occur in the

classrooms, for different reasons, involving various factors, and may be harmful in

various ways. Therefore, conflict resolution is important for teachers and children.

Westlund et al. (2008) found that boys resolve more conflicts than girls as they increase in age from 3 – 6 years. In addition, older boys involved in same-gender conflicts resolve more conflicts than younger boys involved in same-gender conflicts. No similar age effects were found for same-gender conflicts among girls. The greatest number of reconciliations occurred, however, when a younger boy was in conflict with an older boy, with an age difference of 1 - 2 years. Once again, this was not the same for girls.

Different Ways to Resolve Conflicts

Children resolve their conflicts in various ways (Westlund et al., 2008; Verbeek, 2008). One is called immediate peacemaking, in which opponents stay together and try to work things out right away following a conflict. Children made immediate peace by offering objects, physical contact, and/or apologies. They also showed conciliatory behaviors such as making body contact like touching, patting, hugging or holding hands, inviting the opponent to resume or start play, apologizing and/or asking for forgiveness, making excuses for the conflict, offering an object to a conflict opponent, offering a compromise, and making self-ridicule. Children also resolve their conflicts through delayed peacemaking. For this, children have friendly reunions between former opponents, generally within two minutes of the conflict if it occurred on the playground, and within four minutes if the conflict occurred in the classroom. These friendly reunions often included similar conciliatory behaviors. In both immediate and delayed peacemaking, the children resumed play as though nothing had happened (Verbeek, 2008).

Verbeek (2008) noted that the greatest predictor of peacemaking was incidents of positive social interaction between children prior to the conflict. Of course, not all children want to reconcile. Some boys and girls of all ages in Westlund et al.'s (2008) study showed aggression after a conflict. That aggression included retaliation, revenge, and redirection. There was no difference in occurrence of these behaviors between genders or between age groups.

During conflicts, there may be no intervention as the children resolve the conflicts between themselves. Or they may resolve conflicts with the help of another child, or an adult, such as the teacher. In the Dennis et al. (2005) study, boys' conflicts were resolved more frequently – at a rate of more than twice as much -- through teacher interventions than girls' conflicts. Interestingly, Verbeek (2008) and Roseth et al. (2008) found that the peacemaking process between children was actually suppressed when teachers intervened after a conflict. Their studies indicated that teacher intervention is more disruptive than productive in having young children reconcile after a conflict. When teachers intervene with the intention of reconciliation, the children involved in the conflict tend to spend more – not less - time apart. Another result may be that teachers then tend to rely on reconciliation as the only way to resolve conflicts. One study (Westlund et al., 2008) showed that when other children, not teachers, intervene in conflicts, the oldest children in the study, 6-year-olds, preferred more often than younger children to be mediators in their peers' conflicts. That was the same for both 6-year-old boys and girls, with girls mediating nearly three times as frequently as boys.

Teaching Children to Make Peace

Children can learn to deal with their emotions in an acceptable way if they are taught how to do so early on (Drecktrah et al., 2009). This corresponds to Allen's (2009) findings that the young children who participated in an interactive program that promoted conflict avoidance, conflict resolution skills, and respect for others showed significant improvement in skills in contrast to the comparison group. The results were essentially the same for both boys and girls.

Walker et al. (2007) noted that early childhood educators have a unique opportunity to teach young children ways to find peace that may have a lasting impact on several levels. Walker et al. (2007) found that children ages 3 – 8 may understand peace in different ways. This corresponds with the various definitions of peace found by other researchers (Harris, 2004; Verbeek, 2008; and Walker et al., 2007). Walker et al. (2007) suggest that teachers speak with children about peace, building a vocabulary of peace, as well as providing peacemaking experiences, such as games and activities that emphasize shared decision-making and cooperation. When Walker et al. (2007) asked children about what they could do to make peace, they responded with suggestions for either prosocial behaviors meant to help or not harm others, such as "be friendly," "help people sweep the floor", or activism, like "try to stop wars." Walker et al. (2007) reiterated that teachers and parents provide environments that incorporate peacemaking on a daily basis. The activities and experiences could focus on solving problems, tolerance, forgiveness, and negotiations.

In their focus groups with early childhood educators, Stomfay-Stitz and Wheeler (2006) found that there were two primary needs for successful peacemaking among

school children. The first was the need for consistency in the peacekeeping messages at

school, home, and in the community. The second was the need for communication so

that school-wide programs could be shared with families, and families could feel more

connected with the school and its peace message. Suggestions for the in-school

peacemaking activities include peace tables, having children participate in creating a

peace mission, a peace-patrol job so children are expected to act as mediators, a feelings-

helper job so children can help others talk about their feelings, and peace poems, among

others. Wheeler and Stomfay-Stitz (2010) suggest a kindness, caring, and peace

education plan for early childhood classrooms. Teachers and children would work in an

environment where kindness would be an expected way of treating all others, children

would learn to use kind and caring words, as role-modeled by teachers (and, preferably,

by involved parents), and a peaceful environment would be maintained with the addition

of peacemaking activities. The goal would be to help children become aware of and

understand peace; have a place of peace for children; have peace role-modeled; and

provide behaviors that teach children how to keep peace and/or return to peace after

conflict.

The goal of this Action Research is to implement a peace curriculum for children

ages 3 – 6 years in their classroom, and determine if and how that curriculum increases

the children's awareness and understanding of peace, and helps them to resolve their

conflicts.

Description of the Research Methodology

Before beginning the Action Research, a cover letter and parent consent form

(Appendix A) were given to the parents of the children in the class. The cover letter

explained that an Action Research study would be conducted in class, the purpose of the

study, some methods of collecting the data, and that parents had the right to have their

child's data excluded from the study. Only parents who chose to have the data excluded

needed to return a signed form, and they were given one week to do so. One parent

signed and returned the form; parents of the 25 other children did not return the form,

thereby giving the researcher their consent to include their children's data in the study.

Prior to implementation of the peace curriculum and the beginning of the data

collection, each of the two co-teachers in the classroom also was given a consent form

(Appendix B). The form explained some aspects of the study; it also requested that the

teachers complete a written assessment before and after the study, and participate in

observing and recording specific data throughout the study. The teachers were given the

option to have the data they recorded excluded from the study results. Both teachers

signed the forms, thereby agreeing to complete the assessments, participate in the data

collection, and have that data included in the study results.

Next, each of the teachers completed the written assessment (Appendix C). The

purpose of this assessment was to determine the teachers' thoughts about various aspects

of peace, conflicts, and conflict resolution. The researcher also met with the teachers to

discuss how to collect data on classroom and playground conflicts and resolutions using

the observation sheets (Appendix E). The teachers, including the researcher, began

observing and recording conflicts and resolutions immediately, five days a week, for the

entire morning class session from 8:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m., in the classroom and on the

playground as well as in transition. The goal was to have data about the class's conflicts and resolutions before the peace curriculum, as well as throughout the time the peace curriculum was implemented.

Conferencing with the Children About Peace

Prior to implementation of the peace curriculum, the researcher spent two days conducting conferences with the children in the class to determine their understanding of and feelings about peace, conflicts, and conflict resolution. These conferences took place in the classroom, sitting on a small rug on the floor. The researcher met with each child individually and quietly so he or she would not feel intimidated about speaking in the presence of others, and so the other children could not overhear the conversations, potentially influencing the listeners' responses. For each conference, the researcher explained that they, the researcher and child, were going to talk about peace.

The researcher began each conference by saying, "You might have heard the word 'peace' before. Have you ever heard the word 'peace'?" Then the researcher used a student-conference form (Appendix D) to follow a set of questions and record the children's answers about several aspects of peace, including what it meant to them, how it felt, if they liked that feeling, and what made the children feel peaceful and happy at school. Using the same form, the researcher recorded the children's responses to questions about conflict, including whether anything at school made the children feel upset, what happened when they felt that way, and what they could do if they had a disagreement with another child at school. The word "conflict" was not used by the researcher since it did not seem likely that the children would know this word. Instead,

the researcher spoke of "being upset," "being sad or mad," or "didn't agree."

The following day, the researcher conferenced with the children in groups of two to four children to encourage them to record on paper their thoughts of peace and "being upset." As an example and to encourage the children to think about peace, the researcher showed the children some drawings she had made.

Group Peace Discussion

The next day, the researcher spoke to the whole class during circle time about peace and what the children had said about it. The researcher discussed the importance and joy of having a peaceful classroom, with children who feel calm, happy, safe, and at peace. The researcher read the book, "The Peace Book," by Todd Parr (2005), aloud to all the children, and then asked the children how they felt about the book's message of peace. This started a lively conversation.

Use of the Peace Area and Ideas

The researcher then explained how the children could use the peace area, or some of the peace ideas, to return to peace. The researcher introduced the term, "Work it out," reminding the children that they, and any child with whom they are disagreeing, can find peace themselves, usually without the assistance of a teacher. The researcher reiterated, however, that the teachers were there to help as needed, and must be notified if someone was or could be hurt, such as a child hitting out of anger.

First Set of Peace Materials

During the next two days, the researcher gave small-group lessons, with two to four children in each group, to introduce the peace curriculum. The lessons began with an

informal conversation about peace and how and why it means different things to different people. It was also discussed how peace can be found in nature, and that nearly all the objects that would be placed in the classroom peace area came from nature. The researcher told the children that they were invited to use the peace area anytime they had a disagreement with another child, or anytime they felt like being peaceful themselves. The rules of the peace area were explained, including how many children could use the peace area at a time, respect for the materials, and what to do if other children were waiting to use the peace area.

Next, the lesson proceeded with stories regarding the first two peace objects: a blue ceramic pot, which felt very cool to the touch, and which the researcher named "The Calm Palm" due to the engravings of palm trees which could be slowly traced with the children's fingers; and a large, silk scarf, which also felt very cool to the touch, and which had a picture of four people standing within a "circle of friends", chatting with each other and looking happy. It was discussed how both of these – the ceramic and the silk – came from nature, how peaceful nature can be, and how these objects could help the children feel calm and peaceful if they took time to look at them, touch them gently, trace and enjoy the pictures, and feel their smoothness and coolness.   The children were encouraged to use the peace area anytime, and to think carefully about the peace message when using the objects.

Second Set of Peace Materials

Three days later, the researcher again met with all of the children in small groups to present lessons on two more peace materials which were being added to the class peace

area. The first was a small glass jar, shaped like a triangular prism and tinted light blue, with a cork top and a blue silk ribbon tied around the cork. The jar contained several pieces of sea glass. The children and the researcher talked about glass and sea glass and how they came from nature, as did the cork. The researcher showed how the sea glass sparkled when the jar was carefully lifted up into the light above and turned gently from side to side, the sea glass moving like the waves of the ocean and making a pretty and peaceful sound as it rocked.

Next was a lesson about cooperation between friends. The material was based on a story of how two animals compromised and cooperated successfully to get the hay they wanted, instead of working against each other and getting none of the hay. This peace work included two small jars of hay, placed at opposite ends of a tray, and two animals connected with a yoke. To do the work, the children made the two animals pull away from and work against each other in an attempt to get the hay. When they were unsuccessful and in conflict, the two animals stopped, then cooperated and worked together, and they happily got to the hay. The children were reminded that when they do not agree with each other, they can find a way to cooperate, and/or compromise, and work together successfully and happily.

Third Set of Peace Materials

After a few days, the researcher conducted another set of small-group lessons with the children regarding additional peace-area materials. One of these materials focused again on "working it out," using the phrase that had been introduced to the children earlier. This work consisted of a small cloth envelope with three magnetic "stick people"

inside, and a choice of several magnetized faces, with expressions ranging from very happy to very sad. During the lesson, the children made up stories of people disagreeing on something, and they chose sad faces to put on the stick people. Then they created a conversation between the sad stick people, talking and listening their way to a compromise and/or agreement, and changing the faces along the way, until they were ultimately working together with happy, peaceful faces. The children were told they could use these stick people to resolve conflicts with their friends as they occurred. Or they could use their imaginations to create their own stories that began with conflict (not agreeing on something, having hurt feelings, etc.) and, through working it out, ended with peace, calm, and happiness. Another new work for self-peace involved a picture frame made of glass and seashells, as well as small, round, translucent blue glass pieces. The individual letters to the word "peace" were written on five of the glass pieces, while the other pieces had no writing. The work involved carefully holding up each glass piece to the light to find the five pieces with letters. This was a very slow, methodical, and peaceful process, and the blue pieces looked beautiful in the light. As the letter pieces were found, the children built the word "peace" on the glass part of the frame, which was surrounded by seashells.

Final Set of Peace Materials

A few days later, the researcher introduced with stories and added to the peace area three more peace works. For the first work, the researcher created a small classroom peace book that included happy pictures of all of the children in class, along with peaceful pictures of nature and art. The book also included a page with symbols and

words that reminded the children what to do when there were disagreements, hurt

feelings, or other conflicts: stop, listen, talk, and work it out. The resolution could be to

compromise, cooperate, or agree to disagree. The second work, for self-peace, was a

small labyrinth through which the children could peacefully run their fingers. Finally,

there was a miniature Japanese Zen garden, with sand, stones, and rakes. The children

could do this by themselves, or work together to shape the garden.

Teachers Gather Data

Throughout the implementation of the peace curriculum, all three teachers observed

and recorded (Appendix E) incidents of conflict, and the resolution of those conflicts. For

the conflicts, the data collection included the date, time, location, duration, type of,

reason for, and participants involved in the conflict, as well as the activity the children

were engaged in at the time. For the conflict resolutions, the data collection included the

time, location, and type of resolution, duration of time spent resolving the conflict, and

the source of the resolution, such as whether the children resolved conflicts themselves or

involved their friends or teachers. The researcher collected the completed observation

sheets from the teachers on a regular basis throughout the research period.

Insufficient Data

Immediately following the introduction of the peace curriculum, the researcher

attempted to observe and record the usage of and responses to each work in the peace

area. The goal was to identify quantitatively which peace materials were selected most

frequently, by whom, and for how long. However, because the children were allowed to

use the peace area for a mostly unlimited amount of time, it was too challenging for the

teachers observing to stay near the peace area for extensive periods of time and record the usage. In addition, an attempt to have the children tally their usage and response to the materials while in the peace area became a distraction to the children and clearly would have resulted in inaccurate data. Therefore, the tally system was removed soon after it was introduced. As a result, there was insufficient data to make accurate determinations regarding usage of the individual peace works based on tallies or teacher observations.

After Implementation of the Peace Curriculum

When the research period ended, following seven weeks of implementing the peace curriculum and collecting data, the researcher again conferenced with the children regarding their understanding of and feelings about peace, conflicts, and conflict resolution. In order to make fair comparisons, the researcher used a student conference form (Appendix F) after the peace curriculum that asked nearly the same questions as the initial conference form (Appendix D). The researcher also conducted and recorded exit conferences (Appendix G) with the children to determine their usage of and response to the peace-based activities. In addition, just as they had done prior to the implementation of the peace curriculum, the Kindergarten children recorded in their journals, using words and pictures, their thoughts of peace and conflicts. Finally, the teachers completed assessments (Appendix H) regarding their thoughts of various aspects of peace, conflicts, the peace curriculum, and the effects of the curriculum on the children in resolving and reducing conflicts.

Analysis of Data

With this Action Research study, the researcher sought to determine whether a

peace curriculum could help children resolve and/or reduce conflicts in the classroom.

The first, and perhaps most obvious, measure of this was to determine whether there was

a reduction in the number of conflicts per day over the course of the study. In order to

make a fair before-and-after comparison, the researcher first measured the number of

classroom conflicts before implementing the peace curriculum, in order to obtain a

baseline measure, and then throughout the implementation of the curriculum, in order to

assess any changes. To create the baseline measure, the teachers observed and recorded

conflicts for three days before implementing the peace curriculum. "Conflicts" were

defined as any negative interaction between children which were verbal, physical,

emotional, or material (involving material resources). While the peace curriculum began

on the third day of the study, the peace lesson itself was not given until the later part of

the class session that day, giving the teachers the majority of the third class session for

observation as part of the baseline measure. Had the study been scheduled to last for

several more weeks, the researcher would have gathered data for more days prior to the

peace curriculum in order to obtain a greater baseline measure.

A Reduction in Conflicts

The observations made by the three teachers using the Conflict and Resolution

Observation Sheet (Appendix E) were compiled, and the data showed that there was a

noticeable reduction in the daily number of conflicts within the classroom over the course

of the study. As shown in Figure 1, teachers recorded eight student conflicts on the first

day of data collection, January 20, 2015, and three conflicts the next day. On the third

day, teachers recorded five conflicts. These three days represent the baseline measure of

conflicts since these conflicts were observed prior to introducing the peace curriculum.

The first lesson of the peace curriculum was given at the end of the class session on the

third day. The last conflict observed that day took place immediately following the peace

lesson that day; it is included in the baseline measure.
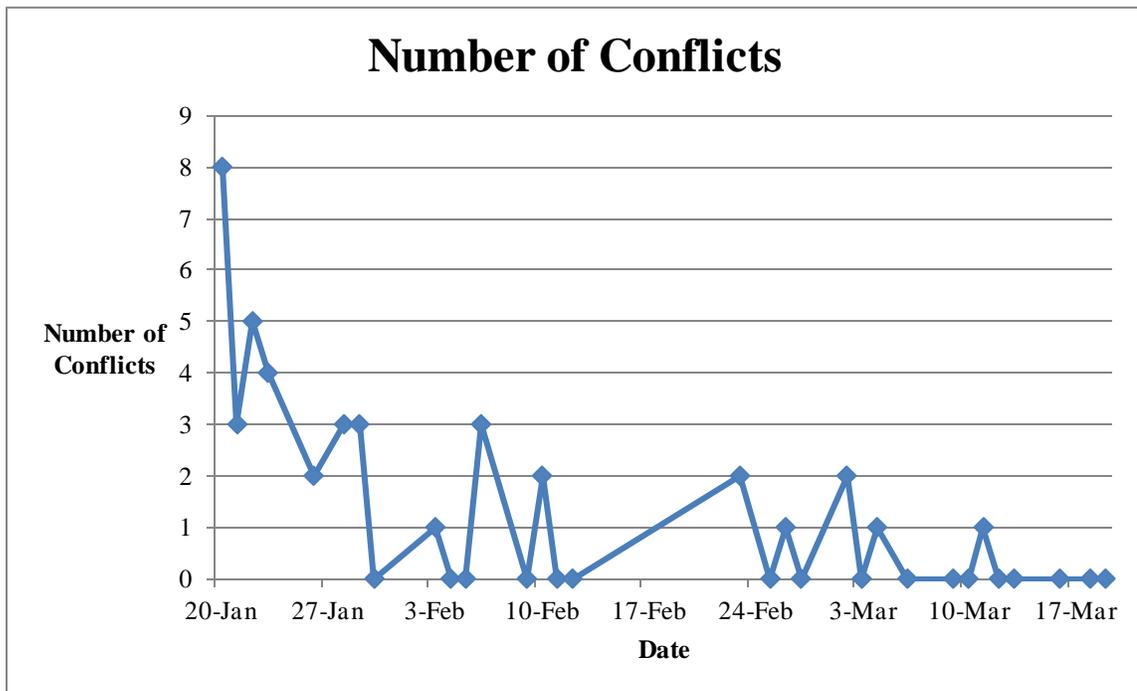
Figure 1. The Number of Conflicts Observed by Day Throughout the Study Period

As Figure 1 shows, once the peace lessons began and the materials in the peace

area were readily available to the children, beginning January 23, there was an overall

pattern toward fewer conflicts. In fact, throughout the remainder of the study, there were

no days which had as many conflicts as the eight conflicts on the first day, or the five

conflicts on the third day of the baseline measure.   Further analysis of this data showed a

decrease in the average daily conflicts from the beginning to the end of the study.   To

evaluate this, the researcher divided the 32-day data collection into the following: three

days of baseline measure, before the curriculum; followed by five segments of five days; and a sixth segment of four days. The baseline segment, together with the following six segments, account for the full 32 days of data collection. Figure 2 shows the average number of conflicts per day for all the segments. There was an average of 5.3 conflicts per day during the three-day baseline segment. The average number of conflicts per day decreased after the peace curriculum began. This correlation between the peace curriculum and the number of conflicts implies that fewer conflicts occurred as children learned more about peace and conflict resolutions.

Average Daily Conflicts
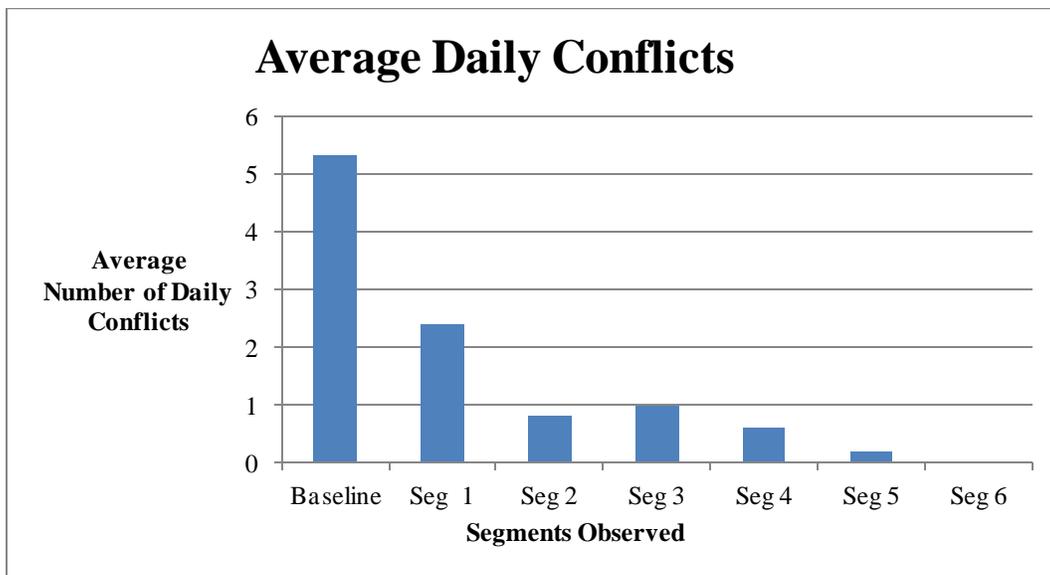
*Figure 2*. The Average Number of Daily Conflicts Observed per Segment

It should be noted that there may have been conflicts that the teachers did not observe. This number, however, likely would be very small since the three teachers were located throughout the room and moved frequently to cover all areas. In addition, the conflicts may have been unobserved because they were quickly and quietly resolved by

the children. Having children resolve conflicts on their own was the intended goal of the

peace curriculum, so this is a positive feature.

How Conflicts Were Resolved

The question of how children resolved their conflicts was also part of the study.

The overarching goal of the curriculum was to help children find peace through their

conflict resolutions.   Therefore, an aspect of the peace curriculum was to have children

realize that they could resolve many of their conflicts themselves, and gain the ability and

courage to do so. Children who rely on teachers to resolve their conflicts may do so for a

few reasons, including: the child does not know how to resolve his own conflicts (lack of

knowledge and/or skill); the child is afraid to resolve his own conflicts, even if he knows

how (lack of confidence); the child has been told by his parents to go directly to a teacher

for every "problem" (lack of proper guidance). It should be noted that these reasons

come from the researcher, and not from the research itself. Prior to implementing the

study, the researcher determined that the children in the classroom, ages 3 – 6 years,

likely were too young to understand and/or express why they might rely on teachers to

resolve their own conflicts instead of resolving the conflicts themselves, when

appropriate.

A review of the research data shows that the children resolved more of their

conflicts themselves or with minimal guidance from a teacher as the study and the peace

curriculum progressed. Figures 1 and 2 show that the number of conflicts decreased over

the course of the study. In addition, the data indicated that, over the course of the study,

the children generally became more adept at resolving conflicts themselves or with

minimal teacher guidance.

Of the 32 days of the study, 17 days had no conflicts, and 15 days had conflicts. For the days with conflicts, Figure 3 shows the degree of teacher guidance required to resolve each conflict. The researcher defined "no or minimal teacher guidance" as follows: no teacher guidance meant that the children resolved the conflict without telling or involving the teacher, and the teacher observed the conflict and the resolution taking place without saying anything; minimal teacher guidance meant that the teacher, on her own or as requested by a child, became involved in the conflict and gave only a brief sentence or two of guidance, such as, "Remember, peace," "I think you can work this out," or, "Perhaps you should go to the peace area to work this out." The researcher defined "heavy teacher guidance" as follows: the teacher, on her own or as requested by a child, became involved in the conflict and gave guidance all the way until the conflict was resolved, or the teacher imposed the resolution.
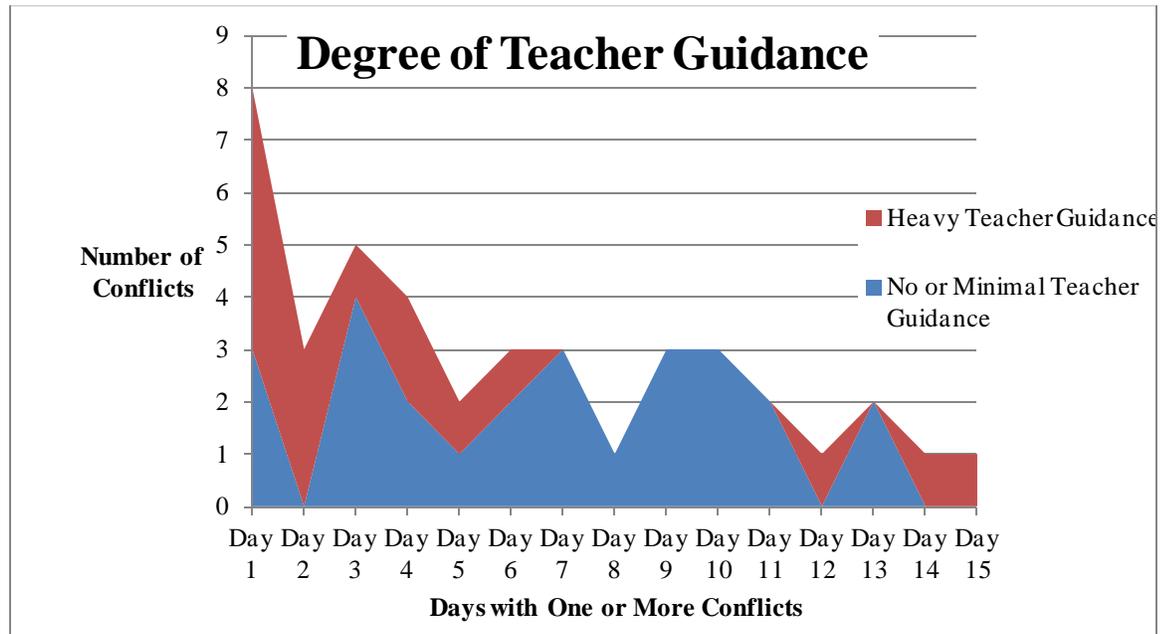
Figure 3. The Degree of Teacher Guidance in Resolving Conflicts on Days with One or More Observed Conflicts

An example of heavy guidance would be the teacher listening to both children explain the issue, asking many questions about the issue and how the children felt, or directing the children through each step of the resolution process. An example of a teacher imposing the resolution would be the teacher telling the child(ren) what to do and why, thereby resolving the conflict.

Individual Results

The researcher questioned whether individual children were involved in fewer conflicts as the study progressed, perhaps as a cumulative effect of the peace curriculum, including more discussions of, strategies for, and materials designed to help peace and conflict resolution, and more of the individuals' classmates engaging in conflict resolution. To determine if individuals reduced the number of conflicts they were

involved in, the researcher counted the number of conflicts each child was involved in over the 32-day study period. It should be noted that a child's involvement in a conflict does not indicate that a child is the instigator of the conflict. Children were counted as "involved" in any conflict which included them. For example, if Child A accidentally stepped on Child B's rug, and Child B said something to Child A, then both children would be "involved" in the conflict. For the purposes of this research, no fault or blame was identified with any of the children involved in conflicts; all recorded conflicts included the child(ren) who instigated the conflict, even accidentally (Child A in the example), as well as the child involved incidentally (Child B). Among the 26 children, there were 98 instances in which a child was involved in a conflict. Six children were involved in seven or more conflicts and represented 45 of the 98 instances. The other 20 children were involved in five or fewer conflicts. In fact, as shown in Figure 4, six of the children were observed in no conflicts, and 14 of the children were involved in one to five conflicts over the 32-day study.

Conflicts per Child

Mean: 3.8
Median: 4
Mode: 0, 4

Number of Children Involved in Conflicts

Number of Conflicts
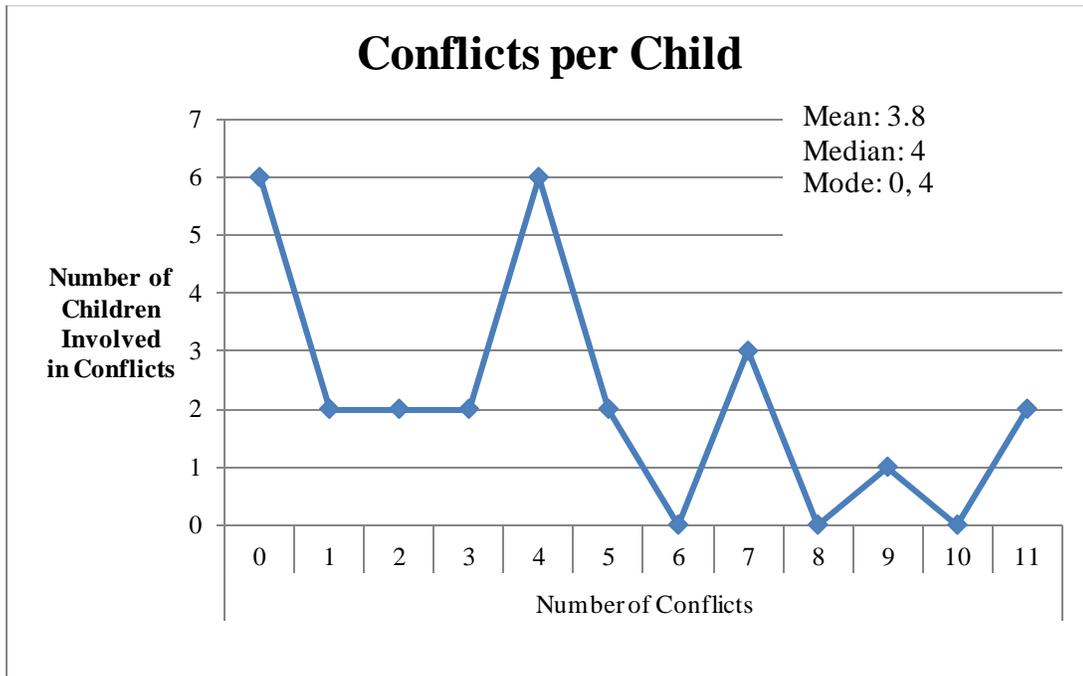
Figure 4. The Number of Children Involved in a Specific Number of Conflicts

Throughout the Study Period

The researcher analyzed the conflict involvement of these six individuals by

segment. Grouping the number of conflicts per child per segment (Figure 5), the data

showed that each of the six children with the greatest total number of conflicts was, in

fact, involved in fewer conflicts after the baseline segment, which is also after the peace

curriculum was implemented. This shows a positive correlation between the

implementation of the peace curriculum and a reduced rate of conflicts over time among

the six children who were involved in the greatest number of conflicts.
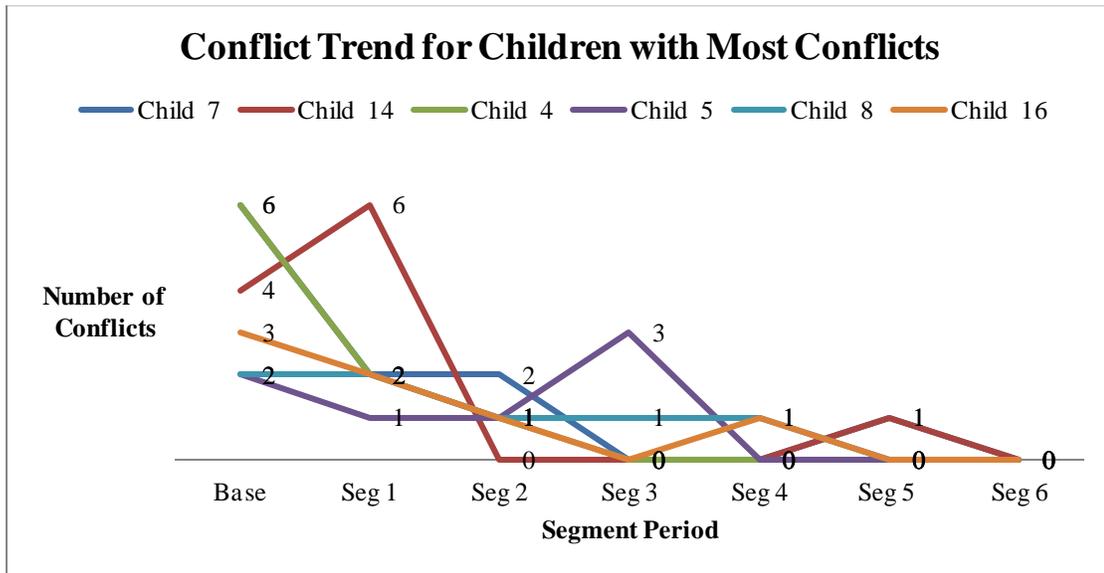
Figure 5. The Trend of Conflicts for the Six Children with the Most Conflicts. Base is

Three Days, Segments 1 – 5 are Five Days Each, Segment 6 is Four Days

Children's Thoughts of Peace and Conflicts

Comparing the students' conferences before (Appendix D) and after (Appendix F)

the peace curriculum, the data showed that students expanded their idea of "peace" since

implementing the curriculum. In the conferences *before* the curriculum, the data showed

(Figure 6) that the majority, 52% of the 26 children, said "I don't know" or said nothing

when asked what they thought when they heard the word "peace." Next, 21% indicated

"peace" referred to "quiet." Another 10% identified "peace" as being or working with

friends. Only 7% defined "peace" with the word "nice" or referring to people getting

along. For example, one child said this about "peace": "It's nice. The children would be

nice…nice to each other." Another 7% referred to feeling "peaceful," as did the 5-year-

old child who said, "My dad is really peaceful also, and he loves me so much and so I

like to be peaceful with him."

"Peace is..."

- I Don't Know, or No Answer
- Quiet
- Being with Friends
- Tidy Classroom
- Peaceful
- People are Nice, Getting Along
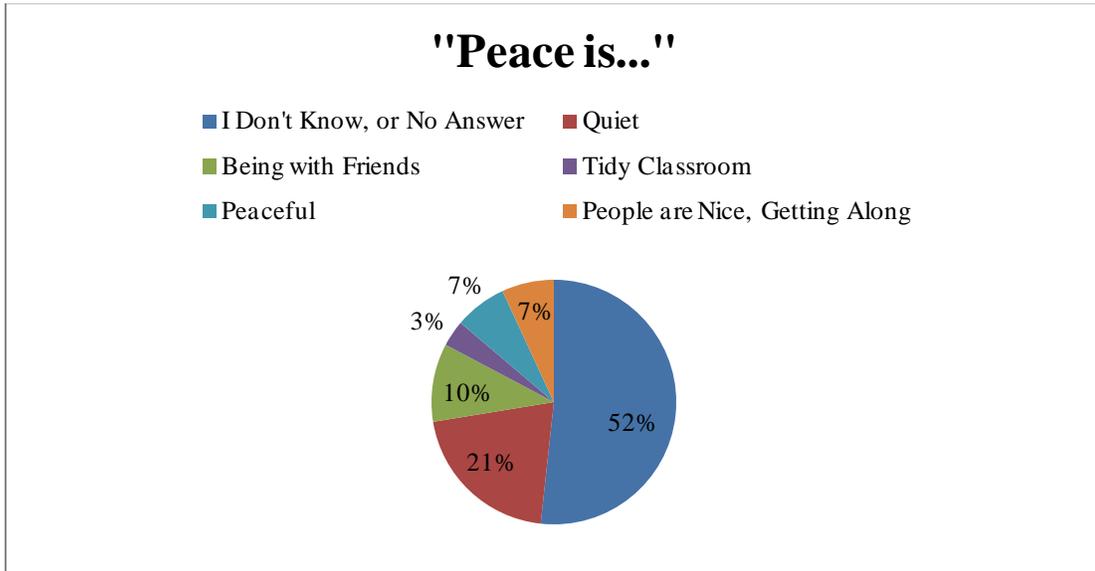
Figure 6. How Children Define "Peace," *Prior* to the Peace Curriculum

In the students' conferences *after* the peace curriculum, however, the percentage of children who considered "peace" to be people getting along or being nice to each other rose to 45% from the 7% *before* the peace curriculum.

"Peace is..."

- Don't Know/Not Sure/Nothing
- Happy/Peaceful Feeling
- Quiet/Calm
- People Working it Out/Getting Along/Being Nice to Each Other
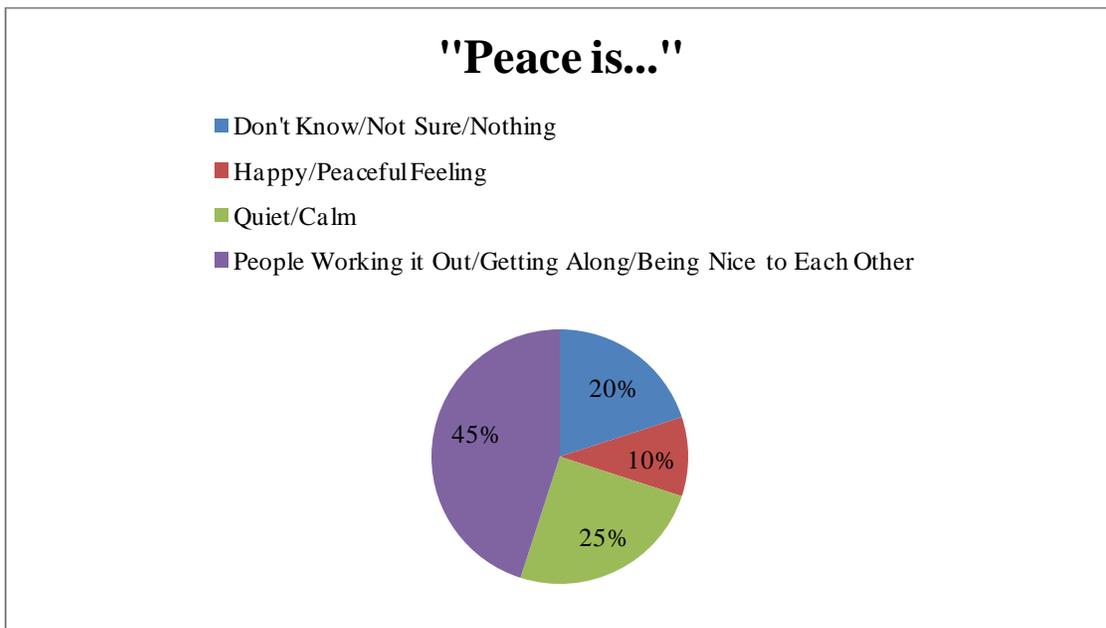
Figure 7. How Children Define "Peace," *After* the Peace Curriculum

The nine oldest children, all of whom are in Kindergarten, wrote words and/or drew pictures in their journals regarding their feelings about peace. Most of the 17 younger children did not choose to write or draw their responses, other than some smiley faces. As a result, there were too few responses among the younger children to be statistically relevant, and only the responses of the older children are included in the study data. Of the Kindergarten children, one wrote a brief story about playing in the snow and having hot chocolate afterwards. "I felt peaceful." Another wrote, "Peace is helping God to help the poor and the rich, and the classroom, and helping Mom clean the dishes."

Prior to the peace curriculum, children were asked about what happens when children get upset with each other at school. Several children answered that it was bad or made them feel sad. One child mentioned that it didn't feel peaceful when others didn't get along. Another child said, "It's not being behave-ful." The children also were asked, "What can you do when you and another child don't agree with each other at school?" As shown in Figure 8, 46% responded with, "I don't know," or "I'm not sure." Another 31% referred to "being nice," or "working it out," 8% said to "tell the teacher," and 15% said to do both. After completing the peace curriculum, children were asked again about what to do when not agreeing with another child. This time, 12% responded with "I don't know," or "I'm not sure," and 82% referred to working it out/going to the Peace Area. Only 6% said to tell a teacher, and none said to do both.

"When You and Another Child Don't Agree…"

- Don't Know/Not Sure/No Answer
- Be Nice/Work it Out
- Tell a Teacher
- Tell a Teacher and Be Nice/Work It Out

15%
8%
46%
31%
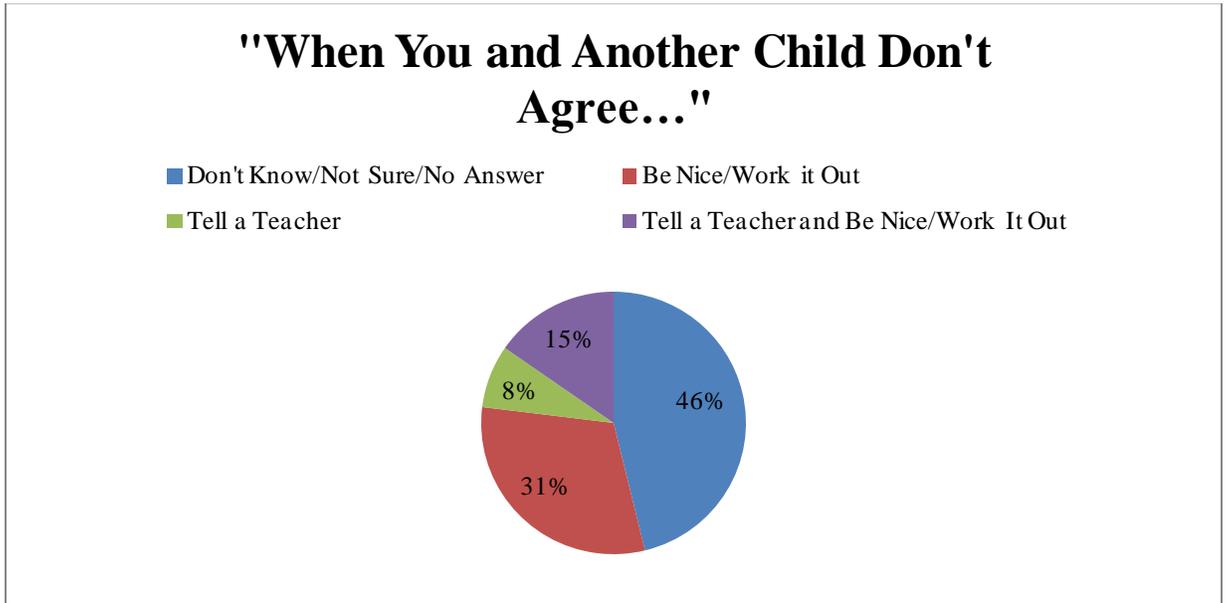
Figure 8. How Children Would Respond to a Conflict, *Prior* to the Peace Curriculum

"When You and Another Child Don't Agree…"

- Don't Know/Not Sure/No Answer
- Tell a Teacher
- Work it Out/Go to the Peace Area/Work Together

12%
6%
82%
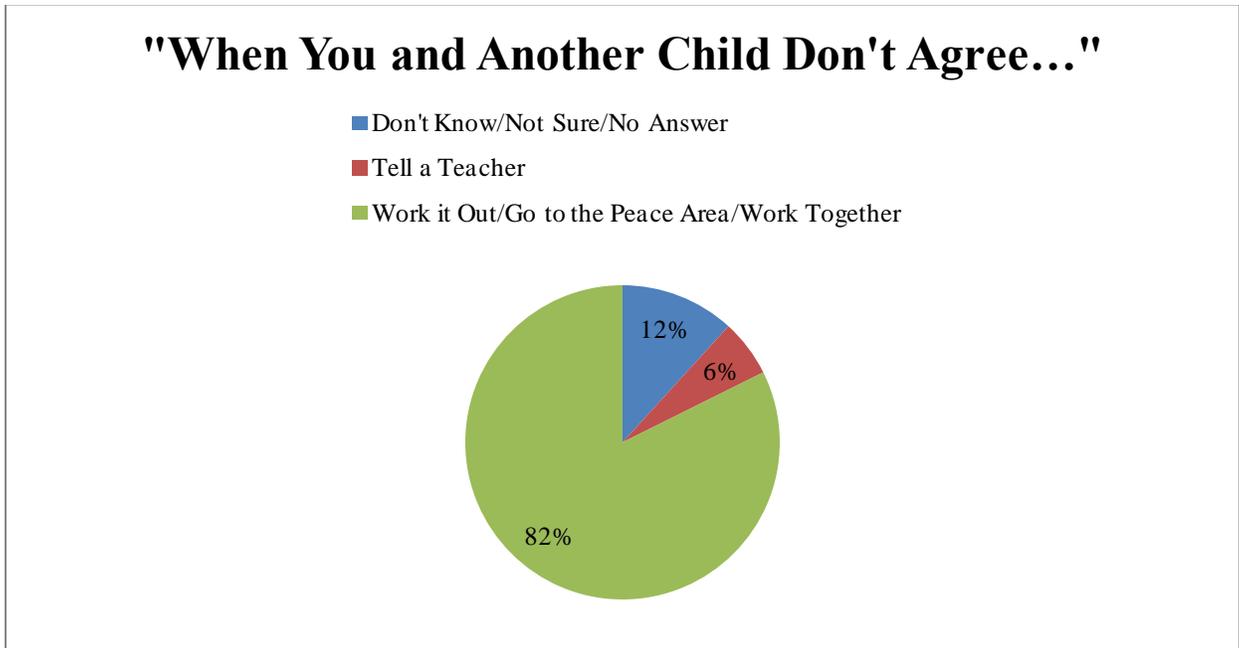
Figure 9. How Children Would Respond to a Conflict, *After* the Peace Curriculum

The significant increase in the percentage of children referring to "working it out" in some way, including "being nice," or "talking to them," following implementation of the peace curriculum implies a positive correlation between the peace curriculum and the number of children who know that they can resolve the conflict, and that they can do so themselves, without always asking the teacher for resolution.

Children's Choices of the Peace-Area Works

Of the children who used the Peace Area at least once during the study, their choices for the top three favorite Peace-Area works, in order of preference, were: the stick people working out their conflicts; *The Peace Book* by Todd Parr (2005); and spelling "peace" with the blue glass pieces. When asked which of the Peace-Area works made them feel the most peaceful or happy, the children's top-three choices, in order of preference, were: the stick people working out their conflicts; "The Peace Book" by Todd Parr (2005); and the animals negotiating and cooperating. All of these Peace-Area works are described in the "Description of the Research Methodology" section of this paper.

Teachers' Thoughts about the Peace Curriculum and the Peace Area

The researcher and her two co-teachers worked together to observe and record the conflicts and resolutions throughout the study. Both co-teachers conferenced with the researcher prior to the implementation of the peace curriculum, as well as after the peace curriculum. In the pre-curriculum conference, both co-teachers said they felt that a peace curriculum was necessary in the classroom. When asked why, one said, "It is important for the children to feel safe and self-assured in a classroom setting." The other teacher

said, "It will teach children to deal with conflicts." Asked why the children should be taught to resolve their conflicts, one teacher said it would be good for their self-esteem, while the other said, "At some point, they need to have this skill. Why not now?"

The teachers also were asked prior to the peace curriculum, "Do you think you need to change the way you interact with children in conflict?" Both responded, "Yes," because they both felt they currently were quick to intervene and resolve the children's conflict themselves rather than letting or guiding the children to resolve the conflicts with no or little teacher involvement.

When asked what they thought the greatest benefit of the peace curriculum would be for the class as a whole, one responded, "The children will feel safe and sure that all will be well, and teacher involvement in conflicts will be rarely necessary." She also added, "Hopefully, children will begin to see their own misbehaviors as inappropriate, and will change before a conflict even arises." The other teacher felt that the greatest benefit of the peace curriculum would be giving children more confidence and independence.

Following the implementation of the peace curriculum, the two co-teachers both ranked the curriculum's effectiveness in helping the children as a "10" on a 1-10 scale, with "10" indicating that the curriculum helped "a great deal." When asked why they thought the curriculum helped the children, both teachers said that it helped the children work out their conflicts, find peace, and become more independent. Both teachers also indicated that they felt the program was necessary and should continue in the class.

When asked why it should continue, one teacher said, "Children are enjoying and benefiting from (it)."

Regarding modifications to the curriculum, including the Peace-Area works, one teacher suggested reducing the number of sea shells in the shell basket, and the other expressed concern about some of the boys working too loudly with the "stick people working out their conflicts." This teacher indicated that she saw the same two or three boys use that work many times; while most times they used it as shown in the lesson, they sometimes used it for make-believe stories, which became particularly animated.

Considerations

In reviewing the data collected on the conflict and resolution observation sheet, it should be noted that there was not 100% attendance of the students in the classroom on every day of the 32 days of observation. Children were out of the classroom on some days due to illness, visiting and working in another classroom for part or all of the class period, or for special services, including speech. The researcher did not account for these differences in attendance because she did not see it having a great impact on the overall study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the data garnered from the 32 days of observation and recordkeeping, over a six-and-a-half-week period, showed a positive correlation between the implementation of the peace curriculum and a reduction in the number of conflicts per day. Furthermore, the data showed a positive correlation over time between the peace curriculum and a reduction in the number of conflicts among the children who were

initially involved in the greatest number of conflicts. Regarding conflict resolution, the data showed a positive correlation between the peace curriculum and the way in which children resolved their conflicts, with more children resolving their conflicts on their own or with minimal teacher engagement, and fewer children relying on the teacher to resolve their conflicts or work with the children until the conflicts are resolved.   In addition, the conferences with the children indicated that several children expanded their idea of "peace" from the before-curriculum idea of it referring only to "peace and quiet," to the broader, post-curriculum understanding of "peace" as people getting along and being nice to each other.

The teachers also commented that they *felt* what the data *showed*, that the children seemed more peaceful, more likely to resolve the conflicts themselves, and more understanding of what "peace" means and why it is important.

Action Plan

The researcher conducted the Action Research to determine whether a peace curriculum would help children resolve and/or reduce conflicts in the classroom. After a 32-day study that included implementation of a peace curriculum, the data analysis showed that there were fewer daily conflicts among the children over time, fewer conflicts involving the children who had initially been involved in the greatest number of conflicts, a shift from more children needing heavy teacher involvement in resolving conflicts to needing no or little teacher involvement, and a broader understanding of what "peace" means. The positive correlations between the peace curriculum and these

improvements in the class indicate that the peace curriculum provided a worthwhile benefit for the individual children, the class as a whole, and the teachers.

Prior to implementation of the peace curriculum, the school year began each September with a simple lesson to the children about how to get a teacher's attention, and how to use the peace area for sitting and talking if children were upset. The children were directed to the peace area initially, though the younger ones rarely went, preferring instead to have a teacher resolve their issues. The peace lessons were not reiterated regularly after the start of the year. The peace area consisted of a few simple but comforting peace works placed on a small shelf in the classroom, and a three-person peace bench placed in front of the shelf for the children to sit on. The works were limited to a small basket of shells, a small peace book, and a vase of flowers. On occasion, other simple works were added. All of these works were intended to provide a peaceful respite for children, but none addressed the issue of resolving conflicts.

The newly implemented peace curriculum included a combination of both peacefulness and conflict-resolution works. Each work was introduced with a lesson in small or large groups, with open discussions about peace, peacefulness, getting along, compromising, negotiating, resolving conflicts, fairness, and kindness. Because the peace lessons were given and new peace works provided at regular intervals, children had a greater and more constant awareness of peace. That is, peace became part of their daily lives, as opposed to being a lesson taught once or twice. The lessons of peace were reinforced each time there was a class or small-group discussion. As a result, peace became an ever-present expectation, and its importance in the classroom and within the

children did not diminish. This was clear both in how the children's behaviors changed and in what the teachers reported. As a result, the teachers have agreed that the peace curriculum should continue in many ways.

Peace Going Forward

The space for the peace area will be slightly enlarged, so as to allow a few more works to be available at the peace area at any given time. Since there were no more than three children in the peace area at a time, the current peace bench will suffice and, therefore, remain.

New peace lessons will be given at regular intervals in small or large groups, and the corresponding peace works will be added to the peace area. While a tally of the use of the works was not kept during the Action Research study, it appeared to the teachers that the children used both the conflict-resolution and peacefulness works almost equally. Therefore, the additional works going forward will reflect both of these aspects of peace. All of the current peace-curriculum works may be used individually, and some may be used by two or three children at a time. New works will have a similar intended usage, so that the works themselves do not restrict the children. Another aspect of the current works is that all of them are made from natural materials to reflect the peacefulness that nature provides. This aspect of the work was discussed by the teacher and children each time a new work was introduced. In fact, at the beginning of each lesson, as the children first saw a new work, the children tried to figure out what part of nature had provided the materials for that work. As a result, the children were learning about nature as well as about nature's role in peace. The researcher will attempt to have all future peace works

made of natural materials so the children continue to learn about nature and the nature-peace connection.

New peace books also will be read to the children on a regular basis. As children hear stories about peacefulness and conflict resolution, they may connect these stories with situations within their lives. The researcher will provide a variety of interesting story examples of children resolving their conflicts and finding peace.   The kindergarteners, who are the oldest children in the classroom, will be invited to read some peace-based stories and/or poems to a teacher, followed by a discussion of their meanings with the teacher. Each of the kindergarteners also will be asked to write a story in his journal about a time when he had a conflict with someone, including if and how the conflict was resolved.

While team-building exercises were not conducted during the Action Research study, it could be beneficial to do one or more such exercises going forward. Having the children work together in a fun, specified way could build a greater bond between them, perhaps lessening conflicts or the intensity of conflicts among them.

The phrase, "Remember, peace. Please try to work it out," was used by both teachers and children when other children were involved in a conflict. The phrase was to remind children about the goal of peace and to encourage them to work together to resolve their conflict. Many times, children involved in conflicts went directly to the peace area when they heard this phrase. This occurred even when it was clear that the conflict could have been resolved right then and there, without going to the peace area. It became clear that the peace area and works gave the children the impetus to work

towards peace. It also seemed to give children a respite from their current conflict, letting them cool their tempers, work and talk together, and become pre-occupied with the peace works, even if they did not speak directly about resolving their conflict.

Children will be reminded regularly of the importance and expectation of resolving their conflicts between themselves, except in the case of a safety concern. If a child is hurt or potentially will be hurt, the children will be reminded to come directly to a teacher.

A whole-school peace curriculum will be implemented for all the classrooms, including peace lessons and works for each classroom. The curriculum will begin in September, as the new school year begins, and new lessons and works will be provided on a monthly, or more frequent, basis throughout the entire school year. The goal is to provide ongoing awareness to the children of the importance and beauty of peace, and give the children the strength and guidance they need to find peace themselves by resolving their conflicts appropriately.

Going forward, an additional Action Research study may be conducted regarding the effect of individual peace works. This would help determine the different impacts the works have on children. Another study may be to determine the effect of music and/or very short stories, listened to with individual headsets in part of the peace area, in finding peace and resolving conflicts. The results of both of these studies could give teachers greater guidance in providing the most influential and beneficial peace lessons and works.

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Appendix A
Assent Form

January 12, 2015

Dear Parents,

In addition to being your child's Pre-K/Kindergarten teacher, I am a St. Catherine University (St. Kate's) student pursuing a Master of Education. As a capstone to my program, I need to complete an Action Research project.   For this project, I am going to study the effects of a peace and conflict-resolution curriculum in our class because I would like to help children resolve their conflicts when they occur at school.

In the coming weeks, and as part of our regular classroom activities, I will be adding many new peace-based activities to our classroom's peace area to help the children understand what peace means, why peace is important, and how to find peace when a conflict arises; the other teachers and I also will be noting the children's use of and response to the peace lessons and activities. All students in our class will participate in the activities. In order to understand the outcomes of my study, I plan to speak to the children about and analyze the teachers' observations of the peace-area lessons and activities to determine which were most beneficial in reducing and resolving classroom conflicts.

The purpose of this letter is to notify you of this research and to allow you the opportunity to exclude your child's data from my study. This data includes brief conferences I will have with the students regarding their feelings about peace and conflict resolution, observations about the students' use of peace-based materials I am creating for the class, and students' reflections, through their own drawings and/or words, of peace and conflict resolution.

If you decide you want your child's data to be in my study, you don't need to do anything at this point.

If you decide you do NOT want your child's data included in my study, please note that on this form below and return it by Thursday, January 15, 2015. Please note that your child will still participate in the peace lessons and activities, but his/her data will not be included in my analysis.

In order to help you make an informed decision, please note the following:

- I am working with a faculty member at St. Kate's and an advisor to complete this project.

- The benefits of the study are that we will determine which peace-based activities can help children appropriately resolve their conflicts.
- I will be writing about the results that I get from this research. However, none of the writing that I do will identify outcomes connected to a particular student. Other people will not know if your child is in my study.
- The final report of my study will be electronically available online at the St. Kate's library. The goal of sharing my research study is to help other teachers who are also trying to improve their teaching.
- There is no penalty for not having your child's data involved in the study. I will simply delete his or her responses from my data set.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at office@themontessorihouse.com. You may ask questions now, or if you have any questions later, you can ask me, or my advisor, Nicole Wilcox, at ndwilcox@stkate.edu., who will be happy to answer them. If you have questions or concerns regarding the study, and you would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you may also contact Dr. John Schmidtt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board at (651) 690 -7739.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

_____   _____

Maria Morningstar   Date

OPT OUT: Parents, in order to exclude your child's data from the study, please sign and return by Monday, January 19, 2015.

I do NOT want my child's data to be included in this study.

_____   _____

Signature of Parent   Date

Appendix B
Active Consent Form

Dear Co-Teachers,

As you know, I am a St. Catherine University student pursuing a Masters of Education degree. An important part of my program is the Action Research project.

I have chosen to learn about the effects of a peace and conflict-resolution curriculum in our class because I would like to reduce conflicts and help children resolve their conflicts when they occur at school. I am working with a faculty member at St. Kate's and an advisor to complete this particular project.

I will be writing about the results that I get from this research, however, none of the writing that I do will include the name of this school, the names of any teachers, students, or any references that would make it possible to identify outcomes connected to a particular student.

When I am done, my work will be electronically available online at the St. Kate's library in a system called Sophia, which holds published reports written by faculty and graduate students at St. Kate's. The goal of sharing my final research study report is to help other teachers who are also trying to improve the effectiveness of their teaching. The benefits of this study are that we will determine which peace-based activities can help children appropriately resolve their conflicts.

Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to a) complete a one-page assessment before and after implementation of the peace curriculum regarding your thoughts about peace and aspects of the curriculum; b) observe and make notes, using a tally sheet, regarding conflicts and conflict resolutions among the children throughout the implementation of the curriculum. The one-page assessment will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The observation and note-taking tally will take place during our normal classroom activities both in the classroom and on the playground, and as part of our normal observation and note-taking routine.

This study will take approximately 4-6 weeks. There are roughly 15 peace-based lessons/activities, and each lesson is approximately 10-15 minutes.

If you decide you do want to be a participant in or your data (list what data will be included) to be in my study, you need to sign this form and return it by [date]. If at any time you decide you do not want your data to be included in the study, you can notify me and I will remove included data to the best of my ability.

If you decide you do not want to be a participant in or your data included in my study, you do not need to do anything. There is no penalty for not having your data involved in the study.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, you can ask me or my advisor, Nicole Wilcox, who will be

happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at (651) 690-7739.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Opt In

I DO want my data to be included in this study. Please respond by Thursday, January 15, 2015.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant in Research   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher   Date

If you would like to be recognized for your contributions to this research, please write your name here as you would like it to be included.

_____

Appendix C
Teacher Assessment Before the Peace Curriculum

Name:_____ Date:_____

Q1. Why do you think a peace curriculum IS or IS NOT necessary in this classroom?

_____

Q2. Generally speaking, what happens at school when there are conflicts among the children?
Mark all that apply.
___ Children in the conflict stop working/playing
___ Children in the conflict continue working/playing without stopping
___ One or more children not in the conflict stop working/playing
___ One or more children not in the conflict continue working/playing
___ The peace and working of the classroom are interrupted
___ Teachers must stop what they are doing to help the children in the conflict
___ The children in the conflict try to resolve the conflict without a teacher
___ Children in the conflict tell the teacher but do not ask for help resolving
___ Children in the conflict tell the teacher and ask for help resolving

Additional comments:_____

Q3. What happens most frequently when there is a conflict in school?
Rank from most frequent (1) to least frequent (5):
___ Children resolve the conflict themselves without telling a teacher
___ Children resolve the conflict with teacher encouraging them to resolve the conflict
    themselves
___ Children resolve the conflict with teacher working with them all the way to
    resolution
___ Teacher resolves the conflict with proposed or imposed resolution

Q4. Why do you think children SHOULD or SHOULD NOT be taught to resolve their conflicts?

_____

Q5. Why do you think children CAN or CANNOT be taught to resolve their conflicts?

_____

Q6a.Do you think you need to change the way you interact with children in conflict?   Yes   No

Q6b.Why?_____

Q7. What, if any, negative aspects might there be in having a peace curriculum? _____

_____

Q8. What do you think will be the greatest benefit of the peace curriculum for the class?

_____

Additional comments: _____

Appendix D
Student Conference Before the Peace Curriculum

Name:_____ Age:_____ Date:_____ ESL?: Yes No

Peace

Q1. We have been learning about peace. What do you think of when I say the word peace?

_____

Q2a. Do you like peace? Yes No I don't know

Q2b. Why?_____

Q3. How do you know when there is peace?_____

_____

Q4. What makes you feel peaceful?_____

Q5. What makes you happy at school? _____

Conflict

Q1. What makes you unhappy at school? _____

_____

Q2a. Sometimes children get upset with another child. Does that ever happen to you?
Yes No

Q2b. (If yes) How do you feel when you and another child get upset with each other?

_____

_____

Q3. What happens when *other* children get upset with each other at school?_____

_____

Q4. What can you do when you and another child don't agree with each other at school?

_____

Teacher comments:_____

Appendix E
Conflict and Resolution Observation Sheet

Conflict and Resolution Observation A.M. East, Ages 3-7	Date:_____
Conflicts	**Resolutions**
Time:_____ Activity: A B C D L O Location: C B H S W P PA Duration:_____ Type: V P M E Details:_____ Reason: R B G A O Details:_____ _____ Names (check if initiated) :_____ Add'l comments: _____	Time resolution began:_____ Loc.: C B H S W P PA Duration of time spent resolving conflict:_____ Type: V P M E Details:_____ Source: CR CR/TE CR/TW TR Details:_____ _____ Add'l comments: _____

Location: C= class S = stair B=bath W = walkway H = hall P = play   PA = peace **Type**: V = verbal P = physical M = material   E = emotional

Reason: R = Resources B = Beliefs   G = Goals A = Actions O = Other   **Activity**: A = Arrival B = Birthday C = Circle D = Dismissal
        L = Lessons O = Other

Source of resolution: CR = children CR/TE = w/tchr. encouragement   CR/TW= w/tchr. working till resol. TR = tchr. imposed resol.

Appendix E (back page)

Teachers' Guide to Marking Observation Sheet

Codes to both Conflicts and Resolutions

Location: C= classroom   S = stairs   **Type**: V = verbal   P = physical   M = material   E = emotional
                       B = bathroom   W = walkway/sidewalk
                       H = hallway   P = playground   PA = peace area

Codes to Conflicts: **Reason for conflict**:   R = Resources (access to)   B = Beliefs G = Goals   A = Actions, behaviors   O = Other

                          Activity: A = Arrival   B = Birthday   C = Circle   D = Dismissal   L = Lessons   O = Other

Codes to Resolutions   **Source of resolution:** CR = children resolved with no teacher involvement
                          CR/TE = children resolved with teacher encouraging them to resolve conflict alone
                          CR/TW = children resolved with teacher working with them all the way to resolution
                          TR = teacher resolved with proposed or imposed resolution

Definitions of Codes: **Types**: Verbal: threat, yelling, name calling, other (list in "Details")
                          Physical: accidental touch, intentional touch – hit/push/pull/kick/grab, chase, make face, displacement (cut in
                           line, take spot in circle, or in line), other (list in "Details")
                          Material: accidental touch of others' materials, intentional touch of others' materials, other (list in "Details")
                          Emotional: social exclusion, humiliation

                          Reasons: Resources: conflict over access to works, activities, friends, teacher's attention, other (list in "Details")
                               Beliefs: disagreement over what children believe

                               Goals: disagreement over what children want or intend to do
                               Actions: disagreement over a child's behavior

Appendix F
Student Conference After the Peace Curriculum

Name:_____ Age:_____ Date:_____ ESL?: Yes   No

Peace

Q1. We have been learning about peace. What do you think of when I say the word peace?

_____

Q2a. Do you like peace?   Yes   No   I don't know

Q2b. Why?_____

Q3. How do you know when there is peace?_____

_____

Q4. What makes you feel peaceful?_____

Q5. What makes you happy at school? _____

Conflict

Q1. What makes you unhappy at school? _____

_____

Q2a. Sometimes children get upset with another child. Does that ever happen to you?
Yes   No

Q2b. (If yes) How do you feel when you and another child get upset with each other?

_____

_____

Q3. What happens when *other* children get upset with each other at school?_____

_____

Q4. What can you do when you and another child don't agree with each other at school?

_____

Teacher comments:_____

Appendix G
Exit Conference with Students About Peace Activities

Name:_____ Age:_____ Date:_____

ESL?: Yes   No

Q1.   Did you go into the peace area? Yes   No   I don't know/don't remember

Q2.   Let's look at the peace works. Which is your favorite work?

Q3.   Did you like any other works? Which one(s)?

Q4.   Did any of these works make you feel peaceful (or happy)? Which one(s)?

Q5.   Were there any works that you did *not* like when you used them? Which one(s)?

Work	"Favorite"	"Liked" but not favorite	"Made me feel peaceful (or happy)"	"Did not like"

Additional comments from the child:_____

_____

Appendix H
Teacher Assessment After the Peace Curriculum

Name:_____   Date:_____

Q1. Overall, how much do you think the implementation of the peace curriculum has helped the children? Circle one rating based on: 0 = not at all   5 = a moderate amount   10 = a great deal

        0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Q2a. If you rated the program 0 – 3, why do you think it did not help or helped only marginally?

_____

_____

Q2b.   If you rated the program 4-10, why do you think it helped?_____

    _____

_____

Q3a.   Did you think a peace curriculum was necessary?   Yes   No

Q3b.   Why?_____

Q4a.   Do you think there should continue to be a peace curriculum in the class?   Yes   No

Q4b.   Why?_____

Q5.   What parts of the curriculum should continue and why?   Be specific about lessons/activities.

_____

_____

Q6.   What parts of the curriculum should not continue, and why? Be specific about lessons/activities.

_____

_____

Q7.   What parts of the curriculum should be modified to be more appropriate or beneficial, and why? Be specific about lessons/activities.

_____

Appendix H (back page)
Teacher Assessment After the Peace Curriculum

Q8. Compared to before the peace curriculum, conflicts among the children generally seem to be:

Frequency: Less frequent   More frequent   About the same
Duration: Briefer   Lengthier   About the same
Resolutions: More are resolved   Fewer are resolved   About the same are resolved
Res. Source: More are resolved without teacher involvement
                      More are resolved with minimal teacher involvement
                      More are resolved with extensive teacher involvement

Q9a. As a result of the curriculum, did you change the way you interact with children in conflict?

         Yes   No

Q9b. If yes, please specify how and/or why._____

_____

Q10a: Do you think you need to make other changes to the way you interact with children in conflict?   Yes   No

Q10b: If yes, please specify how and/or why. _____

_____

Q11a. Do you think were any negative aspects of having a peace curriculum?   Yes   No

Q11b. If yes, what were they? _____

Q12.Why do you think it is or is not important for children to learn about peace and conflict
        resolutions at this age (3-7 years)?

_____

Q13.Do you think children can learn to resolve their own conflicts much of the time?   Yes   No

Q14.What do you think was the greatest benefit of the peace curriculum for the class as a whole?
If you do not believe there was a class-wide benefit, please write "None."

_____

_____