

# Beyond Classroom Conflict

Early Childhood Edition

## The importance of perception



long in the classroom.” I meant they should not physically be in the room without a teacher. The boys came back to the line and followed me into the

She was waiting on the second day of school. I could see the anger from across the room. She wanted to know why I told her child, “You do not belong in this classroom.” She had been up all night thinking about me.

I searched my mind and came up empty. Then I remembered teaching a hallway procedure. Children were taught to wait at the door until I entered the room so I could see all children at all times.

When we returned from a walk around the school, the three boys at the front of the line entered the room ahead of me and sat on the rug. I looked in the room and said, “You do not be-

room. I moved on. The boy, however, felt he had been in trouble and told his mother only that I said he did not belong. Her perception then framed her opinion and upset her evening.

After questioning her child again and understanding the situation, the mother visibly relaxed. I then encouraged her to contact me immediately with any concerns. Clearing up details right away can be easier than undoing hours of dwelling on a situation. She left that morning with my phone number in her pocket and a much better attitude. The remaining 178 days of our relationship were much smoother.

Parent trust often comes second to perception. Information is filtered through the mind and vocabulary of

a small child. Giving facts to a parent may make a teacher vulnerable, however, it also gives the parent an adult perspective to consider with the child’s information.

Explaining facts are necessary as you work through conflicts. Going to parents when I know a situation may be misunderstood has often helped avoid a larger confrontation. There are times I want to hide a situation from a parent to avoid an unpleasant situation. In the long run, though, trust in the teacher’s honesty can lead to security in the teacher’s judgment. This will then make a difference in the perception of a situation.

Conflicts will never end. Communication, though, can be a key to keep the relationship with a parent open despite potential problems. Strong feelings may be present, but clear communication will help bridge the gap between fact and perception. I do not always look forward to those conversations, but they can be a stepping stone to a healthy relationship.

Volume 1, Issue 1  
August 2009

*In this issue:*

The importance of Perception

*Teachable Moments*

**Nancy Nicewonger can help your class move beyond conflict through:**

- **Staff Development**
- **Teacher Training**
- **Parent Meetings**
- **Consultation**
- **Classroom activities**

Visit Nancy @  
[www.beyondclassroomconflict.com](http://www.beyondclassroomconflict.com)

## Beyond Classroom Conflict

Beyond Classroom Conflict  
P.O. Box 764  
Locust, NC 28097

Phone: 704-918-8042

Email:  
nancy@beyondclassroomconflict.com

Visit us on the Web:  
Beyondclassroomconflict.com



An experienced teacher and administrator, Nancy Nicewonger has a desire to help children of all ages gain resources in conflict resolution that will stay with them for a lifetime of use.

After testing an approach to conflict resolution in both private and public school classrooms, Nancy created ***Beyond Classroom Conflict*** as a workshop for teachers. Teachers are given the tools to implement this approach with their students and families.

Nancy is also willing to serve as a mediator or consultant in order to help teachers transform their classroom into a positive culture of resolution. Nancy has a degree in elementary education as well as a Master's Degree in Conflict Resolution. Nancy can help your program make the most of your learning environment by establishing principles of conflict resolution.

## Teachable Moments: A mini-lesson plan

As you engage in daily activities, consider where you can talk about emotions and relationships. The following activity is a simple introduction to discussion of conflict resolution that can go along with activities you already include in your day.

*If You're happy and you know it*

Prepare to sing *If You're happy and you know it* clap your hands.

Before singing, ask, "When are you happy?" If needed, prompt answers by talking about

favorite foods, activities and people.

Continue the discussion about other emotions. "Do you ever get sad? Make a sad face. Have you gotten scared before? Make a scared face. What surprises you? Make a surprised face. What makes you mad?"

Introduce the word **emotion** as the feeling of being happy, sad, mad, surprised and scared. Explain that emotions are normal or "OK". "You will be happy and sad and mad and surprised and scared. What is important is how you act when you have that emotion.

You still need to treat others with good words and good touches even when you are not happy." Sing *If You're happy and you know it*. Substitute other emotions into the song to show that having a range of emotions is acceptable. During the year, show that the actions that accompany some emotions may cause concern, not the emotion in itself.

