

Beyond Classroom Conflict

Early Childhood Edition

Shifting the child's outlook can avoid conflicts

When children join in a preschool class, there are several shifts in the social stature of their lives. As they adjust, adults need to consider how they relate to that child. Creating an environment that helps children change their outlook on these social issues will also avoid many conflicts.

Taking turns may be a new concept for a child that spent most of his time with adults. Encourage the child as he tries to wait patiently.

--Have a system so a child can be first at times. Many children look forward to their turn as line leader. Create other ways to show a child there will be times to be first.

--Model language to express frustration over waiting. At the same time, help the child talk through the issue. "It is hard to wait, isn't it?" "What would you like to do until you can ride a bike?" "You look angry. How will you feel after you get your turn?"

--Realize there may be limits to a child's ability to wait. Sing songs during transition times that require waiting. Practice rhymes while children are in line to wash hands. Hop on one foot while waiting for turns in the bathroom.

Children **may expect their needs to be met immediately**. A child may need to use a bathroom when there is not one available. Another child may want to leave the cafeteria when she is done even if other children are still eating. The child needs to expand her outlook to include the physical and group demands of preschool.

--Monitor some needs of children at the beginning of their preschool experience. Make sure the child goes to the bathroom before outside time. Suggest the child get a drink from the water fountain when there is no rush. By helping the child meet their basic needs at convenient times for the class, you can avoid a crisis situation.

--Teach a schedule to the class. Use pictures to show the children the routine for the day. If a child is hungry, show them on the schedule that lunch will be after center time. You cannot feed them immediately but can show them that food is coming soon.

Children will need to **communicate verbally**. At home, parents and siblings may speak for a child or meet their needs without the child speaking. At school, a child may point to something but you may not see it. Help the child use words at school to communicate needs and wants.

--At the start of the child's preschool experience, take the child on a tour of the classroom once a day for the first 10 days. By saying the names of objects and places in the classroom, the child may increase their vocabulary to include classroom words.

--If you can read a child's signals, put the desire in words before meeting the need. "Do you need to go to the bathroom?" "You need more glue?" Encourage the child to repeat some of the words.

--When a child grabs an object from another child, give him the words to use to solve the problem without aggression. "You need to say, 'I would like that truck.'" "Can you ask her to pass a pair of scissors?"

Some behavior may seem aggressive and inappropriate for the classroom. While that may be true, the root of the behavior may be a self-centered outlook. Help the child understand that they may need to compromise at school, but they will have their needs met. By assisting the child in this transition, you will help them avoid conflicts that often result because of a lack of this social understanding.

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A mini lesson plan

Nancy Nicewonger can help your class move beyond conflict through:

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

Visit Nancy @

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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



Bang your sticks
with me—1 2 3,
1 2 3

Now bang them
quietly

Now bang them
as loud as you
can

Bang them slowly

Bang them quickly

Loud—now soft

Use rhythm sticks or
have children clap their
hands to the following
directions:

Put your sticks down

Ask: Do you like quiet sounds? Do you like loud sounds? Some of us do not like loud sounds. They may hurt your ears or make you feel scared. There are things at school you might not like. They may make you sad or scared or angry. You can be sad or scared or angry without hurting your friends. Instead, ask your friend to stop doing what is making you sad or scared or angry. Say,

“Please stop” and wait for them to stop. If they do not stop, then talk to your teacher and ask her to help. By talking to your friend instead of hitting or yelling, you are fixing your problem in a great way. There will be problems at school, but we can learn to solve them and still be friends.