



# Conflict and mediation

REAL LIFE SOCIAL STUDIES AND LANGUAGE FOR YEARS 3-9

## curriculum

### CURRICULUM STRANDS & ACHIEVEMENT OBJECTIVES

#### Social Studies

- knowing and understanding why we have rules and laws
- knowing how people exercise rights and responsibilities
- knowing how people can organise themselves in response to disputes and how they can be resolved
- identifying rights and responsibilities people have within a group or in society
- understanding the importance of mediation in normal human interaction

### ESSENTIAL SKILLS

- thinking critically, reflectively and creatively
- analysing problems from different perspectives
- testing ideas and solutions
- evaluating processes and solutions
- taking responsibility for group decisions
- communicating competently through listening and speaking
- arguing a case clearly, logically and convincingly

## Tuning in to Difference

### Personal Preferences

- To develop the idea that we all have differing opinions and preferences in just about any area we care to mention, conduct the following surveys...
- What is our favourite ...
 

- takeaway food	- colour	- TV programme
- pet	- school subject	- pop group/music
- Pupils write short sentences listing their preferences and reasons for their choice.
- List all the favourite colours and put a label for each colour chosen at different parts of the classroom.
- Pupils stand by their chosen label.
- Remove half the colour labels (teachers choice) and ask them to stand by their favourite colour again.
- Halve the number of labels again and repeat the process?
- After a few moments, sit the pupils down and have them share and list their reactions when their favourite colour was removed. How did they feel? Was it fair?

## Thinking about Fairness

- Using colour as the topic, introduce the scenario where by all pupils have been invited to choose the colour scheme for repainting the inside of the school.
- What problems can they foresee?
- Have groups brainstorm and suggest ways that these problems might be overcome.
- Is there any way that it can be done that will satisfy all pupils?
- Is there a way of making it fair for all pupils?
- Introduce the notion of compromise. Have pupils brainstorm and list situations at school and at home where they have had to compromise.
- What is their opinion of compromise?

## Differences of Opinion

### Real Life Situations

- Have pupils list situations at home and at school that can lead to (or have led to) differences of opinion.
- From personal experience, have pupils list and share the consequences of these differences of opinion.
- How were they solved?
- Introduce the concept of conflict. What is it? What causes conflict?
- Have groups plan and 'act' out a situation where there is conflict between family members or friends, eg which TV channel will we watch ...?
- Through class discussion have pupils suggest ways that the conflict situations enacted could have
  - been avoided
  - been solved

### Debates and Discussions

- 'Conflict is a healthy and necessary part of life'.
- 'There are always ways to avoid conflict between people'.
- 'When we make compromise, no one wins and everyone loses'.

## Finding Solutions

- Introduce the idea that there are times when we need to ask someone to make the final decision.
- Pose the following questions for the pupils to answer...
  - why do we have referees in rugby and basketball?
  - What would be the consequences if two sports teams did not accept the referee's decision?
- List situations at school and at home where they have had to ask

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someone else to make a final decision to solve a problem or resolve a conflict.

- Who were these people? **eg** a parent or teacher.

### When Conflict Can't Be Resolved

#### Can You Solve This One?

*Family Jones and Family Connell are neighbours. They have always got on well with each other and the children play together and go to the same school.*

*Mr Jones wants to erect a fence between the properties. Mr Connell agrees to pay half.*

*Mr Jones wants a corrugated iron fence as his finances are fairly limited while Mr Connell wants the fence to be made of brick and stone. Mr Jones doesn't object to the stone and brick fence as long as he only has to pay half of the cost of a corrugated iron fence.*

*Mr Connell wants him to pay half the cost of the brick and stone fence and will not agree to the iron fence.*

*They have a heated argument and now they are not talking to each other. Family members have been told not to have anything to do with each other, even at school!*

- Have pupils discuss the above scenario, **eg**
  - who is right? who is wrong?
  - are they both right or both wrong?
  - how would the other family members feel, especially the children?
- Pose the question that as the two men seem unable to resolve the conflict, is there any way it can be solved? Brainstorm solutions.
- Would it help if someone else who was not directly involved solved the problem for them?
- Introduce the concept of mediation by explaining to the pupils how it would work, **eg**
  1. The mediator is a person who is not involved in the dispute
  2. The mediator explains to the two men that they are here to make their own agreement.
  3. Each man will tell his side of the story (without being interrupted) and the mediator can ask questions to help make the problem clear.
  4. The mediator will then ask one man how he thinks the problem can be solved.
  5. The mediator then asks the other if he agrees.
  6. If not, the mediator then asks the other man for his solution to the problem.
  7. They may or may not agree. If they do agree the mediator will then repeat what they have agreed to make sure they both approve.
  8. If they still don't agree, the mediator will talk to them both alone to see if there is a way they can both solve their problem.

- What do the pupils think can be done if they still don't agree? **eg** a judge will decide!
- Do the pupils think it is better for people to try and sort out their own problems (with help) or to have someone else do it for them?

### Asking the Experts

- Invite a mediator, **eg** a Disputes Tribunal referee, to talk to the class about how Jones and Connell could be able to resolve their conflict. What options would be open to them?
- Ask the mediator to give some 'real life' examples of how conflicts have been resolved through mediation.
- Ask the mediator for some suggestions in setting up a classroom dispute committee.

### Solving Classroom Problems

- Have pupils discuss ways they can help solve disputes or problems that happen in the classroom. Are there some that should only be solved by the teacher?
- What methods will they use, **eg** mediation committee or a group making a final decision.
- Give the pupils real responsibility for solving classroom problems. Review the decisions on a regular basis in a class meeting situation.

## assessment

### CHOOSE FROM THE FOLLOWING

- do the students understand that we all have many differing points of view as individuals and as groups?
- are the students accepting growing responsibility for solving classroom and school problems and conflicts?
- are students able to show evidence of creative and logical problem solving skills?
- is there evidence of reasoned and logical thinking in arguing a case?
- can the students argue a case from the opposing viewpoint?
- are the students showing increasing confidence and fluency in speaking
- is there evidence that students are able to listen, understand and appreciate that there are many solutions to a problem?