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Chapter One: The Need For Intellectual Conflict In Schools

Introduction

Near the end of the 12th Century the Anasazi built a city on the Colorado Plateau which we call Mesa Verde. Built on a cliff, Mesa Verde is a remarkably beautiful city consisting of both single and multi-storied pueblo dwellings. Even today, it is one of the most impressive sights in North America. Around 1295, after the Anasazi lived in it for almost a hundred years, the city was abruptly abandoned. In a three to four year period, the Anasazi walked away and never came back. Why? No one knows. Many classes are to students what Mesa Verde was to the Anasazi. Students enroll in a course, pay the tuition, and spend considerable time attending class sessions, completing assignments, and passing tests, but when the course is over, so is their interest. They walk away and intellectually, never come back.

Wouldn't it be nice if your students got so involved in the subject you are teaching that they sparkled with energy, were deeply involved in the topics being discussed, rushed to the library to get more information and resources, continued discussing the topics over lunch and at night, sought out experts in the field to consult, and impatiently waited for the next class session to begin. How do you get students that interested in what you are teaching? An essential and often overlooked part of the answer is, "Stir up conflict?"

Conflict gains and holds attention and interest. All drama, for example, hinges on conflict. When playwrights and scriptwriters want to gain and hold viewer's attention, create viewer interest and emotional involvement, and excite and surprise viewers, they create a conflict. A general rule for television shows is that if there is not a conflict portrayed in the first 30 seconds, viewers will change the channel. Creating a conflict is an accepted writer's tool for capturing an audience. A general rule of modern novels is that if a conflict is not created within the first three pages of the book, the book will not be successful. There should be a general rule of teaching that states that if an teacher does not create an intellectual conflict in the first few minutes of a class period, students may not intellectually engage in the lesson and their attention may drift away to other things. By avoiding conflicts, teachers miss out on valuable opportunities to capture and emotionally involve students and enhance their learning. An important strategy for all teachers is the use of constructive controversy.

The purpose of this book is to empower teachers to structure constructive controversies in which students intellectually challenge each other. Through frequent participation in academic controversies, students will become skilled in the use of the procedure. When

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most teachers utilize the power of constructive controversy for instruction, the school climate will encourage intellectual challenge and argumentation for learning.

In this chapter what is and is not a conflict is explained. Understanding the nature of conflict is important as conflicts as a natural and unavoidable part of life. Constructive conflict is defined. The nature of constructive controversy is then defined, the process by which it works is described, the conditions that limit its effectiveness are discussed, and he outcomes resulting from its use are described.

Training Students To Resolve Conflicts Constructively

Teaching students how to manage conflicts constructively involves three major components:

1. Creating a cooperative context. The constructive resolution of conflict requires participants to recognize that agreeing on a joint solution to the problem and the long-term relationship with the other participants are more important than having the group adopt any one member's position (Johnson & F. Johnson, 2006). They must recognize and value their long-term mutual interests in creating the best reasoned judgment possible and be invested in each other's long-term well-being. The first step, therefore, in managing conflicts constructively is to establish a cooperative environment. The more cooperative the relationships among the individuals involved, the more constructively conflicts will tend to be managed. The easiest way to create a cooperative environment is to use cooperative learning procedures the majority of the day (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998).

2. Implementing the instructional use of constructive controversies. This is the focus of this book.

3. Supplementing academic controversies with the **Teaching Students To Be Peacemakers Program** (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). Students are taught to recognize the potential positive nature of conflicts, master the five primary strategies for managing conflicts, master the problem-solving negotiation procedure, master the mediation procedure, serve as a peer mediator to help schoolmates resolve their conflicts, and as a last resort seek out a teacher or administrator to arbitrate when negotiation and mediation have failed.

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Figure 1.1 Engaging In An Academic Controversy

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Types Of Conflicts

Controversy is one type of conflict. There are other types, pervading all aspects of our lives. Everyone has conflicts, yet the concept has not been an easy one for psychologists to define. Some psychologists have focused on frustration, others have focused on decisions among attractive or unattractive alternatives, and some have concentrated on the feelings of the people involved (rage, anger, distrust, and rejection). According to the World Book Dictionary, a **conflict** is a fight, struggle, battle, disagreement, dispute, or quarrel. Deutsch (1969), however, states that a **conflict** exists whenever incompatible activities occur (an activity that is incompatible with another activity is one that prevents, blocks, or interferes with the occurrence or effectiveness of the second activity). Incompatible activities may originate in one person, between two or more people, or between two or more groups. If, for example, you wish to spend Saturday afternoon both sleeping and studying, you are in conflict with yourself. If you wish to cross the street and someone decides to prevent, block, or interfere with your doing so, you are involved in an interpersonal conflict. If your group decides to win a football game and the other group decides it also wants to win the game, your group is in conflict with the other group.

There are at least four important types of conflicts: controversies, conceptual conflicts, conflict of interests, and developmental conflicts. Constructive **controversy** exists when one student's ideas, information, conclusions, theories, and opinions are incompatible with those of another, and the two seek to reach an agreement (Johnson & Johnson, 1979, 1989, 2003). Controversies are resolved by engaging in what Aristotle called **deliberate discourse** (i.e., the discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of proposed actions) aimed at synthesizing novel solutions (i.e., **creative problem solving**). The goal of a controversy is to reach the best reasoned judgment about what action to take to solve a problem. To make a reasoned judgment, both sides of the issue have to be presented and critically analyzed, and then consensus must reached as to solution to the problem. An example would be dividing a class into groups of four and presenting them with a decision as to whether human-made pollution is a major contributor to global warming. Each group is four is divided into two pairs, one pair is assigned the pro position (humans are significantly contributing to global warning) and the other pair is assigned the con position (humans are not significantly contributing to global warming). Each pair researches their assigned position, presents the best case possible for it (trying to convince the other pair to agree with them), critically analyzes the opposing position, and tries to see the issue from both perspectives. The group of four then has to come to consensus about the extent to which human-made pollution is contributing to global warming.

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What You Need To Know About Conflicts

First, you need to understand what is and is not a conflict. Conflicts may involve struggles, disagreements, disputes, or quarrels. More precisely, conflicts occur as the actions of one person attempting to reach his or her goals prevents, blocks, or interferes with the actions of another person attempting to reach his or her goals (see Deutsch, 1973).

Second, you must accept conflicts as a natural part of life that must be faced and resolved in constructive ways. You might as well try to stop the earth from turning on its axis as to try to eliminate conflicts from your life. Conflicts arise no matter what you do. Conflicts are especially frequent whenever you have goals you care about and are involved in relationships you value.

Third, whenever conflicts occur, destructive or constructive outcomes may result. Obtaining constructive outcomes requires (a) a set of procedures for managing conflicts constructively, (b) the opportunity to practice, practice, practice the procedures until real skill and expertise in their use is attained, and (c) the support and encouragement to use the procedures by the norms and values of the school (and home).

Fourth, if conflicts are to be managed constructively, everyone needs to use the same procedures to resolve them and be skilled in their use. All members of an organization (such as a school, business, or family) must use the same procedure.

Fifth, the most important type of conflict for instructional purposes is constructive controversy. A **controversy** exists when one student's ideas, information, conclusions, theories, and opinions are incompatible with those of another, and the two seek to reach an agreement.

Sixth, academic controversies are constructive to the extent that they (a) result in a synthesis and integration of the best reasoning and conclusions from all the various alternatives, (b) result in all group members learning all relevant information concerning the issue being studied, (c) strengthen the relationship among participants so that they like each other better and are better able to interact or work cooperatively with each other, and (d) increase students' ability to engage in academic controversies constructively.

Seventh, because conflicts occur continually, and because so many people are so unskilled in managing conflicts, learning how to resolve conflicts constructively is one of the best investments you can make. Once learned, conflict skills go with a person to every situation and every relationship. Knowing how to resolve conflicts with skill and grace will increase career success, quality of relationships with friends and colleagues, more fulfilling family life, and happiness in general.

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A **conceptual conflict** occurs when incompatible ideas exist simultaneously in a person's mind or when information being received does not seem to fit with what one already knows (Berlyne, 1957, 1966). An example is when the same amount of water is poured into two glasses--one is tall and skinny and the other is short and fat. The student knows that each glass holds the same amount of water but at the same time believes that the tall glass has more water in it.

A **conflict of interests** exists when the actions of one person attempting to maximize his or her wants and benefits prevents, blocks, or interferes with another person maximizing his or her wants and benefits (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). When two students both want the same library book at the same time, a conflict of interests exists. When needs, values, and goals are incompatible, when certain resources (such as power, time, space, popularity, money, and position) are scarce, and when competition for rewards and privileges is taking place, a conflict of interests exists.

A **developmental conflict** exists when recurrent incompatible activities between adult and child based on the opposing forces of stability and change within the child cycles in and out of peak intensity as the child develops cognitively and socially (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). An example is when one year a child is dependent on the teacher and wants to be noticed and approved of by the teacher all the time. The next year the child is independent and does not want the teacher to express approval or liking. The student does not choose to be dependent or independent, there are social developmental imperatives that demand that he or she be so. These imperatives are pushed to the extreme until a teacher (or parent) sets limits and communicates social reality.

Thus, controversy is one type of conflict. To understand constructive controversy, the nature of controversy needs to be elaborated and the process by which it works and its outcomes need to be outlined (for a more complete discussion, see Appendix A).

What Is Constructive Controversy?

Have you learned lessons only of those who admired you, and were tender with you, and stood aside for you?

Have you not learned great lessons from those who braced themselves against you, and disputed the passage with you?

Walt Whitman, 1860

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John Milton, in **Doctrine and Discipline**, stated *"Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making."* Milton would recommend that teachers create different opinions, disagreements, and arguments if they want to instill knowledge in their participants. The most constructive and effective way of doing so is by using the controversy procedure.

As defined above, constructive **controversy** exists when one student's ideas, information, conclusions, theories, and opinions are incompatible with those of another, and the two seek to reach an agreement. Constructive controversy is most commonly contrasted with concurrence-seeking, debate, and individualistic decision making. **Concurrence seeking** occurs when members of a group inhibit discussion to avoid any disagreement or argument, emphasize agreement, and avoid realistic appraisal of alternative ideas and courses of action. Most group decision-making situations are dominated by concurrence-seeking (Walton, 1987). Concurrence seeking is related to the **groupthink** concept of Janis (1982) in which members of a group set aside their doubts and misgivings about whatever policy is favored by the emerging consensus so as to be able to concur with the other members. The underlying motivation of groupthink and concurrence-seeking is the strong desire to preserve the harmonious atmosphere of the group on which each member has become dependent for (a) coping with the stresses of external crises and (b) maintaining self- esteem.

Debate exists when two or more individuals argue positions that are incompatible with one another and a judge declares a winner on the basis of who presented their position the best. An example would be a group in which each member is assigned a position on whether human-made pollution is contributing to global warming. After each side presents, an authority (such as the teacher) declares as the winner the side that made the best presentation of its position.

Individualistic decision making occurs when isolated individuals independently decide on a course of action without talking with fellow participants. Each decision-maker comes to his or her decision without interacting with others or discussing the information upon which the decision is being made. The processes generated by controversy, debate, concurrence seeking, and individual decision making are summarized in Table 1.1.

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Table 1.1 Controversy, Debate, Concurrence-Seeking, And Individualistic Processes

Constructive controversy	Debate	Concurrence-Seeking	Individualistic
Categorizing And Organizing Information To Derive Conclusions	Categorizing And Organizing Information To Derive Conclusions	Categorizing And Organizing Information To Derive Conclusions	Categorizing And Organizing Information To Derive Conclusions
Presenting, Advocating, Elaborating Position And Rationale	Presenting, Advocating, Elaborating Position And Rationale	Presenting, Advocating, Elaborating Position And Rationale	No Oral Statement Of Positions
Being Challenged By Opposing Views Results In Conceptual Conflict And Uncertainty About Correctness Of Own Views	Being Challenged By Opposing Views Results In Conceptual Conflict And Uncertainty About Correctness Of Own Views	Recognition That Others Have Different Views	Presence Of Only One View Results In High Certainty About The Correctness Of Own Views
Epistemic Curiosity Motivates Active Search For New Information And Perspectives	Closed-Minded Rejection Of Opposing Information And Perspectives	Apprehension About Differences	Continued High Certainty About The Correctness Of Own Views
Reconceptualization, Synthesis, Integration	Closed-Minded Adherence To Own Point Of View	Quick Compromise To Dominant View	Adherence To Own Point Of View
High Achievement, Positive Relationships, Psychological Health	Moderate Achievement, Relationships, Psychological Health	Low Achievement, Relationships, Psychological Health	Low Achievement, Relationships, Psychological Health

What Controversy Looks Like In The Classroom

What had the greatest influence on the decline and fall of the Roman Empire: (a) the deterioration of the economy after Augustus defined the boundaries of the Roman Empire, which limited Rome's ability to pay their armies or (b) the lack of economic opportunity for the average citizen (who was very poor) because the wealth became centered in the hands of a few people and most jobs were performed by slaves? To examine this issue,

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students can listen to a lecture, discuss it in a group, or engage in a constructive controversy.

Constructive controversy is one of three major teaching formats that teachers may use. An teacher may format a class session as recitation, group discussion, or controversy (see Table 1). In the whole class **recitation format**, the teacher asks a student a question, listens to the student response, evaluates the response ("good", "correct", "not quite" "that's interesting"), asks another student a question, and repeats the pattern. Most questions are factual, close-ended, and have "correct" answers. This format assumes that students are to master a static body of knowledge that reflects accumulated wisdom. An emphasis is placed on a quiet class in which students are sequentially asked to recite.

Table 1: Teaching Formats

Characteristics	Recitation	Group Discussion	Controversy
Coverage	Teacher	Students	Students
Assumptions About Knowledge	Static, Reflects Accumulated Wisdom	Dynamic, Socially Constructed	Dynamic, Socially Constructed, Applied And Transformed
Student Role	Recite Knowledge Of Facts, Information	Give Thorough Explanations Of Understanding And Implications	Transform Knowledge Into Argument, Critically Analyze Positions, View From Different Perspectives, Synthesis
Teacher Role	Ask Closed-Ended Question, Listens To And Evaluates Response	Pose Open-Ended Question, Structure Group Discussion, Monitor, Facilitate	Pose Open-Ended Question With Defined Sides, Structure Controversy, Monitor, Facilitate

In the **group discussion format**, the teacher assigns students to small groups, gives them a question to discuss, and facilitates (and moderates) students exchanging ideas, explaining and elaborating their views, questioning and responding to each other, and jointly deriving an answer. Questions tend to be open-ended and require higher-level cognitive reasoning to answer. Answers are open to interpretation. Knowledge is assumed to be dynamic and socially constructed. Teacher monitors the groups to facilitate discussion and obtain a "window" into students' minds by listening to students' explanations. At its best, this format is cooperative learning; at its worse, it is traditional discussion groups.

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In the **constructive controversy format**, the teacher assigns students to groups of four members, divides each group into two pairs, and assigns the task of writing a group report and/or passing a test (given to each member) on the topic being studied. The cooperative goal is for students to reach their "best reasoned judgment" on the issue. One pair is given the assignment of developing and advocating the best case possible for the pro position and the other pair is given the assignment of developing and advocating the best case possible for the con position. The teacher supervises the controversy procedure of researching the issue, presenting a persuasive argument for one's position, refuting the opposing position while rebutting attacks on one's own, reversing perspectives, and seeking an agreement that synthesizes both positions and represents students' best reasoned judgment. Knowledge is assumed to be dynamic, socially constructed, and best learned through applying and transforming it into intellectual arguments and syntheses. Teacher monitors the groups to facilitate discussion and obtain a "window" into students' minds by listening to students' arguments, refutations, rebuttals, and perspective reversals. We use constructive controversy in all of our classes. Any topic can be presented as a controversy as long as at least two sides can be identified.

Of the three formats, constructive controversy is the least well known, even though it has a clear theory, validated by numerous research studies, that has been operationalized into a practical procedure that faculty can use.

An example of a constructive controversy may help. An American history teacher is presenting a unit on civil disobedience. The teacher notes that in numerous instances, such as in the civil rights and antiwar movements, individuals wrestle with the issue of breaking the law to redress a social injustice. In the civil rights movement in the United States, individuals did actually break the law to gain equal rights for minorities. In the past few years, however, prominent public figures felt justified in breaking laws for personal or political gain. The central question is, "Is civil disobedience in a democracy constructive or destructive?" Students are placed in groups of four members and given the assignments of writing a report and passing a test on the role of civil disobedience in a democracy. Each group is divided into two pairs. One pair is given the assignment of developing and advocating the best case possible for the constructiveness of civil disobedience in a democracy and the other pair is given the assignment of developing and advocating the best case possible for the destructiveness of civil disobedience in a democracy. The students are to reach their "best reasoned judgment" as to the role of civil disobedience in a democracy. To develop their positions, students are to draw from such sources as the **Declaration of Independence** by Thomas Jefferson, **Civil Disobedience** by Henry David Thoreau, **Speech at Cooper Union, New York** by Abraham Lincoln, and **Letter from Birmingham Jail** by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Students proceed through the steps of constructive controversy. In Step One, each pair prepares the best case possible for its assigned position by (a) researching the assigned position and learning all relevant information, (b) organizing the information into a

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persuasive argument that contains a thesis statement or claim ("Civil disobedience is a constructive necessity to maintain the integrity and fidelity of a democracy "), the rationale supporting the thesis ("*It provides a, b, and c*"), and a logical conclusion that is the same as the thesis ("Therefore, civil disobedience is a constructive necessity to maintain the integrity and fidelity of a democracy"), and (c) planning how to advocate the assigned position effectively to ensure it receives a fair and complete hearing.

In Step Two, students present the best case for their assigned position to ensure it gets a fair and complete hearing. They need to be forceful, persuasive, and convincing advocates in doing so. Ideally, more that one media will be used. Students are to listen carefully to and learn the opposing position, taking notes and clarifying anything they do not understand.

In Step Three, students engage in an open and free discussion of the issue. Students argue forcefully and persuasively for their position (presenting as many facts as they can to support their point of view). They critically analyze the opposing position (its evidence and reasoning), ask for data to support assertions, and refute the opposing position by pointing out the inadequacies in the information and reasoning. While doing so students thoroughly learn the opposing position and give it a "trial by fire" while following the rules for constructive controversy. Finally, students are to rebut attacks on their position.

In Step Four, students reverse perspectives and present the best case possible for the opposing position. In presenting the opposing position sincerely and forcefully, students may use their notes and add new facts. Students should strive to see the issue from both perspectives simultaneously.

In Step Five, students drop all advocacy and strive to find a synthesis to which they can all agree. Students summarize the best evidence and reasoning from both sides and integrate it into a joint position that is new and unique. Students write a group report on the synthesis including the supporting evidence and rationale, individually take a test on both positions, process how well the group functioned, and celebrate the group's success and the hard work of each member.

This procedure is based on the process of controversy and results in predictable instructional outcomes. Before they are discussed, however, it is helpful to understand the nature of constructive conflict.

Controversies Can Be Destructive Or Constructive

It is not the presence of conflicts, but the way in which they are managed, that determines whether conflicts are destructive or constructive. Academic controversies are constructive to the extent they:

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1. Result in a synthesis and integration of the best reasoning and conclusions from all the various alternatives.

2. Result in all group members learning all relevant information concerning the issue being studied.

3. Strengthen the relationship among participants so that they like each other better and are better able to interact or work cooperatively with each other.

4. Increase students' ability to engage in academic controversies constructively.

In order to utilize the controversy procedure effectively, it helps to understand the process by which controversy works, the conditions under which controversy is most effective, and the benefits of having students engage in controversy.

How Does Controversy Work? The Process Of Controversy

> *Conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates invention. It shocks us out of sheep-like passivity, and sets us at noting and contriving...conflict is a "sine qua non" of reflection and ingenuity.*
>
> John Dewey

In 1859 Horace Greeley and Henry David Thoreau were having a discussion about John Brown's exploits at Harper's Ferry. "No matter how well intended John Brown was," Horace said, "his methods were completely unacceptable. The man broke the law! Terrorism for a good cause is still terrorism. It does not follow that because slavery is wrong, John Brown's actions were right. No matter how opposed to slavery one is, one cannot condone what John Brown did." "Now Horace," Henry replied, "you are missing the whole point. It does not matter whether John Brown broke the law or not. It only matters what he symbolizes. And he symbolizes eternal justice, glory, and devotion to principle. We should pay homage to the ideals John Brown represents, not get caught in a mundane discussion of legalities."

Thomas Jefferson would have applauded Greeley and Thoreau's discussion. Jefferson had a deep faith in the value and productiveness of conflict. He is not alone. A number of 20th-Century theorists have pointed out the value of conflict, including Piaget, Kohlberg, Berlyne, Bruner, Hoffman, and the authors of this article. This theorizing may be subsumed in the following process (see Figure 1 and Appendix A).

When students are presented with a problem or decision, they make an initial conclusion based on categorizing and organizing their incomplete information, limited experiences,

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specific perspective, dominant response, and expectations. They often have a high degree of confidence in their conclusions and, consequently, freeze the epistemic process.

When required to present their conclusions and rationale to others who have different positions, students engage in cognitive rehearsal, use higher-level reasoning strategies, and deepen their understanding of their position. When listening to the conclusions and rationale of classmates, students become uncertain as to the correctness of their views and a state of conceptual conflict or disequilibrium is aroused. They unfreeze their epistemic process.

Students then become curious and search for (a) more information and new experiences (increased specific content) and (b) a more adequate cognitive perspective and reasoning process (increased validity) in hopes of resolving the uncertainty. This motivation to learn more is called **epistemic curiosity** (Berlyne, 1965). It is a stimulation to inquiry. Divergent attention and thought are stimulated.

Finally, students derive a new, reconceptualized, and reorganized conclusion by accommodating the perspective and reasoning of others and adapting their perspective and reasoning. They create novel solutions and decisions that are qualitatively better than their initial conclusion.

The process may begin again at this point or it may be terminated by freezing the current conclusion and resolving any dissonance by increasing the confidence in the validity of the conclusion.

Figure 1: Process Of Controversy

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Conditions Determining the Constructiveness of Controversy

He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves, and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper.

Edmund Burke, **Reflection of the Revolution in France**

Although controversies can create beneficial outcomes, they will not do so under all conditions. As with all types of conflicts, the potential for either constructive or destructive outcomes is present in a controversy. Whether there are positive or negative consequences depends on the conditions under which controversy occurs and the way in which it is managed. These key elements are as follows (Johnson & Johnson, 1979, 1989, 2000, 2003; Johnson, Johnson, & Tjosvold, 2006).

The cooperativeness of the context within which the controversy takes place. The context in which conflicts occur has important effects on whether the conflict turns out to be constructive or destructive (Deutsch, 1973). There are two possible contexts for controversy: cooperative and competitive. Compared with a competitive context, a cooperative context promotes (Deutsch, 1973; Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 2005) (a) more frequent, accurate, and complete communication in which one another's information is utilized and incorporated in participants' thinking, (b) a supportive climate in which group members feel safe enough to challenge one another's ideas, (c) beliefs that controversy is valid and valuable, (d) accurate perspective-taking in which participants are able to understand what others are feeling and why they are feeling that way, (e) the definition of conflicts as problems to be solved (rather than as win-lose situations), and (f) the identification of more similarities between participants' positions.

The heterogeneity of participants. The more heterogeneous the participants, the more constructive the controversy will tend to be. Heterogeneity in perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences naturally creates and enriches controversies. This diversity represents a source of creativity and energy if the controversy is managed constructively.

The distribution of information among group members. If controversy is to lead to achievement, individuals must possess information that is relevant to the completion of the tasks on which they are working. The more information individuals have about an issue, the greater tends to be their achievement and successful problem solving. Having relevant information available, however, does not mean that it will be utilized. Individuals need the interpersonal and group skills necessary to ensure that all individuals involved contribute their relevant information and that the information is synthesized effectively.

The level of group members' social skills. Effectively engaging in the controversy procedures requires several important social skills, such as disagreeing with another

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person's ideas while confirming the person's competence, differentiating the positions before seeking a synthesis, and engaging in perspective taking. To obtain a creative synthesis of all positions in a controversy, group members need an accurate assessment of the validity and relative merits of each position. Doing so requires "standing in the other person's shoes" and viewing the situation from the other person's perspective.

The ability of group members to engage in rational argument. During a controversy, group members follow the canons of rational argumentation. Rational argumentation includes generating ideas, collecting and organizing relevant information, using inductive and deductive logic, and making tentative conclusions based on current understanding.

The Benefits Of Controversy

Conflict theorists have for hundreds of years posited that conflict could have positive as well as negative benefits. Freud, for example, indicated that extra psychic conflict was a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for psychological development. Developmental psychologists have proposed that disequilibrium within a student's cognitive structure can motivate a shift from egocentrism to accommodation of the perspectives of others and what results is a transition from one stage of cognitive and moral reasoning to another. Motivational theorists believe that conceptual conflict can create epistemic curiosity which motivates the search for new information and the reconceptualization of the knowledge one already has. Organizational theorists insist that higher-quality problem solving depends on constructive conflict among group members. Cognitive psychologists propose that conceptual conflict may be necessary for insight and discovery. Educational psychologists indicate that conflict can increase achievement. Karl Marx believed that class conflict was necessary for social progress. From almost every social science, theorists have taken the position that conflict can have positive as well as negative outcomes.

Creating a conflict is an accepted writer's tool for capturing an audience. All drama hinges on conflict. When playwrights and scriptwriters want to gain and hold viewer's attention, create viewer interest and emotional involvement, and excite and surprise viewers, they create a conflict. A general rule of modern novels is that if a conflict is not created within the first three pages of the book, the book will not be successful. Educators, on the other hand, often suppress students' academic disagreements. Consequently teachers miss out on valuable opportunities to capture and emotionally involve their own audiences (i.e., students) and enhance learning.

Over the past 20 years, we (with such colleagues as Dean Tjosvold and Karl Smith) have developed and tested a theory of controversy (Johnson, 1970; Johnson & Johnson, 1979, 1989, 2003). We have conducted over 20 experimental and field-experimental studies on controversy. In all our studies subjects were randomly assigned to conditions, the studies lasted from one to thirty hours of instructional time, all were conducted on intermediate

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elementary and college individuals and all have all been published in journals. In connection with our research, we have developed a series of curriculum units (with such colleagues as Thomas Morton) on energy and environmental issues structured for academic controversies. The use of academic controversy has been field-tested in schools and colleges throughout the North America, Europe, and many other parts of the world.

Learning how to resolve controversies constructively benefits students, the school, and the society. There are so many benefits, only a few can be discussed here (see Appendix A).

Personal Benefits

When students become experienced and skillful in resolving controversies constructively, they improve their psychological adjustment, gain a developmental advantage, achieve their goals more often, achieve higher academically, become engaged in more positive and supportive relationships with peers, and become more successful in future career and personal life.

Psychological Adjustment

The more constructively students manage their conflicts, the happier they will tend to be, the more optimistic their view of the future, the higher their self-esteem, the lower the stress levels in their life, and the greater their sense of personal efficacy. They tend to be more assertive, have more self-control, are more able to communicate effectively, and are more able to cooperate with others. Learning how to manage conflicts constructively tends to increase prosocial behavior that enhances students' relationships and popularity while decreasing anti-social, inappropriate behavior (such as bullying, teasing, excluding others, challenging the authority of teachers and administrators).

Developmental Advantage

Learning how to resolve conflicts constructively gives students a developmental advance over those who never learned how to do so. The developmental advantage includes positive effects on actualizing one's potential, improving the quality of one's relationships, and enhancing life success. Individuals skilled in resolving conflicts constructively tend to make and keep more friends and be more liked by and popular with peers. They tend to be more employable, more successful in their careers, better parents, and better able to maintain life-long friends. Teaching students to resolve conflicts constructively may be one of the most valuable competencies that can be given to students, benefiting them throughout their lives.

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Achieve Goals

The more constructively students resolve their conflicts, the more likely they are to achieve their goals and the more likely other individuals will support their efforts. When students manage their conflicts destructively, the other individuals will tend to sabotage, obstruct, and interfere with the students attempts to achieve their goals.

Academic Achievement

When students engage in academic controversies, their achievement tends to increase. The first is that the controversy procedure tends to act as a cognitive framework for processing information and learning and retaining academic content. The controversy framework provides the type of step-by-step guidance that helps students more thoroughly and effectively research, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and remember academic material. The second reason is the active engagement in presenting and defending one side of the issue while critically analyzing the opposing side, which tend to increase understanding of the issue, change attitudes toward the issues being discussed, and facilitate the long-term retention of the material being studied.

Positive Peer Influences

The more skillful students are in resolving conflicts constructively and working with others cooperatively, the more positive their relationships will be. There is considerable evidence that positive peer relationships are the keys to psychological health, cognitive and social development, prosocial attitudes and values, and many other important aspects of productive and successful lives (Hartup, 1976; Johnson, 1981). Resolving conflicts constructively, furthermore, tends to create more supportive relationships (both personal support and academic support) with both peers and teachers. Having peers and teachers support students on a personal level and provide the help and assistance they need to be successful in school tends to increase students' productivity and achievement, physical and psychological health, ability to cope with stress and adversity, and many other positive outcomes.

Appropriate Aggression In Relationships

Aggressiveness is not necessarily destructive or "bad" behavior. Aggressiveness in achieving goals is often desirable and admirable. Social development requires the engagement in some squabbles with peers in order to learn how to navigate life's inevitable confrontations. Peer conflict contributes to children's development and represents an important form of social interaction (Rende & Killen, 1992; Ross & Conant, 1992). A certain amount of conflict among children and among adolescents is not only expected, but is critical for learning how to get along with others, how to interact appropriately, and how to have fun. Conflicts are maturing, and it is very common for

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children and adolescents to say and do things that may be hurtful as they are learning what is acceptable in relationships and what is not, and where the lines are between entertaining repartee and hurtful teasing. It is important for children and adolescents to learn to resolve these conflicts without adult intervention.

Career Success

Learning how to engage in constructive controversy may especially impact later employability and career success. Individuals who are skillful in managing conflicts may be first to be hired and last to be laid off. A recent survey of vice presidents and personnel directors of 100 of the nation's 1,000 largest corporations found that the people who manage America's leading corporations spend over four working weeks a year dealing with the problems caused by employees who cannot resolve their conflicts with each other. The American Management Association reported that about 24 percent of manager's time is spent dealing with conflict. School and hospital administrators, mayors, and city managers report that conflict resolution commands nearly 49 percent of their attention. Individuals who are skillful in managing conflicts may be promoted to higher management positions because competencies in conflict resolution become more and more important the higher the position in the corporation.

School Benefits

Promoting students' competencies in managing conflicts has positive benefits for the school and reduces the severity of many problems. Teaching students how to manage conflicts constructively can decrease discipline referrals, bullying, social rejection, social withdrawal, and the dropout rate. The more positively students manage conflicts, the higher will tend to be their academic achievement, positive attitudes toward school and learning, positiveness of the classroom and school climate, and the overall quality of life within the school community.

Discipline Problems

The more competent students are in managing conflicts, the fewer the discipline problems faculty and administrators may have to deal with. Teaching is different from what it used to be. Fifty years ago the main disciplinary problems in schools were running in halls, talking out of turn, and chewing gum. Today's transgressions include physical and verbal violence, incivility to the teacher and schoolmates, taunting and teasing schoolmates, cheating, rowdiness, truancy, cutting class, being late for class, and, in some schools, drug abuse, physical fighting, robbery, assault, and murder. The result is that many teachers spend an inordinate amount of time and energy dealing with conflicts, discipline problems, general incivility, and lack of motivation to learn. Many teachers complain about the "tyranny of the few" as considerable time is taken away from instruction to deal with recurrent offenders. A few students can create a distracting and disrespectful atmosphere.

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When students manage their conflicts poorly, aggression tends to result, which is usually punished with detentions, suspensions, and expulsions. Many teachers consider leaving the profession because of intolerable student behavior. Many discipline problems are prevented when students are taught how to resolve their conflicts constructively.

Bullying

The more skilled students are in managing conflicts constructively, the lower will tend to be the frequency of bullying. **Bullying** occurs when a student or group of students repeatedly engages in behavior that is intended to harm or disturb a less powerful schoolmate. The bullying can be physical (hitting), verbal (teasing, name calling), or psychological (shunning). Bullying is a serious issue in many schools. A nationwide study found that bullying affects nearly one of every three U.S. children in sixth through tenth grades. Children who reported being bullied tended to be lonely and had difficulty making friends; as adults they tend to be more prone to depression and low self-esteem. Bullies tend to have poor grades, smoke and drink alcohol, and engage in criminal behavior as adults. Males were more apt to resort to hits, slaps, or pushing, while bullying for females more typically entailed making sexual comments, spreading rumors, and social ostracism (which can have serious negative psychological consequences). Verbal taunting often focused on the victim's looks or speech, as opposed to race or religion. Teaching students how to manage conflicts constructively will tend to reduce the incidence of bullying and change students' responses to being bullied.

If bullies do not learn how to manage conflicts in constructive ways, their future is not bright. Bullies tend to increasingly get in more serious trouble (Aronson, 2000). By their mid twenties, for example, males who were bullies in elementary school were convicted of at least one felony. One-third of the males who were bullies in middle school were convicted of three or more crimes, often violent ones, and had already done prison time. It could be concluded that allowing a student to bully others is tantamount to giving aggressive children training for a life of crime.

Social Acceptance

The more competent students are in resolving conflicts constructively, the less likely they are to be socially rejected. Students are often socially rejected if they engage in coercive, bullying, or antisocial behavior or if they act in ways that are outside peer group norms. There is consistent research that indicates socially rejected students show poor academic achievement, spend less time on task, tend to be deficit in academic skills, and tend not to complete homework assignments (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989). They may, however, join a deviant peer group which encourages their antisocial behavior.

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Social Engagement

The more competent students are in resolving conflicts constructively, the less likely they will be isolated or withdrawn from the other people in the school. **Social engagement** involves positive relationships with other students, faculty, and staff. People who live in social isolation are very rarely happy. Social isolation may result from withdrawal from relationships due to shyness or other causes, or social ostracism due to schoolmates withdrawing from and avoiding interaction with a student. While both forms of social isolation can have serious psychological consequences, social ostracism may especially have negative consequences. Social isolation cues a basic human drive: the need to belong. Belonging is a fundamental human motivation that increases individuals' chances for survival and well being. People need frequent personal contacts with others and positive interpersonal relationships marked by stability, emotional concern and continuity. Being isolated and feeling lonely contribute powerfully to problems in psychological and physical well-being. While the psychological consequences include depression, anxiety, and anger (resulting in extreme behaviors such as suicide and violence towards others), the physical consequences are as detrimental as such factors as cigarette smoking, obesity, and high-blood pressure. Constructive conflict management can contribute to enhancing the relationships students need to develop in order to stay in and succeed in school.

Academic Engagement

The more competent students are in resolving conflicts constructively, the more engaged students will be with the academic program. The more students are engaged in the school, the more effective instruction and the quality of school life tend to be. **Academic engagement** involves being interested in what one is learning and being committed to completing academic assignments. Not all destructive conflicts are characterized by anger and aggression. There are quiet conflicts characterized by withdrawal and disengagement from school life. Disengagement is reflected in tardiness, class cutting, and truancy, all of which may lead to suspension, which results in further disengagement. When conflicts are managed constructively, however, students (and faculty) tend to become more engaged academically, increasing student and faculty success and the success of the school.

Dropping Out Of School

The more competent students are in resolving conflicts constructively, the lower the dropout rate will tend to be. Dropping out of school is less a matter of indifference or having something better to do than it is of feeling angry, victimized, disappointed, and failure (all of which are aspects of destructively managed conflicts). A high school student drops out every nine seconds according to the Children's Defense Fund (2002). If these students do not eventually graduate from high school and go on to post-secondary education of some sort, they will likely end up as part of the working poor, in prison, or on welfare. Every student who does **not** drop out is a success for the school and may save

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society considerable resources. Teaching students to manage their conflicts constructively will tend to decrease the frequency of students' dropping out.

Overcoming Barriers To Meaningful Learning

Participation in structured controversies overcomes a number of barriers to meaningful learning by promoting divergent thinking and flexibility of reasoning. Central barriers to meaningful and complex learning are:

1. **Fixation on the first satisfactory solution generated.** Students often become fixated on the first reasonable solution thought of. Poor decisions are often made because individuals do not think of the proper alternatives or do a poor job of evaluating and choosing among the alternatives being considered.

2. **Uncritically giving one's dominant response to the situation.** When given a problem to solve many individuals quickly decide on a solution based on their dominant response without considering other alternatives. Thus, they may place low probabilities on the correct solution. Responses are hypothesized to be hierarchically arranged from most to least dominant. Dominant responses may be based on physical states such as hunger, psychological states such as attitudes and stereotypes, and one's general cultural frame of reference.

3. **Mental sets.** Mental sets can cause the same words to have different meanings for different persons or the adoption of solutions that have been previously useful.

4. **Expectations.** Persons tend to interpret ambiguous events in ways that confirm their expectations.

5. **Laziness.** In many instances people are lazy cognitive processors in that they do not actively process the information that is available or do not fully consider the alternative ways of understanding such information.

Societal Benefits

There are numerous advantages for our society if all children, adolescents, and young adults are trained in how to engage in the constructive controversy procedure. When citizens are skilled in resolving conflicts constructively, they have the potential to be more productive and responsible, and the society will tend to be more cohesive with more cooperative relations among citizens and groups. Organizations will function more smoothly and effectively. Families will be more cohesive and caring. Fewer citizens will be involved in legal disputes.

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Learning How To Be A Citizen In A Democracy

The word "democracy" comes from the Greek word **demokratia**, which is a combination of **demos** (the Greek word for people) and **kratos** (the Greek word for "rule"). One of the most impressive democracies the world has ever seen existed in the city of Athens in Ancient Greece. At its height in the 5th century B. C., Athens had an assembly of all citizens that met 10 times a year for an open exchange of ideas and opinions. In between such meetings, a council of 500 citizens elected annually did most of the important government work. The citizens of Athens believed that persuasion was preferable to warfare. At the beginning of Homer's **Iliad**, for example, Nestor stops a fight between Agamemnon and Achilleus and begins mediation by reminding them that **to be persuaded is better than fighting**. Four-hundred years later, the Greek dramatist Aeschylus in his play, **The Persians**, demonstrated the spirit of open discussion and respect for opposing views by presenting the Persians as great and noble only eight years after the Persians started an unjust war against Greece and suffered a deserved defeat at Salamis.

One admirer of Athenian democracy was Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson believed that free and open discussion should serve as the basis of influence within society, not the social rank within which a person was born. Jefferson was fond of noting that *the first kings of Greece were elected by the free consent of the people*. Jefferson was also influenced by one of his professors at William and Mary College, Dr. William Small of Scotland. Small advocated a new method of learning in which students questioned and discussed, examining all sides of a topic, with scant regard for the pronouncements of established authorities. A few years before his death, Thomas Jefferson described his experiences as a student at the College of William and Mary in a letter to Dr. Thomas Cooper (1818): *I was bold in the pursuit of knowledge, never fearing to follow the truth and reason to whatever results they led, and bearding every authority which stood in the way.*

Based on the beliefs of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and their fellow revolutionaries, American democracy was founded on the premise that "truth" will result from free and open discussion in which opposing points of view are advocated and vigorously argued. In a democracy, the uninhibited expression of opposing views is supposed to be encouraged rather than suppressed. Before a decision is made, every citizen is given the opportunity to advocate for his or her ideas. Once a decision is made, the minority is expected to willingly go along with the majority because they know they have been given a fair and complete hearing. To be a citizen in our democracy individuals need to master the process of advocating their views, challenging opposing positions, making a decision, and committing themselves to implement the decision made (regardless of whether they initially favored the alternative adopted or not).

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The Avoidance Of Intellectual Conflicts

Conflict is to student learning what the internal combustion engine is to the automobile. The internal combustion engine unites the fuel and the air with a spark to create the energy for movement and acceleration. Just as the fuel and the air are inert without the spark, so are ideas in the classroom without the spark of controversy. Conflict provides the motivation that energizes students to seek out new information and study harder and longer. By structuring constructive controversy in a lesson, teachers can grab and hold students' attention and energize students to learn at a level beyond what they may have intended when they signed up for the course.

Ranking Of The Reasons For Avoiding Conflicts

There are a number of hypotheses about why conflict is so avoided and suppressed in decision making situations. Form a pair. Rank order the following hypotheses from "Most Likely Reason" ("1") to "Least Likely Reason" ("6").

RANK	HYPOTHESIS
	Fear blocks group members from engaging in controversies.
	Ignorance of how to engage in controversy blocks group members from doing so.
	Lack of training in how to use decisional conflict effectively blocks group members from engaging in controversies.
	Our culture is so anti-conflict that group members do not see the promotion of decision making conflicts as a possibility.
	Group norms may block members from engaging in decision making conflicts.
	Inertia (the power of the status quo) may be so great that group members just do not try anything new.

Far from being a standard instructional procedure, however, in most classes creating intellectual conflict is the exception, not the rule. Why? Some teachers avoid creating controversies because they fear losing control of the classroom, and thus losing their own sense of being a good teacher. Images of discussions spilling into chaos are particularly associated with lower-socioeconomic status and lower-achieving students. Palmer (1990, 1991), for example, believes that fear of conflict blocks good teaching and learning and recommends that faculty have the courage to promote intellectual conflict among students and between students and faculty despite their apprehensions about doing so. Some

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teachers fear (real or imaged) reprisals from school administrators. Others are concerned about their lack of training in conducting academic controversies. Teachers may avoid structuring academic controversies because the student involvement and interest results in animated and somewhat noisy discussion. This contrasts with the view that a good teacher has a "quiet" class. Simple inertia, the power of the status quo, may be so great that teachers just do not try anything new. Teachers may choose to play it safe by only lecturing because it is their personal tradition and the tradition of their school and colleagues. Finally, the use of constructive controversy may be avoided due to a concern about coverage. Over concern with covering the content of the course is based on two problematic assumptions. First, it assumes that there is a body of relatively static knowledge that reflects the accumulated wisdom of experts that must be transferred from the teacher to the students. This conception of knowledge contrasts with the constructivist view of individuals developing and shaping their own knowledge. Second, it assumes that students must have a solid understanding of the facts before they can engage in critical inquiry, which marginalizes the development of critical thinking skills. This contrasts with the practice of designing instructional units around a "central question" of enduring significance. Those teachers who do engage students in academic controversy on a consistent basis have succeeded in overcoming such obstacles.

Controversy And Inquiry

To inquire is to ask questions and try to learn. **Inquiry** is investigating a question to establish the best answer or course of action; it involves asking questions and seeking to learn the necessary facts to answer the questions. Inquiry usually begins with a focal point, something that captures participants' attention, holds it, and motivates them to investigate. Disinterested people do not inquire. Controversy creates a focal point for inquiry. In science, for example, the greatest advances come when two theories make contradictory predictions and researchers test them against each other. In essence, one set of scientists presents the best case possible for one theory and another set of scientists advocate for the other theory. The clash of the two theories leads to a more reasoned judgment.

A similar process takes place in structured controversy. Controversy creates an inquiry in order to reach a reasoned judgment about an issue. Different individuals investigate opposing positions on an issue, and from the structured clash of these positions, a deeper, broader, and more sophisticated understanding of the issue is achieved. The result is a more reasoned judgment.

We live in a society that values highly the notion that truth is more likely to be approximated if opposing views can be freely and openly expressed. Rooted in the ancient Athenian tradition of the democratic, open society, we encourage rather than suppress the expression of opposing views. We have faith that truth will spring from the uninhibited clash of opposing views.

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Power Of Education And Your Challenge

If civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships--the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together, in the same world at peace.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

The proverb, "*The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world,*" is a metaphor for understanding that whoever educates children shapes the future. Children, youth, and young adults may be educated in ways that leaves them egocentric, socially immature, unable to form caring and committed relationships with others, and unconcerned about the well being of their society and the world. Or they may be educated in the systems of knowledge, social and emotional competencies, attitudes, and values that are needed to be contributing citizens and happy human beings concerned about the well being of society, empathetic and able to take the perspective of others, competent in managing their emotions and interactions with others constructively, and able to form and maintain meaningful and fulfilling relationships. If the latter is desired, one of the most important aspects of education is teaching children, adolescents, and young adults how to manage conflicts constructively. For citizens of a democracy, for individuals who participate in interpersonal and group decision making, constructive controversy is one of the most important types of conflict to learn how to manage constructively.

History is filled with many exciting examples of constructive conflicts. The great questions of our times will be resolved through conflict. The major issues of our times have been shaped by past conflicts. A democracy is conflict in continuous action. Just as it is not possible to eliminate conflict from your history, it is not possible to eliminate conflict from classroom life. It is within the classroom that students will learn how to participate in open and free discussions in ways that enrich their learning and their lives. On the basis of such learning, students will eventually take their place as full citizens in our society and world and use their competencies in managing conflict to create a better life for themselves and a more peaceful world for everyone. Your challenge is to teach your students how to manage intellectual conflicts constructively and thereby give them the procedures and competencies that will allow them to create a peaceful future.

Concluding Comment

How you ride a horse leaves an imprint that can be detected by a skilled trainer. Some indicators are fairly obvious. If the horse has well-developed muscles underneath its neck, then the rider has habitually been pulling back on the reins. If the horse has well-developed muscles on the top of its neck, then the rider has held the reins loosely and moved the horse forward with his or her seat and legs. More subtle imprints can be

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detected only when the trainer rides the horse. By the way the horse moves, the trainer can tell who was the last person to ride it.

The methods we use to teach leave an imprint on students. From the way students act at the beginning of a class, we can tell a great deal about the teachers who have taught them previously. If students sit passively and are interested primarily in what will be on the test, or if students volunteer their conclusions and engage in spirited disagreement, you know a great deal about their previous teachers. What impact would you like to leave on your students? For each of us, this is a very personal question that gets to the heart of why we became teachers in the first place. How we teach does leave an imprint. If we frequently use recitation, students are imprinted with a pattern of listening carefully, waiting to be called on, and giving factual answers that the teacher likes. If we frequently use group discussion, students are imprinted with a pattern of active participation, jointly considering higher-level questions, exchanging ideas, and utilizing each other's thinking. If we frequently use constructive controversy, students are imprinted with a pattern of intellectual inquiry that includes building coherent intellectual arguments, giving persuasive presentations, critically analyzing and challenging others' positions, rebutting others' challenges, seeing issues from a variety of perspectives, and seeking reasoned judgments. Students learn that the purpose of advocacy and criticism is not to win, but rather to clarify the strengths and weaknesses of various courses of action so that a joint agreement may be reached as to what represents the best reasoned judgment. Of the three formats, constructive controversy may be the most complex to use but the most promising in its results.

Summary

Teaching students to resolve conflicts constructively involves creating a cooperative context, implementing the instructional use of controversies, and establishing the Teaching Students To Be Peacemakers Program. Conflict is a natural part of life and is ever present in relationships. Everyone has conflicts. That is, the actions of one person frequently prevent, block, or interfere with another person's attempts to achieve his or her goals. There are four major types of conflicts. When one person's ideas or conclusions are incompatible with those of another person, and the two must reach an agreement, a **controversy** occurs. When a person has two incompatible ideas, a **conceptual conflict** exists. When one person strives to achieve his or her goals and another person blocks him or her from doing so, a **conflict of interests** exists. When recurrent incompatible actions occur between a child and an adult as part of the child's social development, a **developmental conflict** exists. All four types of conflicts have value. They promote learning, problem solving, healthy social development, change, and success as well as making life more interesting and fun. The value of conflicts only occurs, however, if participants have the procedures and skills required to manage conflicts constructively.

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Within the classroom students should consider the major questions that have dominated our past and determine our present and future. In order to consider the great questions, the questions must be presented in a way that clarifies alternative answers and opposing points of view. Students must engage in constructive controversy, that is, seek to reach an agreement with others whose ideas, information, conclusions, theories, and opinions incompatible with one's own. To engage in a controversy students must research and prepare a position, present and advocate their position, refute opposing positions and rebut attacks on their own position, reverse perspectives, and create a synthesis that all group members can agree to. Despite the power of controversy, however, many teachers avoid and suppress it out of fear, ignorance, and inertia.

When they are managed constructively, controversies result in personal benefits (i.e., increased achievement, positive relationships, and psychological health), school benefits i.e., fewer discipline problems and greater academic and personal engagement), and societal benefits (i.e., more skillful and committed citizens of a democracy). These outcomes are achieved as students formulate a conclusion, are challenged by an opposing point of view, feel uncertain, search for more information and a better perspective, and formulate a revised conclusion. This process works best in a cooperative context, when participants are heterogeneous, participants are socially skilled, and participants engage in rational argument. Since controversies are inevitable and cannot be avoided, educators are well-advised to co-orient all students by teaching them the procedures and skills they need to intellectually challenge each other constructively.

Conflicts can only be managed constructively within a cooperative context. The first step to ensuring that students learn how to deal with their conflicts in helpful and beneficial ways is to make the classroom and school a cooperative enterprise. This will only happen when cooperative learning is used the majority of the time. In the next chapter we will learn what cooperative learning is and how it may be used to create a constructive context for effectively managing conflicts.

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Creative Conflict Contract

Write down your major things you have learned from reading this chapter and participating in training session one. Then write down how you plan to implement each learning. Share what you learned and your implementation plans with your base group. You may modify your own plans after listening to your groupmates plans. Volunteer one thing you can do to help each groupmate with his or her implementation plans. Utilize the help groupmates offer to you. Sign each member's plans to seal the contract.

MAJOR LEARNINGS	IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

Date: _____ Participant's Signature: _____

Signatures Of Group Members: _____

_____

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CONTROVERSY PROGRESS REPORT

NAME _____ SCHOOL _____

AGE LEVEL _____ SUBJECT _____

Day and Date	Description of Tasks and Activities Performed	Successes Experienced	Problems Encountered

Description of critical or interesting incidents:

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CONTROVERSY LOG SHEET

WK.	LESSONS PLANNED AND/OR TAUGHT	COLLAB. SKILL STRESSED	PLANNED WITH	OBSERVED BY	GIVEN AWAY TO
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
GRP					
TOTAL					

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VOCABULARY SHEET

Working with a partner, learn the definitions of the words below.

1. **Define each word in two ways.**

   First, write down what you think the word means.

   Second, look it up in the book and write down its definition.

   Note the page on which the definition appears.

2. **For each word write a sentence in which the word is used.**

3. **Make up a story in which all of the words are used.**

4. **Learn how to spell each word. They will be on your spelling test.**

Words

- Conflict
- Controversy
- Conceptual Conflict
- Concurrence-Seeking
- Debate
- Conflict Of Interests
- Epistemic Curiosity
- Inquiry
- Developmental Advantage
- Academic Engagement

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Conflict Journal

You are to make a conflict journal in which you record what you are learning about yourself and how you behave in conflict situations. A **journal** is a personal collection of your significant thoughts about conflict. Include specific information you have learned about conflict resolution, effective behavior in conflict situations, and the extent to which you have mastered the conflict skills. Personalize it with art, poetry, cartoons, and creative writing. The most important thing about journal writing is to express your ideas freely without judging them. Whatever you write is OK. Spelling, grammar, and neatness do not count. The only thing that matters is writing freely about your experiences and ideas.

The purposes of the journal are to collect (a) thoughts that are related to the book's content (the best thinking often occurs when you are driving to or from school, about to go to sleep at night, and so forth) and (b) newspaper and magazine articles and references that are relevant to resolving conflicts constructively.

Entries

1. Each day find a conflict in the newspaper or on television and describe it in your journal.

   Each day describe one conflict you were involved in during the day:

   a. What was the conflict about?

   b. Who was involved?

   c. The strategies you used to manage the conflict.

   d. How did you feel?

   e. How was it resolved?

   f. What did you learn about managing conflicts constructively?

(Note: If you publish your journal as did John Holt, Hugh Prather, and others, all we ask is a modest 10 percent of the royalties.)

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Journal Entry One

Controversies always occur, and you can profit from them if you have the necessary skills. It is important, therefore, to master the skills necessary for resolving controversies constructively. The first step for doing so is to become more aware of your most frequently used strategies for managing controversies.

Think back over the interpersonal controversies you have been involved in during the past few years. These controversies may be with students, administrators, parents, or colleagues.

1. Describe a recent controversy with a schoolmate, teacher, administrator, or parent.

2. What kind of emotional reaction do you have to these or other controversies? Check the ones that are appropriate.

_____Anger	_____Exasperation
_____Frustration	_____Resignation
_____Annoyance	_____Depression
_____Resentment	_____Excitement
_____Fear	_____Sadness

3. What were the strategies you used to resolve the controversies?

4. Compare your answers with those of the person next to you.

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Name _____ Date _____

What CONFLICT Means to Me

Think of what CONFLICT *means to you. Is it scary or exciting? Is it interesting or yukky? Write in the circles words that come into your mind when you think of conflict. [Make additional circles if you need to.]*

Now compare your words with those of the other members of your group. Decide as a group what conflict means and write the meaning below.

_____

_____

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Instructions For Associations Mapping

Individualistic Task:

Think of what the word "**conflict**" means and what associations and memories it evokes. When you think of conflict, do negative or positive, scary or delightful, hostile or caring images come to mind? Each time you think of something write it down in one of the inner circles. Then write down all the words you associate with each of the new words. Add additional circles if you need to.

Cooperative Task:

Compare with associations with those of the other three members of your group:

1. How would you define the concept "**conflict**."
2. What elements do all conflicts have in common?
3. What causes conflict?
4. What makes conflicts destructive?
5. What makes conflicts constructive?

Individualistic Task:

Write down answers to the following:

1. What did you learn about your associations with conflict?

2. What did you learn about the nature of conflict and how most people perceive it?

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WHAT IS CONTROVERSY?

Working as a pair, write out your answers to the following questions. There should be one set of answers for the two of you, both of you have to agree on the answers, and both of you have to be able to explain your answers to the teacher or the entire class. When you have finished, find another pair and compare answers. Take some of their ideas and make your answers better.

1. Controversy begins when two people must reach an agreement and their ideas, information, conclusions, theories, and opinions are incompatible. When one person says, "Germany builds the best cars" and another person says, "Japan builds the best cars," a controversy exists. What do you think a controversy is? Define the word **controversy** in your own words, using your own ideas.

2. Are controversies good _____ or bad _____?

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Give three examples of good controversies. Give three examples of bad controversies. Then list three small and three large controversies you know about. Finally, list three controversies at home and three controversies at school.

	Good	Bad
1		
2		
3		

	Small	Large
1		
2		
3		

	Home	School
1		
2		
3		

3. What is more important:

_____ Having everyone agree with your ideas

or

_____ Making the best decision possible.

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What Is CONTROVERSY

Working as a pair, write out your answers to the following questions. There should be one set of answers for the two of you, both of you have to agree on the answers, and both of you have to be able to explain your answers. When you have finished, find another pair and compare answers. Take some of their ideas and make your answers better.

Controversy Quiz

1. An argument a day makes student involvement stay.

   _____ True _____ False

2. Controversy (after cooperative learning) is the teacher's best friend.

   _____ True _____ False

3. A lesson without controversy is like a day without sunshine--things are gloomy, depressing, and drag along slowly.

   _____ True _____ False

4. All intellectual growth depends on the collision of adverse opinions.

   _____ True _____ False

5. It is controversy that adds to instruction the spark of curiosity, the flame of interest, the heat of involvement, and the power of creativity.

   _____ True _____ False

Define These Terms

Write down the definition of the following words.

- Argument
- Contradiction

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YOU'VE WON!!

Congratulations!

Your group has just won an all-expense-paid field trip for one week to the spot of your choosing. It can be anywhere in the world. Since it is a field trip, you will have no school for that week. Now comes the hard part -- where will your group choose to go?

1. Think of three places you would like to go. Write down your reasons for wanting to go there.

	Place	Reason
Place 1		
Place 2		
Place 3		

2. In order to make that choice, form pairs. Each pair will think up a list of three places that would be special to them to visit. The pairs will write down their choices and talk over reasons why they think their choices are wise ones. (A trip to someone's grandparent's house may be a fine choice, if that person can suggest things that all the group members would enjoy there.)

   a. Person A states where he or she wants to go. Person B states where he or she wants to go.

   b. Person A states his or her reasons. Person B states his or her reasons.

   c. The two reach an agreement as to where they would like to go as a pair and why.

3. After each pair has made its selection of places, two pairs combine to make a group of four. The group meets to choose a field-trip spot. The group must reach consensus in order to claim their prize.

4. Divide into two pairs. Working as a pair, define the words negotiate, negotiating, and negotiations.

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Intellectual Controversy

Task: In the book, **Peter Pan**, a case is made for staying young forever in Never-Never Land. Is this a good idea? Would you like to live in Never-Never Land and never grow up? Write a report on the issue, **Was Peter Pan right or wrong? Should you grow up or stay a child?"** The report should present a position and the reasons why the position is valid.

Cooperative: Write one report for the group, everyone has to agree, and everyone has to be able to explain the choice made and the reasons why the choice is a good one.

Procedure:

1. **Research And Prepare Your Position:** Your group of four has been divided into two pairs. One pair has been assigned the pro position and the other pair has been assigned to the con position. With your partner, plan how to present to the other pair the best case possible for your assigned position in order to make sure it receives a fair and complete hearing. Research your position and get as much information to support it as possible. Make sure both you and your partner are ready to present.

2. **Present And Advocate Your Position:** Forcefully and persuasively present the best case for your position to the opposing pair. Be as convincing as possible. Take notes and clarify anything you do not understand when the opposing pair presents.

3. **Open Discussion:** Argue forcefully and persuasively for your position, presenting as many supporting facts as you can. Critically evaluate the opposing pair's arguments, challenge their information and reasoning, and defend your position from their attacks. Keep in mind that you need to know both sides to write a good report.

4. **Reverse Perspectives:** Reverse perspectives and present the best case for the opposing position. The opposing pair will do the same. Strive to see the issue from both perspectives simultaneously.

5. **Synthesis:** Drop all advocacy. Synthesize and integrate the best evidence and reasoning from both sides into a joint position that all members can agree to. Then (a) finalize the group report, (b) present your conclusions to the class, (c) individually take the test covering both sides of the issue, and (d) process how well you worked together as a group and how you could be even more effective next time.

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Controversy Rules ○ ○ ○

1. I am critical of ideas, not people. I challenge and refute the ideas of the opposing pair, but I do not indicate that I personally reject them.

2. I remember that we are all in this together, sink or swim. I focus on coming to the best decision possible, not on **winning**.

3. I encourage everyone to participate and to master all the relevant information.

4. I listen to everyone's ideas, even if I don't agree.

5. I restate what someone has said if it is not clear.

6. I first bring out **all** ideas and facts supporting both sides, and then I try to put them together in a way that makes sense.

7. I try to understand both sides of the issue.

8. I change my mind when the evidence clearly indicates that I should do so.

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How Conflicts Should Be Managed

1. Working with a partner, write out five rules for resolving your controversies. There should be one set of answers for the two of you, both of you have to agree on the answers, and both of you have to be able to explain your answers to the teacher or the entire class.

   1.

   2.

   3.

   4.

   5.

2. Combine with another pair. Share your rules. Listen carefully to theirs. Use their ideas to improve your list.

   1.

   2.

   3.

   4.

   5.

Here is a list from another class:

1. Deal with the issue, not the person (ancient history does not count).
2. No name calling (it only makes things worse).
3. No pushing, shoving, or hitting (physical violence makes things worse).
4. Stand up for your ideas and opinions (You have a perfect right).
5. Explore the differences between what you and the other person think before you try to agree.
6. Try to see the issue from both perspectives at the same time.
7. Synthesize, don't win.

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Conflict Self-Assessment

1. Rate your ability to resolve conflicts constructively on the criteria given in the table below.

Low 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 High

2. Then rate the ability of your classmates (students) to resolve conflicts constructively.

Low 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 High

3. Share ratings with partner. Compare your ratings of yourself and others.

My Ability	Criteria	Others' Ability
	Engage In Controversies Frequently	
	Argue To Increase Own and Others' Learning	
	Challenge Other's Position To Spark Inquiry	
	Argue So That Relationship Is Improved	
	Argue In Ways That Increase Trust, Liking, Respect	

I am _____ / am not _____ satisfied with the way I now solve conflicts.

I would _____ / would not _____ like to learn ways to solve conflicts.

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Which Books Do We Take?

Task: Scientists have suddenly discovered that a large comet is going to strike the Earth. All life, if not the earth itself, will be destroyed. Your group (four members) has been picked to move from Earth to a new planet. The conditions on the new planet will be harsh and difficult. You will be starting life over, trying to develop a farming and technological society at the same time. Because of limited room in the spaceship, you can only bring three books. *Think carefully,* the captain says. *You will never return to Earth. You will never be able to get more books from Earth.* Write a report on the issue, **"Which books should we take?"** The report should present a position and the reasons why the position is valid.

Cooperative: Write one report for the group, everyone has to agree, and everyone has to be able to explain the choice made and the reasons why the choice is a good one.

Procedure:

1. **Research And Prepare Your Position:** Your group of four has been divided into two pairs. Each pair is to (a) make a list of three books to take, (B) plan how to present the best case possible for your to the other pair.

2. **Present And Advocate Your Position:** Forcefully and persuasively present the best case for your list to the opposing pair. Be as convincing as possible. Take notes and clarify anything you do not understand when the opposing pair presents.

3. **Open Discussion:** Argue forcefully and persuasively for your list. Critically evaluate and challenge the opposing pair's list and reasoning, and defend your reasoning from attack.

4. **Reverse Perspectives:** Reverse perspectives and present the best case for the opposing list. The opposing pair will do the same. Strive to see the issue from both perspectives simultaneously.

5. **Synthesis:** Drop all advocacy. Synthesize and integrate the best evidence and reasoning from both sides into a joint list that all members can agree to. Then (a) finalize the group report, (b) present your conclusions to the class, and (c) process how well you worked together as a group and how you could be even more effective next time.

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CONTROVERSY Questionnaire

Each of the following questions describes an action taken during a controversy. For each question put a 5 if you always behave that way, 4 if you frequently behave that way, 3 if you occasionally behave that way, 2 if you seldom behave that way, and 1 if you never behave that way.

5-4-3-2-1 1. When I disagree with other group members, I insist that they change their opinions to match mine.

5-4-3-2-1 2. If someone disagrees with my ideas and opinions, I feel hurt and rejected.

5-4-3-2-1 3. I often infer that persons who disagree with me are incompetent and ignorant.

5-4-3-2-1 4. When others disagree with me, I try to view the issue from all points of view.

5-4-3-2-1 5. I try to avoid individuals who argue with me.

5-4-3-2-1 6. When others disagree with me, I view it as an interesting opportunity to learn and to improve the quality of my ideas and reasoning.

5-4-3-2-1 7. When I get involved in a argument with others, I become more and more certain that I am correct and argue more and more strongly for my own point of view.

5-4-3-2-1 8. When others disagree with my ideas, I get hostile and angry at them.

5-4-3-2-1 9. When I disagree with others, I am careful to communicate respect for them as persons while I criticize their ideas.

5-4-3-2-1 10. I am careful to always paraphrase thinking and feelings of others when they present ideas and opinions that are different from mine.

5-4-3-2-1 11. When others disagree with me, I generally keep my ideas and opinions to myself.

5-4-3-2-1 12. When others disagree with me, I encourage them to express their ideas and opinions fully, and seek to clarify the differences between their position and perspective and mine.

5-4-3-2-1 13. I view my disagreements with others as opportunities to see who "wins" and who "loses."

5-4-3-2-1 14. I often insult those who criticize my ideas and opinions.

Taken from: Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills (4th ed.) by D. W. Johnson and F. P. Johnson. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1991.

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CONTROVERSY Questionnaire (cont.)

5-4-3-2-1	15.	When another person and I disagree, I carefully communicate, "I appreciate you, I am interested in your ideas, but I disagree with your current position."
5-4-3-2-1	16.	When others disagree with me, I keep thinking of my ideas and opinions so that I do not forget them or get confused.
5-4-3-2-1	17.	I am careful not to share my ideas and opinions when I think others may disagree with them.
5-4-3-2-1	18.	When I disagree with others, I listen carefully to their ideas and opinions and change my mind when doing so is warrented by their information and reasoning.
5-4-3-2-1	19.	When others and I disagree, I try to overpower them with my facts and reasoning.
5-4-3-2-1	20.	I tend to dislike those who disagree with my ideas and opinions.
5-4-3-2-1	21.	When I am disagreeing with and criticizing others' ideas and opinions, I let them know that I like them as persons.
5-4-3-2-1	22.	I try to view the situation and issue from my opponent's shoes when involved in a disagreement about ideas and opinions.
5-4-3-2-1	23.	I refuse to get into a argument with anyone.
5-4-3-2-1	24.	When others disagree with me, I try to clarify the differences among our ideas and opinions, clarify the points of agreement, and seek a creative integration of all our ideas and information.
5-4-3-2-1	25.	When others and I disagree, I have to convince them that I am right and they are wrong.
5-4-3-2-1	26.	When others disagree with my ideas and opinions, it means that they are angry with me and dislike me.
5-4-3-2-1	27.	While I am disagreeing with others, I let them know that I appreciate their ability to present a challenging and thought-provoking position.
5-4-3-2-1	28.	When I am involved in an argument, I restate and summarize the opposing positions.
5-4-3-2-1	29.	When others disagree with me I stay very quiet and try to avoid them in the future.
5-4-3-2-1	30.	When I am involved in an argument, I never forget that we are trying to make the best decision possible by combining the best of all our facts and reasoning.

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SCORING

Write your answer for each question in the space provided and total your answers for each controversy-managing strategy. The higher the total score for each controversy strategy, the more frequently you tend to use that strategy; the lower the total score for each controversy strategy, the less frequently you tend to use it. Add the scores of all group members for each strategy and divide by the number of members in the group. This will give your group average for each strategy.

WIN-LOSE		REJECTION		CONFIRMATION	
_____	1.	_____	2.	_____	3.*
_____	7.	_____	8.	_____	9.
_____	13.	_____	14.	_____	15.
_____	19.	_____	20.	_____	21.
_____	25.	_____	26.	_____	27.
_____	TOTAL	_____	TOTAL	_____	TOTAL
_____	GRP AVE	_____	GRP AVE	_____	GRP AVE

PERSPECTIVE-TAKING		AVOIDANCE		PROBLEM-SOLVING	
_____	4.	_____	5.	_____	6.
_____	10.	_____	11.	_____	12.
_____	16.*	_____	17.	_____	18.
_____	22.	_____	23.	_____	24.
_____	28.	_____	29.	_____	30.
_____	TOTAL	_____	TOTAL	_____	TOTAL
_____	GRP AVE	_____	GRP AVE	_____	GRP AVE

_____

**Reverse the scoring on this question by substituting 1 for 5, 2 for 4, and so on.*

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CONTROVERSY Questionnaire

Write your scores in the spaces provided below. If your score is above 15, it means that you are likely to engage in this strategy. If your score is less than 15, it means that you are not likely to engage in this strategy.
Add the scores of all group members for each strategy and divide by the number of members in the group. This will give you your group average for each strategy.

Constructive Strategy	Your Score	Group Average	Destructive Strategy	Your Score	Group Average
Problem Solving			Win-Lose		
Confirmation			Rejection		
Perspective Taking			Avoidance		

Procedure

1. Compare your scores for the constructive and destructive strategies.

2. Compare your scores with your actual behavior (as reported by observer) in the controversy exercise.

3. Discuss the strategies that are difficult for you to engage in.

4. On the basis of the group average scores and on the actual behavior of the group members in the controversy exercise, characterize the group's tendencies toward constructive and destructive controversy.