

**Equity in Action:**  
**Building Resiliency in Students Through Transformational Teaching**

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**Overview**

Many teachers are struggling to educate children who may be suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and/or experiencing other forms of adversity that make it difficult for them to focus on learning. This session will provide teachers with research, stories, practical strategies, templates, and examples of how they can teach conflict-resolution skills through culturally responsive lesson plans that can transform students' lives and increase their chances of having a bright future.

**Theme**

Through transformational instruction, teachers can increase student engagement, build resiliency, and increase students' chances of having a bright future. In other words, "They can put equity into action, and thereby, 'make America great' for all students."

**Tips for Designing Conflict-Resolution Skill Development Lesson Plans**

- Share personal stories of how *you* have handled conflicts in the past.
- Be creative.
- Have fun as you create each lesson plan.
- Make your objectives clear.
- Try to address the most common types of conflicts/problems that students may face.
- Make sure that each lesson plan gives students opportunities to share their views and experiences.
- Make sure that students have lots of opportunities to hear your viewpoint about the topic, and the viewpoints and experiences of their classmates in order to understand that many options exist.
- Have students create, decorate, and keep a Personalized Conflict-Resolution Folder or Journal, and add new strategies, solutions, and options to it throughout the school year.
- Include Guiding Questions in lesson plans.

## Examples of Guiding Questions That Can Be Included in Lesson Plans

1. If you were the main character (or individual) how do you think you would've felt if you were experiencing this problem?
2. In your opinion, did the individual handle the problem in the best way? Why or why not?
3. If you were that individual, how would you have handled the problem, and what would've been the consequences of your decision?
4. Have you ever had a similar experience or do you know someone who did?
5. How did you or that person handle the problem?
6. What are some of the consequences of using violence to resolve conflicts?
7. When you are upset with someone, what are some alternatives to using violence?
8. What are some of the consequences of arguing to resolve conflicts?
9. When you are upset with someone, what are some alternatives to arguing?
10. How can you tell when someone is giving you good advice or bad advice about how to handle a problem?
11. Why is it important for you to know how to resolve conflicts wisely?
12. How can knowing how to handle conflicts wisely increase your chances of having a good life?

### Lesson Plan 1: Using Literature to Help Students Deal With Bullying (or other conflicts)

**Targeted Audience(s):** All grade levels

**Objectives:** to improve students' reading, writing, oral communication, critical thinking, and listening skills

**Required Texts:** *Thank You Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco (for elementary students) or *The Friends* by Rosa Guy (for middle school or high school students)

Have students listen to or read one of the Required Texts or some other story about bullying, and discuss, write about, and share:

- how it feels to be bullied
- a time when they were bullied or witnessed bullying behavior
- the reasons why people bully others
- the consequences of bullying, and
- develop a list of options to deal with bullies

### Lesson Plan 2: Using "What Would You Do?" Scenarios to Help Students Develop Options for Handling Racial Profiling (or other conflicts)

**Targeted Audience(s):** Can be modified for all grade levels

**Objectives:** to improve students' oral communication, writing, critical thinking, and conflict-resolution skills

The teacher can have students write about, discuss with the entire class, brainstorm options with a classmate, and share their responses to the following Guiding Questions/Prompts:

**“What would you do** if a store owner followed you around because he or she assumed that you were a thief merely because of your race, religious affiliation, or the neighborhood that you lived in, and what could the consequences of your actions be?”

**“What would you do** if someone called you a bad word, said something mean about you, didn’t want to be your friend, didn’t want to sit next to you in class, didn’t want you to live in his or her neighborhood, or hire you for a job because of your racial background or religious affiliation, and what could the consequences of your actions be?”

### **Lesson Plan 3: Using Storytelling to Help Students Deal With Racism and Discrimination (or another conflict/problem)**

**Targeted Audience(s):** All grade levels

**Objectives:** improving students’ oral communication, listening, writing, and conflict resolution skills

**Storytelling:** The teacher can use his/her own experiences, current events, or literature, to share a story about an individual who experienced racism or some type of discrimination, and explain how it was handled.

Ask students to tell a personal story to one classmate, a small group of classmates, or the entire class.

Ask students to make a list of the three best solutions that they learned from the stories that they heard from the teacher and their classmates.

**Modifications:** Students can be assigned to read a story about racism or discrimination or write a story about a time when they experienced one of these problems and how they handled the situation.

### **Lesson Plan 4: Using Music to Help Students Develop a Range of Options for Handling Conflicts**

**Targeted Audience(s):** Can be modified for all grade levels by using grade-level appropriate music

**Objectives:** to improve oral communication, writing, listening, and critical thinking skills

The teacher can have students listen to a song, such as Dionne Warwick’s “That’s What Friends Are For,” and have students write their own songs, poems or paragraphs about topics such as “How They Deal With Enemies,” make a “List of Options for Dealing With Enemies,” and share their answers with one or more classmates.

The teacher can have students listen to a song, such as Marvin Gaye’s “What’s Going On?” or “Mercy, Mercy Me,” and have students write about topics such as “Peaceful and Non-Peaceful Protests,” “Why Do Wars Occur?” make a “List of Options for Preventing Wars,” and share their answers with one or more classmates.

Source: *Through Ebony Eyes: What Teachers Need to Know but Are Afraid to Ask About African American Students*

### **Lesson Plan 5: Using Poster-Making to Help Students Develop a Range of Options for Handling Conflicts**

**Targeted Audience(s):** All grade levels

**Objectives:** to improve conflict-resolution and critical thinking skills

The teacher can have students design an original poster that displays creative ways to handle various types of conflicts, such as:

- Bullying
- Name calling
- Fighting
- Racism or other types of discrimination
- Gang violence
- Peer Pressure

The posters can be used to decorate and personalize the classroom so that all students feel a “sense of belonging” and pride in the classroom.

### **Lesson Plan 6: Using Quotes of the Week to Help Students Develop a Range of Options for Handling Conflicts**

**Targeted Audiences:** Can be modified for all grade levels by using grade-level appropriate quotes

**Objectives:** to improve oral communication, writing, and critical thinking skills

Each Monday, the teacher can write a famous or not so famous quote on the board, and ask students to discuss, write about, and share its meaning.

**Quotes:**

“Never judge a man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins.” (Native American Proverb)

“To err is human, to forgive divine.” (Alexander Pope)

“To avoid criticism, say nothing, do nothing, be nothing.” (unknown)

“Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never harm me.” (unknown)

“In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart.” (Anne Frank)

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.” (Eleanor Roosevelt)

### **Lesson Plan 7: The Community Problem-Solving Project**

**Targeted Audience(s):** upper elementary, middle, and high school students

**Objectives:** to improve students' reading, writing, speaking, research, and problem-solving skills

1. Make a list of the five biggest problems in your neighborhood or community.
2. Select the problem that is most important to you.
3. Write 5 to 10 questions about this problem, regarding the causes, consequences, and solutions.
4. Interview 5 to 10 adults by asking them to answer your questions.
5. Identify the similarities among the responses.
6. Write a paragraph, essay or research paper (depending on the students' grade level that includes (a) a description of the problem; (b) an explanation of the causes; (c) examples of consequences; and (d) solutions.
7. Produce a chart, poster, video or some other creative outlet to share with the class during your oral presentation.

### **Lesson Plan 8: Using Conflicts That Arise at School as "Teachable Moment Opportunities"**

**Targeted Audience(s):** all grade levels

**Objectives:** to improve students' reading, writing, speaking, research, and problem-solving skills

When conflicts arise in the classroom or elsewhere at school, guide students through questioning, discussions, and writing activities that are designed to help them:

- Examine what happened,
- try to figure out why it occurred,
- identify the lessons that they can learn, and
- try to determine how the problem can be prevented from recurring.

#### **What Mrs. Tessem Believed**

"Anybody who wants to be a teacher, has to realize the nobility of what you're doing on a daily basis."

"Teachers should treat each individual as a precious mind."

Many educators "haven't treated these children with the respect and gentleness that they need."

#### **The Reasons Why Mrs. Tessem was a Turnaround Teacher**

- "She had the correct mindset about her students."
- "She had high expectations for students."
- "She cared about her students' overall wellbeing."
- "She used the curriculum to empower students."

- “She used fair, humane, and transformational instructional and classroom management strategies.”
- She respected our “cultural and racial identities.”

### Extended Professional Development

- Use or modify one or more of the Lesson Plans.
- Create your own original lesson plans that are designed to improve students’ conflict-resolution skills.
- Collaborate with a colleague on developing an “Effective Conflict-Resolution Skills Unit” for students.

### References

*Yes, You Can! Advice for Teachers Who Want a Great Start and a Great Finish With Their Students of Color* by Dr. Gail L. Thompson & Rufus Thompson

*Up Where We Belong: Helping African American and Latino Students Rise in School and in Life* by Dr. Gail L. Thompson

*Through Ebony Eyes: What Teachers Need to Know but Are Afraid to Ask About African American Students* by Dr. Gail L. Thompson

*Dear Beautiful! A Self-Empowerment Book for Black Women* by Dr. Gail L. Thompson

*A Brighter Day: How Parents Can Help African American Youth* by Dr. Gail L. Thompson

### Resources

“Equity in Action: Building Resiliency in Students Through Transformation Teaching” by Dr. Gail L. Thompson

**Link:** [go.illuminateed.com/equityresources](http://go.illuminateed.com/equityresources)

Illuminate Education Additional Equity Resources:

Equity & Access

Professional Development

**Link:** [go.illuminateed.com/equityresources](http://go.illuminateed.com/equityresources)

“How Today’s Students Learn: Building Brain-Considerate Classrooms” by Dr. Kenneth Wesson

<http://icsos.us/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/PD-2-29-16.pdf>

“Race, Equity, and Inclusion Action Guide” by the Annie E. Casey Foundation  
Race Equity Inclusion Action Guide.pdf.