...and 5th & 6th graders use it too!

curriculum as well as a tool for exploring win-win solutions for conflicts and issues within the group,” says Kathy Boone, one of the two 5th/6th co-teachers and a trained CFG Coach.

Scott Evans, her co-teacher, says, “We like to give the students the power of rule-making and decision-making, and Chalk Talk is a good way to get a lot of ideas out on the table from everyone. Three or four years ago, we had a very chatty class and we used Chalk Talk to talk about the issue. The students came up with a ‘quiet monitor’ that rotated, and they developed appropriate consequences. The ideas came from the kids instead of top-down, and that’s the power of using this protocol.”

These photos show the students working in a theme on immigration, answering the question “What human rights do you think all people should be guaranteed universally?” Almost every April or May, Kathy conducts a Chalk Talk around the question, “How can we help make the world a more just and peaceful place?”

“The challenging part for fifth and sixth graders is to remain quiet!” Scott says. “But this discussion was quite deep. They really paid attention to others’ ideas, brought forth a lot of ideas that were just on the perimeter of their awareness, and then were able to bring those in and make it real.”

If you use NSRF Protocols in the classroom, we want your stories! Email us!
AN EXPERIMENT IN GROUP DYNAMICS: How I Learned To Stop Talking  By Teri Lindner, NSRF National Facilitator, CFG Coach in Pennsylvania, tklindner@me.com

Have you ever noticed in meetings that there is a certain type of person who attentively listens and when she speaks, the room grows quiet? As she begins to talk, there is a noticeable anticipation in the air. Her colleagues listen to her because she is considered to be so insightful. For her less is more.

“She doesn’t say much but when she does, she’s right on the mark.”

Do you find that there are also those who dominate the conversation and hold the floor longer than most? They might have impressive ideas and make valuable contributions to a discussion but, in the end, they have talked two or three times more than anyone else. As a result, when you survey the room, you notice that there are some people who have not uttered a word or expressed a single idea.

If you identify with the second type of speaker, as I do, you might have promised yourself to try and tone it down a bit. You tell yourself that you will let others have the floor and that you’ll express your ideas, just not ALL of them.

During the next meeting, one inner voice says to you, “OK, sit on your hands, listen and wait to talk.”

Then another voice says, with utmost enthusiasm, “I’ve got it!” or “This is really important, I need to say this!”…and off you go.

Before you know it, you are talking and everyone else is listening. After the meeting, people seem to have appreciated your ideas, and it seemed that you helped spark an interesting discussion. But, when you stopped to think about whether you had reached your goal of sharing the stage, you realized that you had fallen short again. Some – maybe many – voices in the room had not been heard. If you’re being honest with yourself, you might admit that “Maybe they didn’t get a chance to talk.”

Try as you might, you just don’t seem to be able to slow down and be that person who everyone waits to hear from – part mysterious, and part brilliant!

During one of my CFG facilitator trainings, I heard my NSRF mentor say, “If you wait, someone else will probably make your points and you can save your best for last.”

Was this one of those sayings that get thrown out to make you feel better? Is it just some friendly advice? Do you find yourself saying, “Thanks…that’s probably true” but thinking “Yeah, right…”

Was my mentor’s advice just another maxim like:

- “When one door closes, another one opens.” “Yeah, right…”
- “Someday you’ll thank me for this!” “Yeah, right…”
- “This time next year everything will be better.” “Yeah, right…”

Teri Lindner is the founder of the Life-Link programs in the State College Area School District in Pennsylvania. These award-winning programs help students with special needs transition to the adult world. Teri has taught in the USA, Paris, London and Switzerland and was the Disney Teacher of the Year in 1999.

Contact Teri with your questions or comments at tklindner@me.com