Reflective Essay

Prior to my experience in Conflict Resolution and Mediation in Secondary Schools, I believed that in my future career as an educator I would avoid conflict and leave the mediation to someone else. Since learning the procedures and tips of conflict mediation, I now feel much better prepared and knowledgeable about resolving quarrels among students, and am now fully willing to mediate when the opportunity presents itself. As a teacher, I realize that it is important for me to be aware of the school atmosphere, and pay close attention to the way my students behave around each other. Mediating petty conflicts early on is the key to keeping the school and my classroom safe for everyone, and that is one of my most important jobs.

One aspect of the class that I was not anticipating was the topic of bullying. I know that bullying is a serious problem in today's society, but I had not ever thought about the devastating effects this can have on everyone involved. I feel as though it is my responsibility to notice any and all signs of bullying, so I can put a stop to it before the situation gets out of hand. School is supposed to be a safe place, and I always thought it was. I was unaware that students who are bullied are horrified of school because much of the bullying takes place there. After studying this horrible reality, I now understand the long-term effects of bullying,
sometimes ending in suicide or murder. I am much more prepared to educate after learning how to look for and confront any situation involving bullying among students.

As far as mediation goes, my preconception of conflict was that it was none of my business if it did not involve me (or my class), and I therefore felt uncomfortable ‘butting’ in to hear the story. Not once during the class, however, did that topic present itself, and I now know why. If there is any kind of conflict among my students, then it is my business, and my duty, to figure out the problem and come up with a solution to it. For the safety of the students involved, and the rest of my students for that matter, I should always put myself out there and try to mediate all conflicts that I become aware of. I feel, after hearing many stories about the topic, that a large number of situations involving violence in school could have been prevented. One of my new goals as a teacher is to be hyper-aware of what is going on around me so I can spot conflict and mediate it before it can escalate to something more.

I learned quite a bit about the mediation process, which helped me to overcome my fears about mediation. Before learning this process, I was completely unaware of how to solve conflict among people. I believed that two people in a conflict should be left alone to figure out a solution amongst themselves, but what I did not know was that is exactly what mediation is all about. Honestly, what I heard about mediation at my high school sounded pointless, but the process for resolving conflict that we learned in class made a lot of sense to me. All conflict mediators do, which I did not know previously, is set ground rules for the conflicting individuals, ask questions, let each party tell their story, and let them find a solution that will work for both of them. It even sounds like it works! I believe that people in a conflict must own up to their
own actions, and work on forgiveness and finding a solution. The practice in class helped me prepare to mediate anyone involved in conflict, which will definitely help me down the line as an educator.

The topics covered in class made me more prepared to face conflict in my career as a teacher. Learning the mediation process has helped me in my everyday life, and is an important skill that I wish I would have known earlier. Many conflicts can be resolved just by telling the story and talking about misunderstandings, and I am glad to have that new insight for myself and those around me. One part of the class that will stay with me is the horrifying truth about bullying. After seeing all of those youths who have committed suicide because they felt alone and tormented, I will make sure to offer myself to any student who seems like the loner in class. I want to be the teacher that students can feel comfortable talking to about their problems, and I now realize how important that is.