



## Enhancing Relational Skills and Reducing Conflict in a Christian School

By Ken Sande | [www.rw360.org](http://www.rw360.org)

FREE DOWNLOAD

## Introduction

Education is all about relationships with students, parents, teachers and administrators, each of whom can make an educator's job either a joy or an ordeal.

Therefore, one of the wisest investments educators can make is to enhance their relational skills by learning relational wisdom (RW), which is faith-based form of [emotional intelligence](#). These skills can be applied on multiple fronts every day, enabling educators to:

- **Serve** challenging students who bring a lifetime of trauma and broken relationships into the classroom,
- **Respond** to critical parents patiently and build relationships of mutual respect and cooperation,
- **Influence** inexperienced or difficult staff members and inspire them to upgrade their own relational skills,
- **Get upstream** of conflict on all of these fronts and devote more of your time to the joy of teaching,
- **Fulfill continuing education requirements** with training that improves both their professional and personal lives,
- **Go home** with less stress in the evening, where you can use these same skills to nurture a stronger family,
- **Provide a compelling witness** to the transforming power of Jesus Christ and his gospel.

Schools can experience a **double benefit** by encouraging their teachers and support staff to develop relational skills they can use both at school and at home.

Studies indicate that when educators have positive home lives, they are more relaxed and focused when they come to work. As a result, they are typically happier with their co-workers and supervisors and find their work to be more fulfilling, productive and enjoyable.

This results in more cohesive, innovative and effective teams, as well as lower absenteeism, conflict and staff turnover, all of which lead to a peaceful, cohesive, creative, productive and enjoyable academic environment.

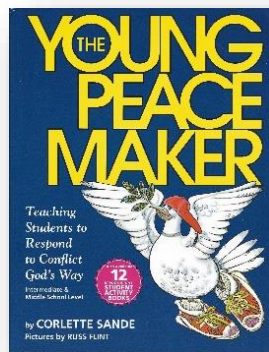
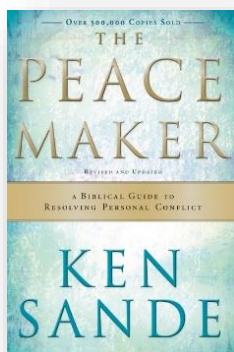
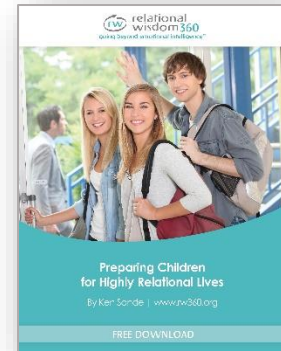
For more detailed information on the studies that illustrate these benefits, see [Relational Wisdom Strengthens Both Families and Businesses](#) and [Emotional Intelligence for Teachers – Studies and Articles](#).

Go to [www.rw360.org/christianschool](http://www.rw360.org/christianschool)  
for a pdf with active links.

## A. Educational Resources

The following resources are designed to help school administrators, teachers, support staff, students and parents develop stronger relational skills.

1. [RW360 Smartphone App](#) – Provides immediate access to hundreds of RW and peacemaking articles and videos (Free)
2. [RW360 Blog](#) – Practical applications of RW and peacemaking (Free)
3. [Preparing Children for Highly Relational Lives](#) (Free download)
4. [Discovering Relational Wisdom 3.0 – Online Course](#) (qualifies for 6 hours of continuing education credit)  
Regular cost: \$49  
- 10% discount for school staff (code: “teacher10”) = **\$44.10**  
- 50% discount for all students (code: “student50”) = **\$24.50**
5. [Discovering Relational Wisdom 3.0 – Live In-Service](#) (6 hrs, 1 ACSI CEU)
6. [The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict](#) (Baker Books)
7. [The Peacemaker: Student Edition](#) (For Teenagers, Baker Books)
8. [The Young Peacemaker](#) (Complete Curriculum for 3-6 graders; Shepherd Press)



## B. School-Wide Strategies for Administrators

1. Recommend the *Discovering Relational Wisdom 3.0* **online course or live in-service for continuing education** to shape your entire school culture, promote core relational values, and improve relational and conflict resolution skills.

To promote this training, download this [poster](#) and add additional information relevant to your school or state in the text box at the bottom.

2. Subscribe to the *RW Blog* and *use select posts and articles for devotionals or discussions in staff meetings* or send select blog links to staff through your school newsletter.

### Workplace Examples

- [Why Relational Families Produce Better Employees](#)
- [Three Qualities that Improve Every Relationship](#)
- [Falsely Accused](#)
- [Face to Face and No Excuses](#)
- [Two Stubborn Scientists](#)
- Additional posts at [RW in the Workplace](#)

### Student Engagement Examples

- [I Am Home](#)
- [Dolphins vs. Eagles](#)
- [Inside Out](#)
- [Have You Ever Been This Kind?](#)
- [Raising Empathetic Children](#)
- [The Three Faces of Fear](#)
- Additional posts at [RW for Parenting](#), [RW for Teens](#), [RW for Children](#)

3. Select a gifted member of your staff to be trained as an Advanced *Relational Wisdom Instructor*<sup>™</sup> and serve as your in-house educational and coaching specialist and coordinator for relational wisdom and peacemaking ([Details](#)).
4. At the beginning of every school year, host a *special presentation to parents* where you use the [RW Smartphone App](#) and [RW pamphlet](#) to introduce them to the concepts of relational wisdom and peacemaking and explain your commitment to practice these principles with both students and parents. Encourage the parents to do the same, both at home and when they come to school to meet with teachers.
5. *Encourage parents to improve their own relational skills* (and their example to their children) by going through one of the online courses on relational wisdom at the [RW Academy](#). Point out that there are both faith-based and [values-based \(secular\)](#) versions of this training so it can be used by both Christian and non-Christian families. (The two courses have multiple cross-over links, so non-Christians will have several opportunities voluntarily read about the gospel.)

6. *Inspire older students to grow in relational wisdom* by reading and discussing Jeff Sande’s insightful testimony, [Overcoming Artificial Maturity with Relational Wisdom](#).
7. If you have a *regular newsletter or communication to parents*, include links to select RW Blogs throughout the year to remind them of RW concepts they can reinforce at home and apply when meeting with teachers.
8. During staff meetings or professional development sessions, divide teachers into small groups and have them discuss how they would apply RW to specific [Challenging Relational Scenarios](#), which will prepare them to respond constructively when problems arise in real life.
9. Whenever you are guiding people through conflict or moving your team to accept changes, deliberately seek to provide [The Three P’s of Satisfaction](#):
  - Process Satisfaction
  - Personal satisfaction
  - Product (result) satisfaction
10. Deliberately cultivate the quality of being “[approachable](#),” so that staff, students and parents feel comfortable approaching you with suggestions, concerns and even criticism (better to hear it directly than to have it fester underground!)
11. Defuse [potentially explosive meetings](#) with staff or parents by specifically defining the issue or problem you need to address and then asking people to share their perspectives by answering these six questions:
  - Briefly stated, how do you feel because of this problem?
  - What have you done that might have contributed to this problem?
  - What do you think would please God as we work through this situation?
  - What steps have you already taken to make things better?
  - What are you now willing to do to help resolve this problem?
  - What do you suggest others do to help resolve this problem?
12. The vast majority of distressing *leadership transitions* that take place in Christian schools (and churches) are the result of clumsy (well-intended but poorly executed) decisions. Therefore, long before your school initiates a leadership (or staff) transition, meet with your board and commit to the principles your school will follow when making such transitions (see [Leadership Transitions: The Good, the Bad and the Clumsy](#)).
13. Add *Discovering Relational Wisdom 3.0* to your curriculum as an *elective or required course for all high school students* so that when they graduate, they have developed the relational skills needed to succeed in [job interviews](#), the [workplace](#), friendships and marriage, and in their witness for Christ (see [Preparing Children for Highly Relational Lives](#)).

### C. Personal and Classroom Strategies for Teachers

1. Subscribe to the *RW Blog* for *weekly insights on applying relational wisdom*.
2. Use the *Discovering Relational Wisdom 3.0* online course for *personal skill development and continuing education (CEU)* requirements. Studying in an interactive group with other teachers enhances the learning experience.
3. Send an [RW pamphlet](#) home to parents and explain that you will be teaching and applying these concepts in your classroom. Invite parents to model and reinforce these principles at home.
4. When conflicts arise, use them as opportunities to model and teach [peacemaking principles](#) to your students and their parents
5. For grade school children, teach portions of *The Young Peacemaker* at the beginning of the year and then briefly reinforce the principles each week.
6. Set up a "*Peace Table*" in your grade school classroom where students can go to work through conflicts. Stock the table with laminated summaries of key peacemaking principles.
7. For older students, use select *RW Blogs* to set the stage for classroom discussions on relational issues.
8. Encourage students to find and share *compelling stories from the news, on social media or in movies* that illustrate the value of relational wisdom or its "secular cousin," emotional intelligence. Have students vote on which story is the most compelling and give extra class credit to the student who submitted the winning story.
9. Teach and focus on a specific [RW acrostic](#) each month.
10. *Use practical skills taught in The Peacemaker*, such as reflecting, asking clarifying questions, listening, etc., during difficult conversations with parents or administrators.
11. Use the "*explosive meeting*" questions listed above (B.11) when talking with distraught students or parents.
12. Set up *private study groups for the online course* and invite interested students to study RW together, with you serving as moderator (students receive automatic 50% discounts).

### D. Strategies for Students with Relational Weaknesses or Patterns of Conflict

1. Ask the student to *read relevant RW Blogs*, answer the reflection questions and apply the principles to his or her life.
2. Create a *special study group for the online course* for the student (or a group of similarly struggling students), with a teacher or staff member acting as group

moderator and guide the student(s) through the course, adding relevant questions, articles or case studies for the students to process.

### E. Strategies for Gifted and Mature Students

1. Identify *students who are especially gifted or mature* in their relational skills and encourage them to go through the online *Discovering Relational Wisdom 3.0* course as sophomores or juniors. If they continue to demonstrate relational maturity, ask them to *moderate groups* of younger students who are going through the online course.
2. Train mature students with conflict coaching and mediation skills so they can serve as “*peer mediators*” and assist other students in resolving conflict (see [Guiding People through Conflict](#) booklet).

### F. For Assistance in Resolving Serious Conflict

- Include “*conciliation clauses*” in your staff and student enrollment contracts so that serious conflict and even threatened lawsuits are resolved through biblically based mediation rather than litigation (see [Conciliation Clauses](#)).
- Contact the Christian Conciliation Service®, a division of Relational Wisdom 360 or our conciliation partner, *Crossroads Resolution Group* ([www.crossroadsresolution.com](http://www.crossroadsresolution.com)) for conflict coaching, mediation and arbitration assistance with conflicts you cannot resolve internally.

### G. For Community Engagement and Outreach

- Read [Using RW for Witnessing and Evangelism](#) to see how your school could train members of your staff to use either the faith-based or the values-based (secular) version of RW as a form of community engagement and evangelism.
- You could offer short workshops, ranging from 30 minutes to 3 hours, to local businesses as a form of professional development for their employees.
- You could also host annual or even quarterly seminars at your school and open them to your community.
- In addition to providing other people with life-changing relational skills, such training could sow the seeds of the gospel throughout your community, enhance your school’s public image and draw new families to your school.

As you discover additional ways to teach and practice relational wisdom in your school or classroom, please let us know so that we can add your ideas to this list!

[mail@rw360.org](mailto:mail@rw360.org).

Go to [www.rw360values.org/publicschool](http://www.rw360values.org/publicschool)  
for a similar booklet for public schools.

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