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Implementation of a peer mediation program

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Recommended Citation

IMPLEMENTATION OF A
PEER MEDIATION PROGRAM

by
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A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 2003

Approved-by_____

Date Approved _____

ABSTRACT

Darin B. McDonald

The study was designed to examine and describe the implementation of the peer

mediation program at Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary School. In the past few decades,

with the rise of school campus violence, models of conflict resolution programs including

peer mediation have rapidly increased in popularity in which students assist their peers in

resolving disputes. Peer mediation at Wiggins Elementary School offered training and

counseling to students who would become peer mediators to help other students manage

their conflict without the use of violence. Significantly, the study was action based in its

design to find out what components would be necessary in order to have an effect on

violence prevention among the population of four hundred and fifty five students. The

success rate of the program will be determined statistically in the months and years ahead

from the figures compiled monthly off of the student behavior referral forms. Improving

the attitude of students involved in interpersonal conflicts can be managed productively

from within a group of their peers.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Darin B. McDonald

Implementation
Of a Peer Mediation
Program
May 2003
Dr. Theodore Johnson

The study was designed to examine the implementation of the peer mediation program at Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary School. The research examined how peer mediators helped students resolve their disputes. Data recorded monthly on behavior referral forms will be measured in the upcoming months and years ahead into the program.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1

Introduction

Focus of the Study

School reforms aimed at curbing violence in our schools are at the forefront of many school district policies. In the urban school environment the growing problem of school violence is at a stage where confrontational conflicts could be addressed differently. Policies such as zero tolerance, in-house suspension room, and peer-mediation are catch phrases that are rarely understood by the people in which they are intended to help and according to some strategists are not very practical or effective in reducing or preventing school violence.

School administrators in an effort to become tougher on school violence are not fully convinced that zero-tolerance policies, which state that any form of violence results in expulsion, can reduce the cycle of school violence and more than ever are questioning these reform policies. In an effort to reduce school violence within Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary School, this study will review school policies such as peer mediation through conflict resolution as an alternative to out-of-school suspension and pilot data regarding the program's effectiveness in reducing and preventing school violence.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will look extensively at conflict resolution as an alternative to out-of–school-suspension for violent behavior among elementary students in an urban school zone. As a result, future administrators, teachers, parents, and the community will gain insight into how school discipline policies are applied to the larger political, social, cultural, and economic contexts of school policies.

Definitions

1. Conflict – disagreements and problems resulting from divergent wishes or needs-is inevitable in human life, and can be a positive force for learning and development.

2. Conflict Resolution Program – a process in which the goal of conflict resolution education is to reduce the disruption and harm that can arise when conflicts are mismanaged, by helping students and educators to develop skills that support constructive nonviolent conflict resolutions.

3. Mediator – an unbiased third party who helps disputants to talk about and handle their problems.

4. 4. <u>Disputants</u> – two or more students who are involved in a conflict that they feel cannot be resolve successfully without the assistance of a peer mediator.

5. <u>Peer Mediator</u> – a student who is trained to manage conflict constructively.

6. <u>Peer Mediation</u> – the resolving of conflicts or disputes peacefully by trained students acting as mediators.

Limitations of the Study

The research of the study will be limited to Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary school for conclusive findings. The intent of this study will be significant using grades from one to five to provide alternative methods to out-of school suspension, and in-house suspension programs frequently used in the urban school district of Camden, New Jersey.

Because each elementary school function within its own walls of parameter and unique setting, the intern will have to consider the existence of many discipline programs already intact and which usually follow the school discipline guide handbook used by most administrators. The fallback to relying on the discipline

guide code book is that it over generalized and too standardized on disputing gray

issues in which the guide accordingly do not provide solutions. Other than students

in the lowest grades; first, and second, because of their lack of sophisticated

reasoning skills, peer mediation through conflict resolution could become very

successful to meet the needs of students in the urban school district of Camden, New

Jersey.

Setting of the Study

The study will be conducted during the 2002-2003 school year at Ulysses S.

Wiggins School located in Camden, New Jersey. Camden is an urban city located in

Camden County New Jersey famous for its historical and cultural sites such as the

Walt Whitman house Campbell Soup Company, RCA Company and the Shipping

Port Authority. The city is in a transformational and rebirth stage receiving

Empowerment Zone Funding from Trenton, New Jersey and Washington D.C. for

economic development. Camden City Public School system is paneled by a nine

member school board serving a three-year term. The superintendent and the nine-

member school board members are imposed with the prominence of a state

legislature take-over of the Camden City Public School district.

The once-proud industrial city has been in a slide for decades. It has the third-

highest poverty rate among U.S. cities of 50,000 people or more and a reputation for

crime and government corruption. The school board in the state's poorest city has used a lawsuit to fend off one kind of state takeover and has assurance of state Education Department officials that there will not be another kind.

Significance of the Study

The significance of a conflict resolution program that involves students working with each other and adults through peer mediation, can be greatly beneficial to the school and to the community because it can help to establish lifelong skills in how to conflicts without resorting to violence. School administrators in an educational leadership position that commits to this type of a program will help students in preparing to be contributing members of society (ISLLC Standards 2 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium).

The peer mediation program established and operating at Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary School for the last two years is a program that should be modeled throughout the entire school district of Camden, New Jersey because of its success record of what students can achieve in solving their conflicts through talks and discussions. Additionally the out-of-school suspension rate and in- school suspension rate at Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary School has decrease substantially due to the effectiveness of peer mediation through conflict resolution.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one of the study states the purpose of the research which focuses on how an effective peer mediation program could reduce the suspension rate throughout the entire district through the implementation and operation of a conflict resolution program. The other main areas of focus are Chapter 2 consisting of the literature review, Chapter 3 which provides the data and description of the instruments used, Chapter 4 which will analyze the data and Chapter 5 which will summarize the study and state the conclusions. In addition, Chapter 5 will present the issue of further research and the implications and impact this study has made on the school district of Camden, New Jersey.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

With the growing concern of school violence in our schools and the way in which young people solve their disputes has caused the educational community, legislature, teachers, parents and students to stop and think to see if there is yet a better way in which conflict can be resolved peacefully. In an effort to take an even tougher stand against violence, President Clinton signed the Gun-Free Schools Act into law in 1994. The law mandates a one-year expulsion for any student caught with a gun at schools receiving federal aid. This law set the tone for many schools to adopt zero-tolerance policies, which state that any form of violence results in expulsion (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

Although the majority of schools have zero-tolerance policies, those policies are increasingly being questioned (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Expulsion can ultimately put violent students at even greater risks for careers of violence (Black, 1999); Townsend, 2000). Moreover, adopting more extreme forms of punishment may not actually make the school safer. For example, one national study that compared zero-and non-zero tolerance schools found that more of the former had a

violent episode that required police involvement (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

Conflict

Conflicts among students in United States schools result in destructive outcomes with alarming frequency. In many schools, outbreaks of violent behavior and the presence of weapons are all too common, with estimates indicating that over 25,000 handguns enter schools daily. A quarter of all high school seniors in 1993 reported being threatened with violence (Stop the Violence, 1994). Providing students with a quality education is becoming more difficult as societal influences disrupt the curriculum. To be effective, schools must feel safe. Civil behavior in the classroom is a prerequisite to learning. When violent responses to conflict are the norm, an atmosphere of fear impairs the quality of education for all students. Instructors spending significant portions of their time addressing student conflicts are distracted from teaching effectively. Moreover, student/student conflict handled by teachers or the principal often leads to a win/lose or lose/lose outcome; punishment occurs without the agreement of all parties involved and leads to low compliance and expensive policing (Opotow, 1991).

Violent Offenders

How will school administrators know who fit the profile of violent offenders? According to the research by (Buka &Earls, 1993) the emphasis on early intervention

is predicated on the belief that the precursors to violence, particular aggression, appear early in childhood and needs to be addressed as soon as possible. (Flannery & Siger, 1999), hypothesize in their study that violent acts are committed by so-called early-onset offenders. However, the (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001) feel forty percent (40%) of violent youths are so-called late-onset offenders. More than half of all violence is situational or relationship violence (Tolan & Guerra, 1994).

Situational violence occurs in response to a set of unusual circumstances, and relationship violence arises from interpersonal disputes (Tolan & Guerra, 1994).

The first act of violence for many students in high school is an episode of situational or relationship violence, which would make them late-onset offenders. A survey of principles listed these types of physical conflicts as the third most pressing problem in schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). A comprehensive violence prevention effort must address the question of which approaches work for which violent acts and which violent students (Bemak & Keys, 2000).

Disciplinary Prevention

Disciplinarian approaches to reducing school violence fall into three categories, security, punishment, and school-based programs. The first category, security approaches, is designed to keep violence out of schools by using security guards, metal detectors, identification badges, locked campuses, and locker and book

bag checks. These approaches are highly visible and immediate and certainly do prevent some incidents of violence. On the down side, however, they are expensive, and there is a risk that they will make the school feel like a fortress. Another security approach is profiling, which establishes the characteristics of potentially violent youths to identify and help them before they erupt with violence. Profiling has increasingly been questioned because it may injure innocent students (Kopka, 1997; Mulvey & Cauffman, 2001) and because it has yet to be proven that there is a profile (Futrell, 1996).

The second category, punishment, has long been used as a deterrent for violence. The most common form of punishment has been out-of school suspension. There are, however, significant concerns about its effectiveness (Dupper & Bosch, 1996). First, suspension often does not deter future violence because many students are repeatedly suspended for fighting (De Ridder, 1991; Mayer, 1995). Second, the objectivity and fairness of out-of-school suspensions has been questioned as some groups of students, including male, minority, and academically and behaviorally challenged students, are suspended in disproportionate numbers (Foster, 1986; Kunjufu, 1986; Townsend, 2000; Uchitelle, Bartz, & Hillman, 1989). Third, suspension creates serious negative consequences for suspended students. They often perform poorly academically and cannot afford to be away from the classroom. Suspension further disempowers and isolates already marginalized students and their

parents from the school (Coben, Weiss, Mulvey, & Dearwater, 1994; Cunningham, 1996; De Ridder, 1991; Gaddy & Kelly, 1984; Stretch & Crunck, 1972). The cycle of fighting, suspension, and failure can culminate in a student's dropping out of school or being expelled (Black, 1999; Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986; Mayer, 1995).

The third category, violence prevention programs, encompasses a vast array of programs ranging from climate improvement strategies to programs that provide skills-based training, which is generally designed for all students. Unfortunately for high school administrators, most of these programs target elementary schools, leaving only limited choices for high schools. Moreover, very few of those high school options have been tested empirically (Thorton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch, & Baer, 2000); U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).

So, how are administrators going to develop comprehensive violence prevention efforts? They could simply use all three approaches; however, such an effort would not be practical because the approaches work in different and not necessarily complementary ways. Moreover, a comprehensive violence-prevention program must attack the spectrum of school violence that includes murder, physical fighting, and bullying. Finally, the individual students who commit these acts of violence vary greatly and therefore, should be handled differently (Cortines, 1996; Futrell, 1996).

Peer Mediation and Conflict Resolution

Until recently, little systematic research was available regarding the implementation or effectiveness of conflict resolution programs, including peer mediation, in schools. However, practitioners' interest and commitment to peer mediation has fueled the rapid spread of these innovations in schools across much of the world (CREnet, 2000; Hall, 1999). Where there are sufficient mediators on duty, peer mediation programs are associated with reduction in physical aggression (Cunningham et al., 1998).

Peer mediation supports student learning of skills for problem-solving, decision-making, communication, critical thinking, and self-discipline (Crary, 1992; Johnson and Johnson, 1996), and may result in reduction disciplinary actions (Carter, 1995; Stomfay-Stitz, 1994). Where mediator teams are diverse and bias is addressed, students may also develop intercultural sensitivity (Day-Vines et al., 1996).

Peer mediation programs, by offering alternative autonomous approaches to self discipline and by involving a wider population of facilitators to assist students' conflict management, can help to overcome some of the equity problems common in traditional punishment-based discipline (Bettman and Moore, 1994; Slee, 1995). The vast majority of student conflicts that goes to peer mediation are resolved (85-95%) and nearly all of those agreements are kept (MAMP 1995). Training students to

resolve conflicts constructively has been recommended to schools for some time (Johnson, 1970, 1971). A number of conflict-resolution programs have been developed, and generally, they are two types: (a) the cadre approach, in which a small number of students are trained to serve as peer mediators for the whole school, and (b) the total student body approach, in which all students in the school (or class) are taught how to manage conflicts constructively.

Summary

This study will examined the use of a peer mediation program in an urban setting elementary school with a racially diverse student body. The research will be conducted to provide more information about four specific issues: (a) what specific types of conflicts are brought to peer mediation in a primary school, (b) what strategies elementary-age students use before mediation to manage their interpersonal conflicts, (c) what solutions are derived from peer mediation, and (d) what differences exist among male-male, female-female, male-female conflicts.

The study will need to examine if peer mediating can benefit other elementary schools that are using punishment as a form of deterrent to undesirable behavior by the student. More needs to be understood about the strategies elementary-school students use in attempting to resolve their conflicts before they seek mediation. The third purpose of this study will examine the nature of the

settlements used at Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary school resulting from peer mediation session recorded. Note: by definition (Johnson et al, 1992, 1994, 1995): conflicts that go to mediation have not been managed constructively by the participants. It is unknown, however, if peer mediation actually results in constructive settlements. In this study, therefore the agreements resulting from peer mediation will be recorded and placed in the following categories as outlined by (Johnson et al., 1992, 1994, 1995) study: no agreement, third-party imposed agreement, avoidance of each other, one disputant wins, forgiving and apologizing , new solution agreeable to both developed and fully negotiated mutual agreement.

Conflicts in schools may be between males, between females, or may involve both males and females. Little is known about whether there are differences between the way males and females manage conflicts. Therefore in this study the gender of the disputants will be recorded and the data on type of conflict, strategy used, or mediated resolution will be analyzed separately for male-male, female-female, and male-female conflicts.

Chapter 3

The Design of the Study

Introduction

In the urban school environment, the growing problem of school violence each year presents to the administrator and the teaching staff a new set of discipline conflicts which need to be addressed. So, what decisions can the administrator and the teacher make that will help the school and the district combat disruptions to the educational process? How can we learn to cope with the new generation of students whom some have been profiled as being "at risk-students" that will reduce school violence?

The answer to these two questions may help to determine our public school trust from the community and from our legislators who vote on school referendums and policies. Surely, the truth is, public schools must change dramatically in ways of curbing and eliminating violence on the campus. When a student is caught fighting at school and some disciplinary action must be taken, there is a major opportunity for use of intervention and conflict resolution. Rather than using punishment, schools should modify the discipline code to offer these students a violence prevention program instead of immediate suspension. The criteria being, the alternative to home

suspension or in-house-suspension will be reduced because of an alternative to combat such negative behavior.

Administrative leaders must take the initiative in designing or selecting study teams to implement such programs as peer mediation and conflict resolution program.

Description of the Research Design

The study was developed to curb the out- of-school suspension rate by offering conflict resolution training as an early intervention effort. The study action based by design includes the data of the number of cases of students referred to peer mediation. The study also includes the number of cases settled prior to mediation and the number of mediations conducted during the 2002-2003 school year at Ulysses S. Wiggins School. To help establish the quantitative aspect of the design, the intern participated with the training of peer mediators, the numbers of cases referred to mediation; and collaborated with the guidance counselor to help establish the accuracy of the data. Throughout the study, the descriptive phase of the study remains qualitative in scope.

Development and Design of the Research Instruments

Much of the research instruments used in the study is relatively new in design, including the School Mediation Program Data Input Record (See Appendix

A). Peer Mediation Programs Incorporated created the Data Input Record for the expressed purpose of program evaluation. Through the use of the Data Input Record, the intern can collaborate with the administrator to compile, and compute, the number of instances referred to mediation, the number of cases settled prior to mediation, and the number of mediations conducted.

The discipline statistics including the number of suspensions, detentions and violent incidents were arranged by categories using a Student Behavior Referral form (See Appendix B) by the guidance administrator. The intern collaborated with the guidance administrator in reaching the final analysis of these statistics. The figures, reflecting the number of instances referred to mediation, the number of cases settled prior to mediation, and the number of mediation conducted were developed on a monthly basis from the Data Input. To determine the effectiveness of a conflict resolution program, a peer mediation follow-up report (See Appendix C) was developed by the intern and the guidance administrator.

Description of the Sample

Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary School, named after Dr. Ulysses S. Wiggins, an African-American physician who practiced medicine in Camden, beginning in 1928 was the site for the study. The study was initiated in the academic school year of 2002-2003. Ulysses S. Wiggins is one of the twenty-four elementary schools in

the Camden City district. The number of students enrolled in grades kindergarten through fifth total approximately 455 at the time of the study.

The racial percentage of the student population totaled 41% African Americans, 57% Hispanic Americans and 1% Caucasian Americans. The one principal within the school assumed the leadership position and corresponded with the guidance counselor who handled overall discipline problems. Emphasis on correcting discipline problems was modeled around peer-mediation and conflict resolution. The program was initiated in the 2002/2003 school year by the guidance counselor to coordinate with staff, students, and parents more efficiency and effectively on the policies and practices of disciplinarian issues at Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary School.

Ulysses S. Wiggins peer mediation and conflict resolution program was organized, supervised and directed by the guidance counselor. The major philosophy surrounding conflict resolution was designing a program in which the entire school body could work as a coherent organization in which discipline problems could be solved through the students and their peers with the assistance of the administrators and staff members.

All classroom teachers and instructional staffs were informed of the criteria of the program in September. Information of the guidelines for student's participation in peer-mediation was generated to parents through school letters. To

implement the program in September 2002 the guidance counselor selected four student mediators to assist with hearing disputes. The students were trained during school hours on how to mediate problems through the use of viewing several video tapes on conflict resolution techniques.

Description of the Data Collection

Information and data of students' misbehavior was recorded each month on the School Mediation Program Data Input sheet. In addition, students' discussions provided feedback, prediction, and evaluation to the strength of the mediation sessions. Additional tracking of students' misbehavior was gathered through the use of Peer Mediator Intervention Referral forms, Student Behavior Referral forms and school records.

Description of the Data Analysis

Data was compared by the guidance counselor using the Mediation Program Statistics and the Discipline Statistics over a seven month period. The data tabulated, was able to give the study a model for future comparison and provide the guidance counselor with the means to see if students offenses declined or increased. In addition, peer mediators could evaluate the mediation sessions for cooperative solutions to disputes.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Research Findings

Introduction

Currently, an estimated 7,500 to 10,000 Peer Mediation programs, in which

students assist their peers in resolving disputes, have been implemented in U.S.

elementary, middle, and high schools (LeBoeuf &Delany-Shabazz, 1997). They have

been found to have a positive effect (Crawford & Bodine, 1996) on schools in many

ways, including reducing reliance on traditional disciplinary systems (Tolson,

McDonald, & Moriarty, 1992), improving attitudes toward mediation as a means of

conflict management (Moriarty, 1992; Weir, 1995), giving students conflict

management and citizenship skills, and providing a powerful means of violence

prevention (Bradley & Henderson, 1994).

A peer mediation program encouraged students to question the use of

violence as conflict management tool and analyzed problems critically. When

students understand conflict resolution techniques, they cultivated valuable life

skills, learn nonviolent methods of dealing with conflict and developed an

experiential appreciation of the need for rules. While learning how to identify

sources of conflict and discussing them in a systematic manner, students realized

their own power to resolve conflict. Students learned to take ownership of their

conflicts, to take an active role in their resolution, and to develop empathy for the other person's position. In the process, students learned to accept responsibility for their behavior. The mediation process allows each student to understand how his or her own behavior led to conflict and to identify changes in behavior that will make things right. Those skills allowed students to become proactive problem solvers and responsible citizens (Schmitz, 1994; Tolson, McDonald & Moriaty, 1992).

Grand Tour Question

Many schools today have various types of in-school suspension programs whereby large number at-risk students often spend time in those programs. However, studies have often shown that such programs do little to change the negative attitudes and behaviors that resulted in the student's placement there. Seemingly, many programs expectations can cause the negative behavior to worsen. Recent noted evidence has suggested that suspensions are correlated with a number of negative educational outcomes. Too often students who are repeatedly suspended from school can suffer academically, and are more likely to be retained or drop out of school (DeRidder, 1990). Establishing a peer mediation program is a flexible approach that can be adapted into the school settings in several ways. Conflict resolution curricula can be developed into a peer mediation program or incorporated as part of an overall violence prevention and safe-school strategy (Crawford & Bodine, 1996).

Some of the strategies implemented at Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary School in the development of a peer mediation program in the 2002/2003 school year have made a tremendous positive impact on the overall quality of school climate. Peer mediation can provide a meaningful alternative to suspensions, by resolving problems and by educating students who choose fighting as a conflict resolution to learn alternative ways to resolve their conflicts.

<u>Training and Implementation</u>

Peer mediation is a flexible approach that can be adapted into school settings in several ways. A systematic approach in the establishment of a peer mediation program at Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary school followed the approach of developing the process curriculum. This approach was characterized by devoting specific time to teaching conflict resolution principles; training, and lessons to potential peer mediators. Potential peer mediators spend time discussing techniques on conflict resolution with the guidance counselor or facilitator. The goals, and belief of the mission is characterized during this opening session and students received training in conflict resolution to serve as third-party mediators. Peer mediation programs are geared to handle disputes that would otherwise be dealt with through the school's disciplinary system.

The conflict resolution program at Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary School was designed and implemented during the year of 2002-2003 school year to create an

environment where the learning of all students can take place, free from disruptions

and distractions, and to teach students the awareness of how to handle and resolve

conflicts. The research began with the guidance counselor selecting the first group of

peer mediators during the beginning of the school year. Expectations, role playing

and viewing conflict resolution videotapes helped to ensured that the students

received adequate training. In addition, peer mediators were asked to give written

responses for self evaluation analysis (See Appendix D).

The ground rules for all participants are discussed prior to the mediation

session. Peer mediators welcome everyone to the session and then explain the rules

of the program.

Collection of Discipline Data

The research figures for the mediation and discipline statistics were collected

from September 2002 through February 2003 (See Table 2). The study show that the

number of cases referred to mediation doubled each month from September to

December along with the number of mediations conducted due to the awareness of

the program and students exercising their rights to peer mediation. The number of

detentions increased in the month of December and leveled off and declined in the

months of January and February 2003 (See Table 2). The numbers of violent

incidents in which the student can be suspended out-of-school are identified in (Table 3).

Data from Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary School from the previous years on the number of violent offenses were unavailable, however according to the principal and the guidance counselor the number of suspensions thus far during the school year of 2002-2003 have been at an unprecedented lower rate than in the past.

Table 1

- Welcome to the Peer Mediation Conflict Resolution Program.

- You are here to try to solve your disputes and problems.

- Would you like to solve your problem through mediation?

- One disputant can speak at a time without being interrupted.

- Each disputant explains their situation to the peer mediators.

- Peer mediators engage in verbal dialogue about the dispute.

- Mediation sessions end with both disputant being ask if agreement is reached.

- The facilitator assigns the follow-up session if necessary, and dispense with appropriate correction of discipline.

Table 2   School Mediation /Discipline Statistics 2002-2003

	Month					
	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.
Mediation Program Statistics						
1. Cases referred to mediation	0	2	4	8	8	7
2. Cases settled prior to mediation	0	0	0	0	0	1
3. Number of mediations conducted	0	2	4	8	8	8
4. Number of cases of follow-up	0	1	1	2	3	2
Discipline Program Statistics						
1. Total Number of Suspensions	0	1	2	4	2	0
2. Total Number of Detentions	2	3	4	8	3	4
3. Total Number of Violent Incidence	0	1	3	4	4	3

Table 3   Violent Incidents That Constitute Out-of –School-Suspensions

Destruction or defacing of property

Extortion/ Shakedown

Stealing/Theft

Student misconduct/Multiple Referrals

Threatening/Attacking school personnel/students

Possession of dangerous object

Fighting/gang related

Sexual Assault

Trespassing

Starting/Causing fires

False Alarm/Bomb Scare

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications and Further Study

Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to show how peer mediation developed at

Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary School by the guidance counselor, principal, and

staff met the needs for the whole school particularly among students in grades

three, four, five, and six. The underlying factor implemented during the conflict

resolution program was student participation. The study focused on the

development of peer mediating among students during the first six months of the

2002-2003 school year. Peer mediation was responsible for the lower school

suspension rate by providing a meaningful alternative to children prone to

fighting alternative ways of handling their conflicts and disputes. The study was

brief lasting only six months in length, statistics from the Mediation Program

Statistics concluded that the program changed the negative behavior of the

students.

Many interpretations can be made from the implementation of the conflict

resolution program and the intern involved in the study noticed the difference in

the effectiveness of the peer mediators' ability to successfully counsel their

peers. This quality was fostered by the confidentially of the program to help

students solve their problems peacefully. The organization of the school has changed dramatically since peer mediation initiation. First, the student now had an alternative to seek help other than relying on the standardized form of punishment handed down from school personnel. Secondly, the study proved implementing a conflict resolution program significantly reduced conflicts among the student population. For example, at Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary School the commonly referred problems such as pushing, name calling, rumors, and hurt feelings all declined and resulted in cooperative solution and signed agreements with all of the disputants.

In addition the study showed that time-off for teachers to deal with student conflict decreased as a result of peer mediation. The intern management skills increased throughout the six months of the research. The first three months of the research reflected the need for accurate record keeping and accountability to be held in confidence by the intern working closely with the guidance counselor.

Implications

To be effective, schools must feel safe. Peer mediation at Wiggins Elementary School during its first six months of operation positively contributed to the way in which the student managed and resolved conflict. Through its beginning with the collaboration of administration and staff the program reached its goal of reducing violent confrontations, disputes, and fights among many students who would otherwise resorted to using these forms of abuse. The effectiveness of the program rested on presenting discipline issues to the student and minimizing the use of the administration intervention. More student conflicts resulted in more win/win and fewer win/lose outcome over the time period of the first six months of peer mediation.

Overall, the program dramatically presented alternative ways for the student to take the opportunity to discuss his or her conflict among their peers. The data indicated that most of the mediation and cases served increased during the month of December probably because of the program being promoted more by the guidance counselor and the school principal. The entire process of a mediation session varied in length of time, depending on the severity of the case being mediated. In some mediation cases the final dispensed of punishment would come from the guidance counselor. However, the study showed that most of the

cases at Ulysses S. Wiggins Elementary School were effectively negotiated by peer mediators.

Further Study and Recommendations for Further Research

As peer mediation programs continue to spread in the United States schools, further research might seek to determine characteristics of successful peer mediators. Comparison of the peer mediation program data will have to include the characteristics of the entire student body such as gender, grade, and personality characteristics for a more accurate association of descriptive traits. Training and development of how to use the peer mediation and behavior referral forms in most cases will have to be professionally implemented at workshops and studies among the teaching staff.

In addition, assembly programs throughout the year on the process of conflict resolution will have to be implemented in order to show students how to use the process.

Peer mediation can facilitate cooperative problem-solving in the face of conflict if the program is implemented during the beginning of the school year among everyone including the parents. Safe schools across the nation are becoming a priority by legislature. As this study proved better learning environments could

be made by students in creating their own safe environments through the use of

peer mediating and conflict resolution training at their school.

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Appendix A

School Mediation Program Data Input Record

SCHOOL MEDIATION PROGRAM DATA INPUT RECORD

SCHOOL: _____   YEAR: _____

I. Mediation Program Statistics

	SEP.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.	IST QTR.	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	2ND QTR.	APR.	MAY	JUN.	3RD QTR.	YEAR TOTALS
1. Number of cases referred to mediation:														
2. Number of cases settled prior to mediation:														
3. Number of mediations conducted:														
4. Number of signed agreements reached:														
5. Number of mediations with no signed agreement:														
6. Number of cases requiring a follow-up session:														

II. Discipline Statistics

	SEP.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.	IST QTR.	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	2ND QTR.	APR.	MAY	JUN.	3RD QTR.	YEAR TOTALS
7. Total Number of Suspensions:														
8. Total Number of Detentions:														
9. Total Number of Violent Incidents:														
10. Total Number of Absences:														
11. Total Number of Drop Outs:														

This form has been provided by Peer Mediation Programs Inc. for evaluation purposes.

Appendix B

Student Behavior Referral Form

STUDENT BEHAVIOR REFERRAL

ULYSSES S. WIGGINS SCHOOL
400 Mt. Vernon St.   Camden, NJ 08103
(609) 966-5120

STUDENT'S NAME	GRADE
TEACHER	ROOM
DATE	SECTION

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Teacher submits both copies to office as soon as possible or with pupil. 2. All appropriate information should be included.
3. Following administrative action, a copy of completed form will be returned.

TEACHER REPORT

Date of Offense _____ Time of Offense _____ Location of Offense _____

Description of Offense _____

_____

_____

Previous Incidents Involving Student _____

_____

_____

Corrective Efforts _____

_____

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Administrator _____ Date _____ Time _____

Action _____

_____

PARENT'S COPY-PART 1

Appendix C

Peer Mediation Intervention Referral Form

Ulysses S. Wiggins School

☐ **PEER MEDIATOR**

☐ **Intervention Referral Form**

September 2002 – June 2003

Name_____

Date:_____

Grade:_____

Staff Referring:_____

Time of Offense:_____

Reason(s) For Referral: Check Appropriately:

Fighting	Verbal Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Mischief
☐	☐	☐	☐

Disobedience/Disrespectful		Name Calling	Destroying Property
☐		☐	☐

Disruptive Behavior		Throwing Items	Excessive Talking
☐		☐	☐

Using/Under the Influence of a
Controlled Dangerous Substance   Bullying   Weapon/s

☐   ☐   ☐

Comments:/Other_____

_____
_____
_____
_____

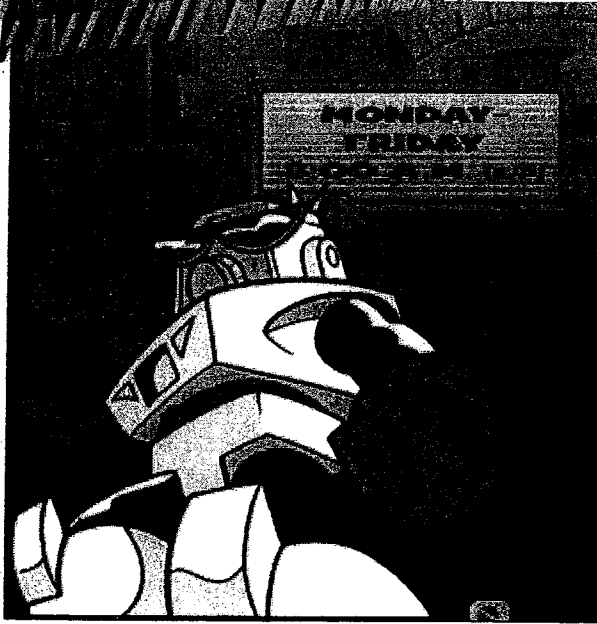Appendix D

Peer Mediators Support Letters

How Peer Mediation Helps Me

Peer mediation helps me by giving me something positive to do with my spare time. Peer mediation also keeps me from getting into trouble with other kids. It has also helped me learn how to solve disagreements without being mean and spiteful. Peer mediation has helped me by solving my problems when I get into trouble. And peer mediation has showed me how to tell the truth from a lie and that lying causes more problems, so it's best to be honest. It's also taught me not to show favoritism when we're in a session. Most importantly, it has taught me how to be a good listener.

By; Daniel Hopkins

For Mr. Roebuck

HOW HAS PEER MEDIATION HELPED ME

Peer mediation has helped by allowing me to prevent conflict and solve them whenever they come up. Also being able to tell a lie from the truth. I can help younger students solve their problems. It has kept me out of situations. Also I learned that if I ever get into a situation I know to stay cool so they don't suspect a lie. I can solve my own problems.

Edward Ortiz   Elijah Austin   By Datrie Hopkin

Biographical Data

Name   Darin B. McDonald

High School   Woodrow Wilson Senior High
                              Camden, NJ

Undergraduate   Bachelor of Arts
                              Art Education
                              Rowan University
                              Glassboro, NJ

Present Occupation   Art Teacher
                              Yorkship Elementary School
                              Fairview, NJ