

California State Auditor

B U R E A U O F S T A T E A U D I T S

School Safety:

*Comprehensive Resolution Programs
Help Prepare Schools for Conflicts*



August 1999
99107

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99107

The Governor of California
President pro Tempore of the Senate
Speaker of the Assembly
State Capitol
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Governor and Legislative Leaders:

As requested by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, the Bureau of State Audits presents its audit report concerning conflict resolution programs and related best practices that California public schools have in place to prepare themselves for conflict between students, students and the school, and parents and the school.

This report concludes that more than 75 percent of schools have a conflict resolution program, however; few have programs where the entire school community—principals, vice principals, teachers, students, other staff, and parents—learns and adopts conflict resolution techniques. Principals of schools with comprehensive programs that train most of the school community feel their schools are better prepared to handle conflicts than those with limited programs which train few. Therefore, schools would benefit by enhancing existing programs or implementing programs where most of the school community is exposed to conflict resolution. While schools use varying resources to support programs aimed at reducing school violence, many schools rely on district general funds. Furthermore, recent legislation provides \$100 million for school safety programs; however, schools must still decide whether they will devote any of the money to conflict resolution programs.

Respectfully submitted,

KURT R. SJOBERG
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SUMMARY

RESULTS IN BRIEF

More than 75 percent of California’s schools for grades kindergarten through 12 train students to resolve conflicts among themselves. However, few schools have an “extensive,” or comprehensive, program that educates the entire school community—teachers, students, parents, principals, and clerical and support staff—about strategies for defusing potentially violent disagreements. At schools that do use extensive programs for conflict resolution and that devote necessary funds and staff resources to the programs, principals report feeling that their schools are relatively prepared to handle disputes among students, between students and the schools, and between parents and the schools. In addition, some schools have data indicating that conflict resolution programs have reduced fighting and suspensions on the campuses, and anecdotal evidence suggests that such campuses are quieter and more peaceful than they were before the programs began.

Interviews of faculty and other staff at 14 California schools helped us identify the key elements and best practices of conflict resolution programs. We learned that effective programs incorporate three essential approaches that together involve everyone in the school community: the training of students to act as peer mediators for other students who have disputes; the incorporation of conflict resolution principles into students’ regular academic curriculums; and the education of all members of the school community, including parents, about methods for alleviating conflicts. Further, the most comprehensive, thorough programs use peer mediators who adequately represent their schools’ populations, perform mediations as soon as possible, and receive prompt evaluations from adults about the mediation sessions. These programs also tailor conflict resolution education to the needs of the particular schools’ students and teach strategies in core classes such as English and History. Finally, these programs strive to train as many people as possible.

Currently, schools have varying resources for implementing such programs, but many schools use their general funds to pay for programs aimed at reducing school violence. Despite many demands on their limited funding, some schools have made

Audit Highlights . . .

Many of California’s public schools use conflict resolution programs to help defuse tensions and train students to resolve conflicts peacefully. Our review found:

- While most schools have conflict resolution programs, few have comprehensive programs that educate the entire school community.*
 - Effective programs combine three approaches: peer mediation, education, and school community.*
 - Principals at schools with comprehensive programs report that their schools are prepared to handle many types of conflicts.*
 - Many schools use district general funds to pay for their conflict resolution programs.*
 - Although recent legislation provides \$100 million for school safety programs, it is unclear how many districts will use the funds for conflict resolution programs.*
-

conflict resolution programs a high priority and are committed to supplying necessary money and staff resources to run their campuses' programs. Recent legislation provides about \$100 million for school safety programs in districts with grades 8 through 12 enrollments, but these districts must decide how exactly they will use the funds and whether they will devote any or all the money to conflict resolution programs. ■

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The shooting in Littleton, Colorado, and the violent assault on a principal in Los Angeles and a teacher in Richmond, California, have once again underscored the need for conflict resolution and violence prevention in schools. Although extreme acts of school violence are rare, verbal and physical aggression occur regularly in schools.

Sources of Conflict

During our visits to California public schools, teachers and principals reported the following signs of typical conflicts among students:

- Dirty looks, stares
- Teasing, swearing, or name-calling
- Verbal threats
- Bullying
- Pushing, hitting, grabbing
- Physical fights
- Things damaged or stolen
- Ethnic conflict
- Sexual harassment

In fall 1998, 5.8 million California students attended classes for grades kindergarten through 12 (K-12) in more than 8,300 public schools. These students constitute a diverse school population, and many conflicts arise because youth from differing backgrounds must interact each day. Discord can stem from differences in gender, sexual orientation, economic class, appearance, origin, ethnicity, or race. Conflicts occur not only among students, but disputes also arise between students and staff and between parents and staff. The vast majority of these conflicts may not result in physical injury; nevertheless, they can undermine the school community's sense of safety. David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson, University of Minnesota researchers on conflict resolution issues, summarized the potential impact of school discord: "In the community,

violence has been known to occur as a result of a look, comment, or random event. As long as a look is interpreted as disrespect and disrespect is considered a serious enough issue to kill over, then concern about students' safety in school seems justified."¹

With the help of community groups, many schools have created programs to resolve conflicts between groups and individuals. These programs can help defuse tensions that may lead to

¹ David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson, "Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation: Programs in Elementary and Secondary Schools: A Review of the Research." Review of Educational Research, Winter 1996.

violence and detract from the students' education. When schools help students resolve minor conflicts peacefully, the schools may also be preventing violence.

Schools Employ Various Methods to Handle Conflicts and Violence

Various programs have evolved to provide frameworks for addressing conflicts and helping to manage school violence. In an effort to reduce extreme conflict, many schools hire police officers to patrol their campuses. Other schools use physical security elements, such as fences and metal detectors; safety-oriented policies, such as mandatory discipline for violent acts; and dress codes to reduce gang-oriented clothing.

State and federal grants and programs often provide funding for these violence-reduction programs. For instance, the Federal Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities grant provides money for a wide range of safety efforts, from additional campus police officers to health education. Some grants and programs allow schools to choose whether they want security equipment or student services aimed at reducing drug use or violence. For example, the After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program provides tutoring and recreation activities to students. Schools also use safety grant funds for conflict resolution programs, which are designed to make schools safe and to improve the school climate by teaching effective communication skills and problem-solving processes.

Conflict Resolution Programs Combine the Peer Mediation, Education, and School Community Approaches

Although conflict resolution programs may vary greatly from school to school, they often employ one or more of these common approaches to reducing violent conflicts: peer mediation, education of students, and training of the entire school community. Engaging trained students who act as neutral facilitators, peer mediation is valuable because it offers a proven, effective method for schools to handle conflicts between students. In most peer mediation programs for middle and high schools, two trained student mediators listen to the concerns of disputing students and help them determine how to resolve the conflict. The programs do not direct students to intervene in conflicts involving drugs, weapons, abuse, or other illegal activities. In most elementary schools, peer mediators monitor playground activities and help other students resolve disagreements.

Students see peer mediation as a way to talk out problems without adults judging their behavior, thoughts, or feelings. Further, when students solve their own problems, they are more likely to be committed to the solutions. Because the mediators keep these sessions confidential, other students know that the issues will not become public knowledge.

Targeting students, the education approach teaches conflict resolution principles and problem-solving processes through simulations, role plays, group discussions, and cooperative learning. Some schools add diversity curriculum and character education as a supplement to or substitute for conflict resolution education. In most middle and high schools, teachers use the education approach in daily lessons during a semester, or as a series of workshops, sometimes conducted during the homeroom advisory period. In most elementary schools, teachers present conflict resolution methods in addition to daily lessons, although existing lessons can integrate the subject.

When a school chooses the school community approach, it attempts to involve in conflict resolution everyone associated with that school. School community programs promote peacemaking as standard behavior for everyone and also encourage the community to value diversity. Participants in school community programs apply conflict resolution skills to interpersonal and intergroup problems and issues that confront students, faculty, administrators, and parents. The school community approach ensures that conflict resolution lessons receive reinforcement at home and throughout the community.

Schools apply these approaches in diverse ways. For instance, some programs have a narrow scope and teach a few students mediation skills. In contrast, other programs are more comprehensive and combine multiple approaches, which can result in every member of the school community learning conflict resolution principles. Some programs begin as “grass roots” efforts, with one teacher bringing the concept to the school and developing a program. Other programs are broader, multiple-school models and receive planning and financial support from their school districts.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The Joint Legislative Audit Committee asked us to determine whether California public schools are appropriately prepared to handle and resolve potential conflicts. Specifically, we were to assess how school districts handle and resolve conflicts between parents and school officials. We expanded our review to include conflicts involving students because such conflicts are more common and are often the underlying causes for conflicts between parents and school officials. To determine the characteristics of the conflict resolution programs, we identified successful conflict resolution programs used in California schools and interviewed teachers, principals, and others at schools that use these programs. To determine the prevalence of these programs around the State and schools' preparedness for conflict, we also surveyed a sample of California schools.

To pinpoint successful conflict resolution programs, we researched publications on conflict resolution and focused on studies that evaluated the success of conflict resolution programs. We also identified organizations that offer conflict resolution training to schools and other community organizations and asked them to inform us about how their training affects the school environment. Interviewing California Department of Education staff helped us learn about conflict resolution resources available statewide and about funding sources for conflict resolution programs. Further, we examined relevant laws, rules, and regulations to understand the State's requirements for reporting on school safety and conflict resolution.

To determine how schools run the programs and to find out school communities' perceptions of these programs, we interviewed principals, teachers, and students at 14 public schools around the State. In our discussions with school principals, we talked about the need for the programs and their effect on student discipline and behavior. Additionally, we attempted to obtain from school district personnel some information on the programs' costs. We interviewed the individuals responsible for the day-to-day oversight of the programs to learn how they started the programs, the level of support they receive from the administration, and the difficulties they encounter. We interviewed teachers to assess the amount of time and effort they put into the programs as well as the successes and problems they

experience. We asked students for their opinion on the nature of conflicts at their schools and the students' acceptance of the programs.

To evaluate the prevalence of conflict resolution programs, we randomly selected 202 of California's more than 8,300 schools for grades K-12 and then sent surveys to the schools in this sample. We received 173 responses, which allowed us to project the sample results to the total California school population with a 7 percent margin of error. On the survey, we asked school principals to indicate whether their schools had conflict resolution programs and to identify their programs' key components. We also requested that principals indicate how many of their students and staff receive training in conflict resolution and to cite sources of program funding. Finally, the survey asked the principals to conclude how prepared their schools are to handle conflict among students, between students and school officials, and between parents and school officials. We used the principals' responses to determine how many schools had comprehensive programs for addressing conflicts. We then analyzed the data to discover whether any relationships exist between a particular type of program, the recipients of its training, and a school's overall preparedness to handle conflict. ■

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CHAPTER 1

California Schools Should Train All Members of Their School Communities in Conflict Resolution Strategies

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Currently, most California schools have “limited” programs in which some school community members learn the principles of conflict resolution; however, few schools have “extensive” programs in which the entire school communities—teachers, students, parents, principals, clerical and support staff—receive education about ways to defuse conflict. According to the survey we conducted, school principals feel their schools are capable of handling most conflicts when a majority of their school community members have participated in training for resolving disagreements. After making participants aware that conflict happens frequently, conflict resolution programs give individuals new skills for dealing with conflict in nonviolent ways. For these reasons, schools should implement extensive programs that teach such skills and concepts.

Approaches Taken by Conflict Resolution Programs

- Peer Mediation—trains a group of students to conduct peer mediations.
- Education—teaches students conflict resolution principles in separate courses or integrates the concepts into the curriculum.
- School Community—trains parents, teachers, students, and other staff in the principles of conflict resolution to create a peaceable school.

Limited Programs—use one or two approaches, most frequently peer mediation.

Extensive Programs—combine all three approaches and train most of the school community in conflict resolution principles.

MOST SCHOOLS HAVE SOME TYPE OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAM, BUT MORE NEED EXTENSIVE PROGRAMS THAT TRAIN MOST MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

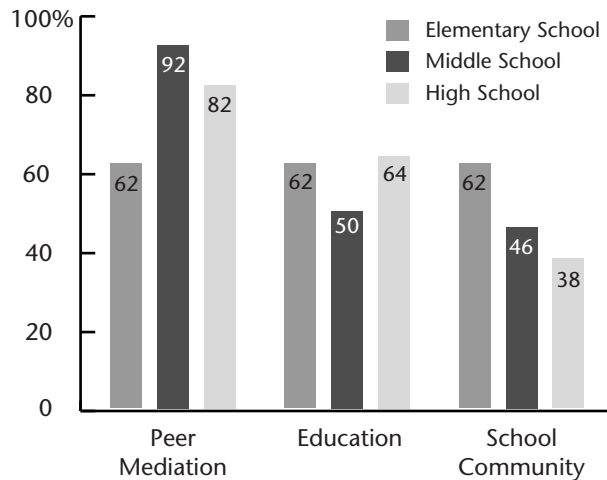
To determine the prevalence of conflict resolution programs in the State, we surveyed a representative sample of 202 public schools. Of the 173 schools responding to our survey, 135 (78 percent) indicated they have conflict resolution programs. However, only 34 (25 percent) of these 135 schools have extensive programs that combine the peer mediation, education, and school community approaches described in this report’s introduction. In general, the percentage of schools with conflict resolution programs varies little among the elementary, middle, and high school

levels; specifically, 73 percent of elementary schools have programs, while 84 percent of middle schools and 85 percent of high schools have these programs. The percentage of schools that each have an extensive program was highest (31 percent) at the middle school level. Just 27 percent of elementary schools have extensive programs, and only 18 percent of high schools have such programs.

We found that most schools with conflict resolution programs use peer mediation as one of their approaches. As Figure 1 shows, principals at 62 percent of elementary schools, 92 percent of middle schools, and 82 percent of high schools indicated that their schools employ peer mediation. Most of these schools use peer mediation in addition to other approaches; however, 19 percent use only peer mediation. Many experts believe that schools should not implement peer mediation as the sole approach to resolving disputes; instead, peer mediation should serve as an integral part of a more extensive program.

FIGURE 1

Percent of Schools Using the Peer Mediation, Education, or School Community Approach to Conflict Resolution



Source: Survey responses from 131 schools with conflict resolution programs.

Note: On our survey, principals could mark all the approaches that apply to their school communities; therefore, percentages for each school type total more than 100 percent.

The education approach is the second most common approach in school programs. Sixty-four percent of high schools reported using this approach. Fewer schools reported using the school

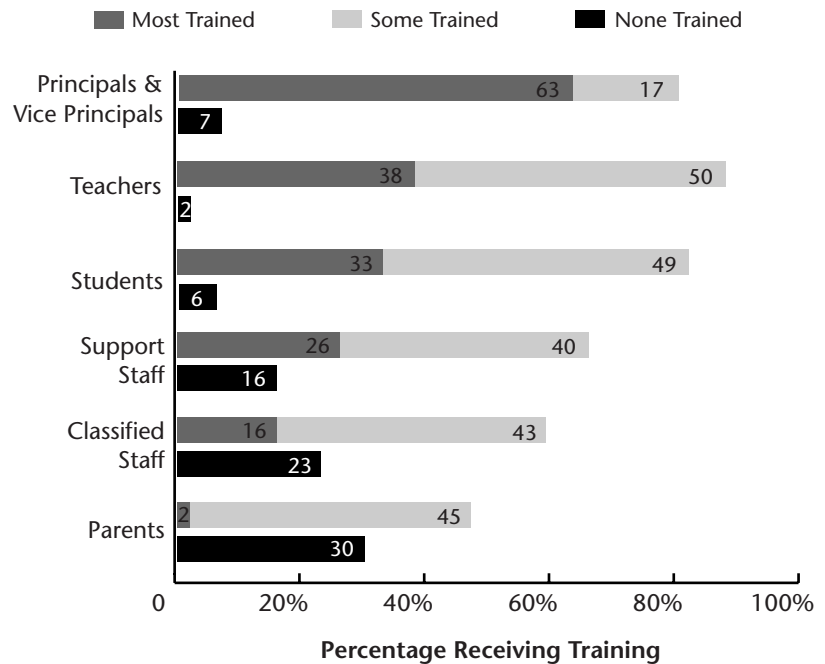
community approach, and the surveys indicated that elementary schools take this approach more often than middle and high schools.

Most Schools Train Some Members of the School Community, but Training Parents Poses the Greatest Challenge

On our survey, we asked schools how many principals, teachers, students, parents, and support and classified staff receive conflict resolution training. We found that in general, the extent to which the school community participates in conflict resolution education varies. As Figure 2 indicates, most schools train at least some of their students and staff; however, few educate all students and staff, and involving parents poses the greatest challenge for most schools.

FIGURE 2

Most School Communities Receive Some Training in Conflict Resolution



Note: Percentages do not total 100 percent because some schools in our sample of 173 did not respond to each question.

Principals, vice principals, teachers, and students are most likely to learn conflict resolution methods. Support and classified staff, such as bus drivers and custodians, are less likely to undergo training, and a high percentage of schools reported teaching none of these staff about resolving disputes. Parents were least likely to learn conflict resolution principles; specifically, only 2 percent of the surveyed schools reported that they had educated most parents, 45 percent indicated that some parents had attended courses, and 30 percent indicated no parents experienced education in conflict management. The number of individuals who receive training is important because school communities feel better prepared to handle conflicts when most rather than just a few members receive some type of training.

Parents were least likely to learn conflict resolution principles; only 2 percent of surveyed schools report they educated most parents.

Similarly, at the 14 schools we visited, we asked principals and program coordinators to identify members of their respective school communities who had participated in courses on conflict resolution. Again, we found that the numbers and groups of individuals receiving training varied. For example, Palisades Charter High School in the Los Angeles Unified School District trained the program coordinator and a core group of students to conduct mediations as part of its peer mediation program. Another school in the same district—Figueroa Street Elementary School—trained all teachers and students and exposed all principals and other staff to conflict resolution principles. In this school community, parents are also introduced to the program at the beginning of the school year and invited to participate as members of a special help team. The school plans to increase parent awareness by implementing a procedure in which the school sends parents a brochure describing the school’s program, and parents must sign and return the brochure indicating that they received the information.

Integrating All Three Approaches Allows Conflict Resolution Programs to Educate Most Members of the School Community

Conflict resolution training helps participants recognize that while conflict happens all the time, people can learn new skills to deal with conflict in nonviolent ways. The programs that appear to be most effective are comprehensive and involve problem-solving processes and principles of conflict resolution, the basics of effective communication and listening, critical and creative thinking, and an emphasis on personal responsibility

The most effective programs include:

- *Problem-solving processes*
 - *Basics of communication and listening*
 - *Critical and creative thinking*
 - *Personal responsibility and self-discipline*
-

and self-discipline.² Therefore, the entire school community—teachers, students, principals, classified and support staff, and parents—can all benefit from such training.

Our survey found that although limited programs result in some individuals receiving training in these areas, extensive programs that combine all three conflict resolution approaches are most likely to result in the entire school community receiving comprehensive training. After all, two of the three approaches, peer mediation and education, focus on training students, and the school community’s approach centers on training for everyone involved. In general, all three approaches include training for at least some students in the school community.

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS FEEL PREPARED TO HANDLE CONFLICT WHEN MOST MEMBERS OF THEIR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES RECEIVE TRAINING

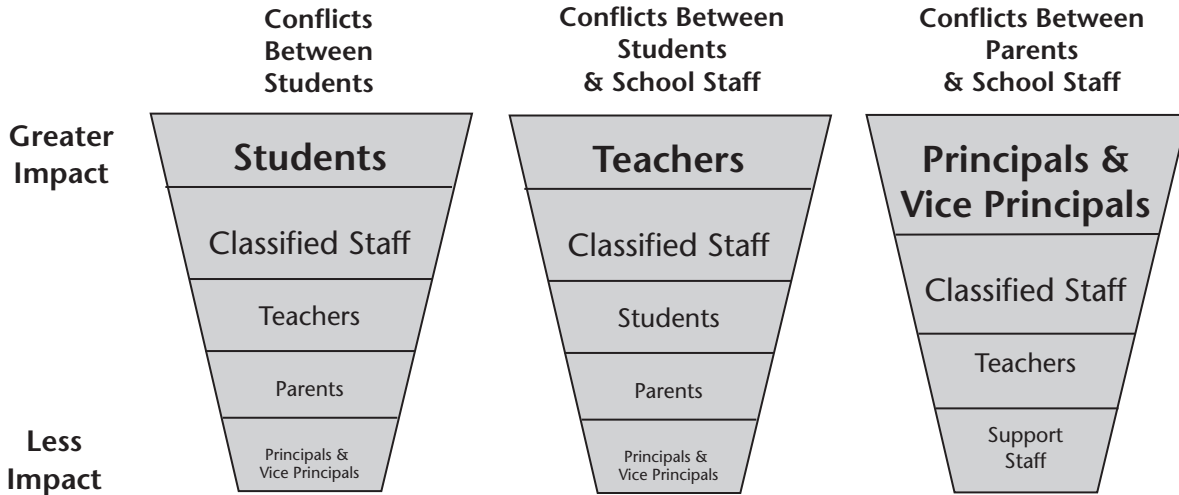
Our survey asked school principals how prepared they feel to handle conflicts among students, disputes between students and their schools, and disagreements between parents and the schools. We found that when most members of school communities learn conflict resolution techniques, principals feel more prepared to handle conflicts than if only a few members attend training courses. Therefore, schools should strive to train as many school community members as possible.

Our survey results also revealed that training particular groups of individuals within school communities has a strong and positive effect on the principals’ sense of preparedness for different types of conflicts. Figure 3 displays, in order of descending impact, which groups are the most important audiences for training courses if schools are to prepare for certain types of conflict.

² Creating Safe and Drug-Free Schools: An Action Guide, 1996. Partnership between Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, and Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education.

FIGURE 3

Groups Whose Training Most Affects Principals’ Sense of Readiness for Conflicts and Resolution



As the figure shows, getting students to learn and adopt the basic strategies for conflict resolution has the greatest impact on principals’ feelings of readiness to handle conflicts among students. On the other hand, to increase a sense of preparedness for conflicts that arise between students and school staff, training that focuses on teachers is the best choice. Finally, for school principals to feel prepared to handle disagreements between parents and the school, principals and vice principals need to learn and use conflict resolution techniques.

Not only did our surveys indicate that all groups within school communities need to learn conflict resolution methods, but our visits to 14 schools also led us to the same conclusions. The responses we received from the 14 school principals and program coordinators paralleled responses for our survey; principals and coordinators at schools where most of the school community receives training believe their schools are better prepared to handle conflicts than are schools that train only some community members. For example, at North High School in the Torrance Unified School District, all of the school community, including bus drivers and campus security, participates in conflict resolution training. At this campus, we observed a peaceful school, and administrators said they feel equipped to handle most conflicts. In addition, students told us that campus fights have declined since the school implemented its conflict resolution program. Furthermore, one student told us that

North High School is very calm compared to the school she had transferred from, and she attributed the difference partly to the success of the conflict resolution program.

SOME EVIDENCE INDICATES THAT CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAMS HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

According to safety and school violence research groups and also school officials, few schools formally evaluate the success of their conflict resolution programs. Instead, schools gauge program success by anecdotal and personal observations and describe such success as a change from a discordant to a relatively peaceful climate. Many of the administrators at schools we visited believe that conflict resolution programs have positive impacts on their school communities, and some had data based on reductions in suspensions and on written evaluations by participants.

North High School, which has a program that began in 1996, reported data indicating a decrease in the number of fights, an increase in the number of mediations that students conduct to prevent fights or fight reoccurrences. Specifically, from school years 1996-97 to 1997-98, the number of fights decreased by 69 percent, from 130 to 40, and mediations increased by 83 percent.

At one school, suspensions due to fighting decreased by 50 percent—attributable in part to their conflict resolution program.

In addition to the schools we visited, two schools we surveyed attributed a decrease in suspensions and expulsions to their conflict resolution program, and these schools provided us with data. Located in the Lompoc Unified School District, Vandenberg Middle School, which implemented conflict resolution in school year 1994-95, provided data showing that its number of suspensions dropped by 40 percent over three years, from 327 in school year 1994-95 to 197 in school year 1997-98. At Vandenberg, administrators suspend students primarily for fighting and defiance. The biggest decrease in suspensions occurred in the category of fighting, which declined by 50 percent. The school attributed this reduction partly to its Conflict Managers Resolution Program. Also, the school noted that as a result of the program, students are able to create a safe, comfortable learning environment on campus. Similarly, Palm Desert High School in the Desert Sands Unified School District, experienced a 62 percent decrease in violence-based suspensions since school year 1995-96. In school year 1995-96, the school had 156 suspensions, but in school year 1997-98 it had only 59.

RESEARCH SHOWS CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAMS HAVE A BENEFICIAL EFFECT ON SCHOOL CAMPUSES

Research has shown that conflict resolution programs improve school environments. In one study, researchers found the following: “Conflict resolution and peer mediation programs do seem to be effective in teaching students integrative negotiation and mediation procedures. After training, students tend to use these conflict strategies, and constructive outcomes tend to result. Students’ success in resolving conflicts constructively tends to reduce the number of student-student conflicts referred to teachers and administrators, which, in turn, tends to reduce suspensions.”³ Other research also supports the claim that these programs have positive impacts on schools that use them.

Another researcher found that “peer mediation programs had a significant and sustained impact on teacher and staff perceptions of school climate for both cadre and whole-school programs and in all education levels.”⁴ In addition, studies indicate that potentially the most effective programs go beyond a concentration on individual children and attempt to change the climate or culture of the entire school in meaningful ways.⁵

CONCLUSION

Our survey of 202 California school principals found that most schools have conflict resolution programs, but few have extensive programs that train all of the school communities members. Principals of schools where most community members receive training report feeling better prepared to deal with conflict and some schools have limited data suggesting that conflict resolution programs reduce fights, suspensions, and expulsions. For these reasons, schools with limited or no programs should expand or establish programs that incorporate all three conflict resolution approaches and that train all members of the school community to help resolve disputes. ■

³ David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson, “Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation: Programs in Elementary and Secondary Schools: A Review of the Research,” *Review of Educational Research*, Winter 1996, Volume 66, Number 4, Page 498.

⁴ Jones, Tricia S. PhD, “Comprehensive Peer Mediation Evaluation Project: Preliminary Final Report,” October 27, 1997.

⁵ Flannery, Daniel J., “School Violence Risk, Preventive Intervention and Policy. Recommendations and Implications for Policy.” *Urban Diversity Series*, Number 109. ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education. December 1997, Page 60.

CHAPTER 2

What Makes a Good Conflict Resolution Program?

CHAPTER SUMMARY

After interviewing personnel at 14 schools, as well as consultants who develop conflict resolution programs, and after studying publications on conflict resolution education, we pinpointed practices that make conflict resolution programs successful. The most effective conflict resolution programs engage peer mediators from a cross section of the school population, arrange timely mediations, and give prompt evaluations to the peer mediators. Good programs tailor education about conflict resolution to the needs of students and use core classes, such as English or History, to teach strategies for resolving disputes. Another factor that contributes to program success is training involving as many people in the school communities as possible. In addition, exceptional conflict resolution programs develop from well-planned implementation strategies that demonstrate a commitment of time and resources from school and district administrators.

As discussed in the Introduction of this report, we classified conflict resolution programs into three broad approaches—peer mediation, education, and school community—and further identified specific examples of best practices within each of the three approaches.

Best Practices for Conflict Resolution Programs

Peer Mediation

- Diverse groups of mediators
- Timely mediations
- Evaluations of mediators
- Strong awareness of mediation
- Link to disciplinary process

Education

- Customized curriculum
- Outreach to all students

School Community

- Training for all members
- Partnerships with the local community

PEER MEDIATION EMPOWERS STUDENTS TO RESOLVE THEIR OWN CONFLICTS

In grades K-12, peer mediation is the most widely used conflict resolution method. More than 75 percent of the schools we visited and surveyed reported having some form of peer mediation. Typically, selected students receive training as mediators to help fellow students resolve common disputes. Using our observations, we developed the following list of best practices for peer mediation programs: the use of diverse groups

of mediators, the conducting of timely mediations, prompt evaluations of the mediations by trained adults, active promotion within the schools of the mediation services, and links between peer mediation and the schools' disciplinary processes.

Most schools we visited adopted three or more of these five practices to make their peer mediation programs work; most had diverse groups of mediators, timely mediations, prompt evaluations, and some sort of awareness campaign. No schools formally link peer mediation with the school disciplinary process. Nonetheless, we feel that implementation of all five practices would increase the overall effectiveness of each school's program.

One of the first priorities of an effective peer mediation program should be to recruit and train a diverse group of student mediators, and most of the schools visited attempt to recruit a cross section of their population. Diversity does not just mean different gender, racial, or ethnic groups. Mediators should also have different interests, participate in different sports or clubs, and represent a range of academic achievement. When mediators reflect the diversity of the student population, the disputants may feel more comfortable and more inclined to participate. Additionally, when working among their peer groups, student mediators can act as informal publicists for the program, telling their peers about the positive benefits of mediation. If more groups of students learn the benefits of peer mediation, the credibility of the program increases.

Once its diverse group of peer mediators participates in training, the school should develop a process for timely mediations. Prompt mediations prevent conflicts from escalating, and the more quickly a conflict is resolved, the more quickly the disputants can focus on academic matters. In fact, the principal at Pomolita Middle School in Ukiah believes that to be effective, mediations should occur no more than 15 to 20 minutes after the conflict arises. Schools try to expedite mediations using different methods. For example, Nokomis Elementary, also in Ukiah, has a drop box for peer mediation referral slips, which is checked regularly. The principal then schedules the mediations to occur during the physical education classes of the students involved in the dispute. This process allows teachers, staff, school volunteers, and students to request timely mediation for every student. A secondary school in Torrance follows a similar policy. Because its program coordinator is a teacher and needs to remain in the classroom, potential problems are referred to

Recruiting student mediators from diverse groups can make others more inclined to participate in the program.

campus security personnel, who then pull disputants and mediators out of their classes to attend to mediations quickly. Similarly, at an elementary school in Modesto, peer mediators patrol the school grounds during recesses to resolve conflicts promptly.

Timely evaluations are as important as timely mediations in peer mediation programs, and most of the schools we visited offered prompt reviews of the interventions. Typically, a teacher, counselor, or administrator debriefs the mediators after each session. This practice provides two benefits. First, it alerts an adult at the school to conflicts that remain unresolved and that could lead to future problems. The school can then monitor the situation further or choose to intervene. Second, debriefing helps the peer mediators assess their techniques and improve their skills. For example, the program coordinator at Davis High School in Modesto, who is also a school counselor, meets with the peer mediators after each mediation to discuss the conflict and the effectiveness of the attempted resolution. To maintain the confidentiality of the mediation, as well as the trust of the disputants, the discussion does not include specific information about individuals or situations.

Schools with peer mediation programs should promote campuswide awareness of the program.

Soon after a school begins a peer mediation program, it should begin a campaign to promote the program to the whole student body. Of the 11 schools we visited that have peer mediation programs, most have formal campaigns to promote campuswide awareness of peer mediation, but use different methods to publicize their programs. For example, some schools introduce peer mediation in student assemblies, orientations, and class presentations. The mediators at Calvin Simmons Middle School in Oakland, for example, visit all sixth grade classrooms and role-play to demonstrate peer mediation. In another instance, the principal at Nokomis Elementary in Ukiah reminds the students during the daily announcements to use their peer mediators when a conflict arises. As more students become aware of peer mediation, more use the program, and the program becomes better.

The final practice a school should adopt to increase the success of peer mediation is to link it with the school's administrative discipline processes to address unresolved conflicts. For example, when suspended students return to campus, the school can offer peer mediation to help resolve the students' original conflicts. Even though it seems like an effective measure, this practice is rare among the schools we visited. In fact, only one school—

Calvin Simmons Middle School in Oakland—formally used peer mediation in this capacity. The coordinator at this school stated that this practice helped reduce repeat suspensions in the first year of the program. However, because of changes in school administration, the school formally discontinued this practice.

TAILORING CURRICULUM TO MEET SCHOOLS’ NEEDS AND INTEGRATING CURRICULUM INTO CORE CLASSES HELP MAKE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAMS EFFECTIVE

In addition to identifying what we consider the most useful features of peer mediation, we also identified the best practices used in educating students about conflict resolution. To make conflict resolution work effectively, the schools should teach curriculum for alleviating conflicts in core classes and customize the training for their students’ needs. The curriculum can cover essential principles and processes of resolving conflicts, methods of improving communication, and social responsibilities. The curriculum should also expand students’ awareness of bias and cultural differences.

School administrators who feel their students need to improve communication or learn social values and responsible behavior, may tailor curriculums to focus on these skills, which indirectly helps the students resolve conflicts. Figueroa Street Elementary in Los Angeles is one school that has implemented this type of education. A teacher there stated, “Since the program has been in place, kids now pull each other away from fights instead of egging a fight on.” Still other schools, which have students from several different ethnic backgrounds, educate their students in diversity and bias awareness by teaching them to stand up to intolerance, prejudice, and racism. For example, North High School in Torrance has a Human Relations Committee that sponsors monthly diversity retreats, a human relations convention, assemblies, and other events that encourage students to respect and appreciate individuality and cultural diversity. One student told us that because of the monthly retreats, she felt her school has grown to appreciate and value the various backgrounds of its students.

One Los Angeles teacher stated “ . . . kids now pull each other away from fights instead of egging a fight on.”

In tailoring education about conflict resolutions to meet students’ needs, some schools use a combination of concepts; for example, one school in the Torrance Unified School District teaches conflict resolution principles to all students and offers

one-day retreats for students to explore diversity issues. We believe that when a school offers an education program that addresses the root of schools' conflicts, the students benefit and the program has a better chance to be successful.

Some schools integrate conflict resolution curriculum into core classes, such as English or History.

Regardless of the educational curriculum a school chooses, it is vital that every student be exposed to conflict resolution training. The school can either integrate the curriculum into existing classroom lessons or develop it as separate lessons, all of which can vary by grade level. Eight of the 14 schools we visited taught conflict resolution to their students, and most of those 8 taught conflict resolution in English or History classes. Elementary school students, for example, generally have specific lessons and activities that discuss conflict resolution, diversity, or communication skills. Teachers may read a story to the children about different ways people can resolve conflicts. The teacher then allows the students to discuss the possible resolutions and perform related role plays.

In contrast, grades 6 through 12 should have conflict resolution curriculums integrated into core classes, such as English or History. Some high school teachers told us that they encourage students to explore alternatives to conflicts that appear in literature or history. For example, when reading Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* or studying World War II, students explore less violent alternatives to handling the conflicts described in the students' textbooks. Schools also promote diversity and cultural awareness through activities in core classes, as when teachers base lessons on African-American History Month or host multicultural conferences. This infusion helps middle and high school students relate to examples of conflict and diversity.

SCHOOLS SHOULD MAKE THEIR ENTIRE SCHOOLS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES AWARE OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION PRINCIPLES

Our third category of best practices involves not only teachers and students but also the broader school community of administrators, librarians, counselors, and parents. Others just outside the immediate school environment, such as local businesses and community groups, also have an impact on conflict resolution programs. As Chapter 1 explains, survey responses and other observations we made indicate that schools that train as many of these groups as possible feel best prepared for potential conflicts.

Because adults in each school and surrounding community all have some influence on students, the adults' use of conflict resolution techniques will equip them to model appropriate behavior, identify potential problems, or intervene when conflicts do occur. The principal at Pomolita Middle School noted that an important characteristic of a comprehensive and successful conflict resolution program is that everyone in the school community receives training. Moreover, according to a report by the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education, when adults and youth practice conflict resolution, respect, caring, and community building become the norms.

In conjunction with training their school communities, schools should develop awareness campaigns to let businesses and organizations in the surrounding communities know about the schools' programs. If aware of these programs, the businesses and organizations will no doubt support them, even to the point of donating funds or supplies. For example, one Los Angeles school we visited rewards students for excellent behavior with gift certificates donated by a local restaurant. At another Los Angeles school, a local foundation offers training to adult facilitators who lead weekly student discussions on personal, racial, and community issues. The foundation even underwrites some of the training costs. If schools begin by involving the entire campus, the program can expand beyond the schools' campuses and into the local communities, thus affecting all aspects of students' lives.

Implementation Steps

Strategic Planning

- Include all stakeholders
- Conduct needs assessments
- Set goals and objectives
- Obtain management commitment
- Identify and obtain funding and resources
- Develop promotional campaigns

Training

- Select or develop curriculum
- Train the entire school community, including students, teachers, support staff, and parents
- Conduct refresher training as needed

Evaluation

- Establish and measure progress toward goals
- Change the strategic plan as necessary

TAKING CERTAIN PRELIMINARY STEPS IS ESSENTIAL TO ESTABLISHING A SUCCESSFUL CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAM

The approaches outlined above are important to a conflict resolution program's overall success. Before these approaches can be put into place, however, schools must develop implementation steps that not only direct the program's strategic plan but also address appropriate training and periodic evaluation.

A constructive strategic plan should begin with a needs assessment of as many stakeholders as possible. In addition, the plan should set goals and objectives, identify sources of funding and other required resources, and acquire commitment from school and the district administration. This commitment is

especially important because several schools we visited indicated successful conflict resolution programs could take several years to fully develop. Next, the school should select an educational curriculum that will train the entire school community. To evaluate the success of their programs periodically, schools should also develop measurable goals to help them determine whether they are meeting expected goals or need to make necessary improvements. Schools should also give the programs time to work. Abandoning a program because it is not an immediate success may be a mistake. Instead, schools should try to identify shortcomings and work to modify the program accordingly.

Programs need time to work—abandoning a program because it is not an immediate success may be a mistake.

Through our interviews of school officials, we identified three resources that schools can draw upon for assistance in developing their conflict resolution programs. The Sacramento County Office of Education publishes one resource guide, “School-Based Conflict Resolution Programs,” which outlines program planning and implementation. In addition, the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education publishes “Conflict Resolution Education: A Guide to Implementing Programs in Schools, Youth-Serving Organizations, and Community and Juvenile Justice Settings.” Another resource, published by the Community Boards, a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization, is a list of implementation steps for the whole-school conflict resolution program it developed. Schools could use one or more of these publications as aids in planning new conflict resolution programs or improving existing programs.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION IS NOT A QUICK FIX FOR SCHOOL VIOLENCE

We have identified a number of elements schools can incorporate into their conflict resolution programs to increase effectiveness; however, we want to caution that no one should view conflict resolution programs as an immediate cure for all violence in schools. Experienced conflict resolution practitioners see conflict resolution as only one method to help youth find nonviolent solutions for conflicts, to promote social justice, and to reduce prejudice in school communities. Furthermore, expecting instant results from such programs is also a mistake. True results from even the most successful conflict resolution programs appear only after some time has elapsed. ■

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CHAPTER 3

Conflict Resolution Programs Must Compete Against Other Safety Priorities for Resources and Funding

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Because schools' conflict resolution programs range from those that take a single approach to those with a well-developed curriculum combining different approaches, the resources needed to implement and oversee the programs vary. Programs require resources for development, operations, oversight, and training. To balance the requirements of conflict resolution programs with schools' other funding needs, schools and districts must determine how they can piece funding together from various funding sources, such as district general funds or school safety grants. The schools that most successfully juggle resources and funding to support their conflict resolution programs are those that have made conflict resolution a priority.

SCHOOLS REQUIRE A RANGE OF RESOURCES TO IMPLEMENT AND OVERSEE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAMS

We found that the resources required to implement and oversee conflict resolution programs vary with the size of the program. Using information from some of the 14 schools we visited, we compiled a list of activities used to start a conflict resolution program and keep it running effectively. Activities fall into two broad categories: training and oversight.

Initial training entails instructing a core group of teachers and counselors in conflict resolution. Some schools received initial training and materials from nonprofit organizations that promote conflict resolution programs in schools. For instance, a San Francisco-based organization—Community Boards—runs conflict resolution institutes costing \$425 per person for three days of training for staff members from elementary schools or \$575 per person for four days of training for staff from middle or high schools. The Sacramento-based Citizenship and Law-Related Education Center provides two days of similar training for \$375 per person.

Schools often use their groups that first receive training to educate the school community, including support staff, other teachers, administrators, and parents. The number trained depends on the extent of the conflict resolution program: Schools with a limited program train a few teachers, whereas schools with extensive conflict resolution programs train many. The time invested in training other teachers and staff can range from one hour to four days. Students, in turn, generally learn about conflict resolution principles from assemblies, class visits, or periodic lessons that in total range from 3 to 30 hours in length. In addition, some students receive one to three days of training to become peer mediators.

Training and Oversight Activities

Initial Training

- One to four training days for several school faculty members who will in turn train the rest of the school.

Staff Training

- One hour to four days of training for the rest of the school staff.

Student Training

- One to three days of training for peer mediators.
- Assemblies or class visits for all students.

Oversight

- Two to 25 hours per week for each team or individual.
- District-level administrative support.

Overseeing a conflict resolution program requires additional resources. We found that schools differed significantly in the number of hours they devote to oversight activities; some schools devoted just 2 hours per week to this task, while others spend 25 hours per week overseeing their programs. Some schools use counselors or teachers to direct daily program operations and grant teachers an extra preparation period or a small stipend to compensate for these duties.

Beyond the direct costs for training and oversight are administrative, materials, and incidental costs. For example, administrators at each school district we visited spent at least some time on program matters. In one case, the director of pupil services at Modesto City Schools will spend 10 percent of her time this year setting up new conflict resolution programs at five schools. Schools also use materials, such as training manuals and teacher guides, to supplement their conflict resolution lessons or training. Incidental costs, such as award certificates or t-shirts to motivate student mediators, also use a portion of the budget.

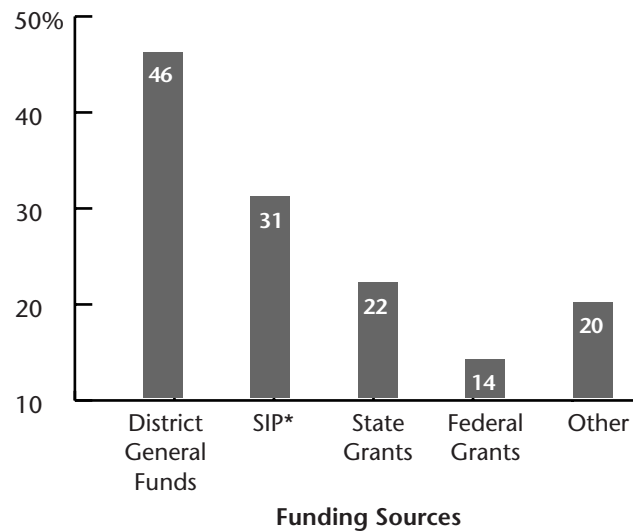
TO FUND EXTENSIVE PROGRAMS, SCHOOLS MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN COMPETING SAFETY PROGRAMS

Although volunteer efforts of school staff and community members meet some program needs, most programs require some source of funding in order to operate. Necessary funding may be minor in relation to a school's overall budget; however, schools that identify conflict resolution as a priority are better

able to balance the financial demands of conflict resolution and other school safety programs or student services. Many schools reported that they used district general funds, which include local property taxes and state education funds. In addition, some schools receive state or federal grants designated for broad school safety or drug programs that include hiring counselors and safety officers or installing metal detectors and fencing. Recent legislation allocates approximately \$100 million for school safety projects in middle and high schools, yet each school district must still decide how much money to dedicate to conflict resolution. Figure 4 indicates the various funding sources for schools with conflict resolution programs.

FIGURE 4

Percent of Schools Using Each Type of Funding Source for Conflict Resolution Programs



* School Improvement Program

Note: Numbers total more than 100 percent because 28 of the 135 schools with programs use multiple funding sources.

Some Schools and Districts Have Made Conflict Resolution a Priority and Choose to Fund Extensive Programs

Schools and districts that identify conflict resolution as a priority often are able to direct money to the programs. Likewise, when school boards or principals identify conflict resolution as an integral part of the educational process, they have been able to arrange training and oversight for the program. For example, the Torrance Unified School District included conflict resolution

as one of five goals in its strategic plan. By making a long-term commitment to developing conflict resolution and communication skills within its school community, the Torrance district has dedicated funding and time off for staff training. In another display of commitment, the Los Angeles Unified School District allots three preparation hours each day to the coordinator at Palms Middle School for conflict resolution duties.

Many Schools and Districts Choose to Use Discretionary Money to Fund Conflict Resolution

Schools and districts must balance competing demands when they choose to fund conflict resolution. Before their general fund money can go to optional programs like conflict resolution, schools must satisfy multiple requirements. For example, most school funding goes toward teachers' salaries, administration, site maintenance, and other required activities. Even when funds are available for discretionary use by school districts, numerous programs compete for the money. For instance, schools receive state money for the School Improvement Program (SIP), which they can use for a wide range of purposes, such as staff development, improving the classroom and school environment, and reducing incidents of violence. About one-third of the schools we surveyed with programs use some SIP funds for their conflict resolution programs. At Davis High in Modesto, the principal pulled \$1,000 from his discretionary funds in 1994 to establish the school's peer mediation program, which he continues to fund each year. In a similar effort, Calvin Simmons Middle School in the Oakland Unified School District sets aside a teacher position to coordinate its conflict resolution program.

State and Federal Grants Provide Some Funding for Safety Programs, but Grant Funds Designated for Conflict Resolution Are Rare

Schools and districts also use general safety grants from the state and federal governments to fund these programs. Because these grants are intended for a wide range of safety programs, schools and districts must make choices about whether to fund conflict resolution programs or other safety measures, such as installing metal detectors or hiring campus police. In addition, a limited number of districts receive some grants, so few schools actually benefit from this money. The following table describes grants and other funding sources that schools reported using for conflict resolution.

Schools must choose between conflict resolution programs or safety measures such as metal detectors or campus police.

TABLE

Many Funding Sources Target Violence Prevention, but Few Schools and Districts Qualify for the Grants

Source/Name of Grant	Funding	Availability	Comments
State Grants			
Conflict Resolution and Youth Mediation	\$8,000 to \$16,000 per school district	Limited*	30 Districts. Training for conflict resolution teams.
School Community Violence Prevention	\$170,000 per district over four years	Limited	17 Districts. For violence prevention.
Safe School Plan Implementation	\$5,000 per school	Limited	95 Schools. To assist schools in implementing their safe school plan.
After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnership Program	\$5 per student per day	Limited	86 Districts. School literacy and enrichment programs.
Student Leadership	\$750 to \$5,000 per school	Limited	54 Schools. Student designed safety projects at high schools.
School Safety and Violence Prevention Act	New \$100 million grant, details pending†	Wide**	Districts with grades 8 through 12 enrollments. Violence prevention, including conflict resolution.
Federal Grants			
Grants to Local Education Agencies (Title I)	\$830 million allocated according to percentage of students in poverty	Wide	4,800 schools in California. To improve learning for at-risk children. Schools with high levels of poverty can use funds for a wide array of programs.
Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Grants Act (Title IV)	Varies	Wide	Various programs aimed at creating safe and drug-free schools.
Safe Schools/Healthy Schools Initiative	\$1 to 3 million per district, over three years	Limited	50 districts nationwide. To develop drug prevention and safety programs in middle schools.
Other Sources			
District general funds	About \$5,700 per student	Wide	Pays for classroom instruction, administration, maintenance, and other school programs.
Donations and volunteers	Varies	Unknown	Some schools solicit donations from local businesses or obtain volunteer services.
School Improvement Plan (State)	\$31 to \$111 per student	Wide	All schools. Improves the school's instruction, services, and environment.

* "Limited" availability means the funds are available to relatively few of the 8,300 schools and 1,055 school districts in California.

** "Wide" availability means the funds are available to most or all schools.

† The State has not yet released specific funding details for this new grant; however, middle and high school populations will determine funding.

The one grant specifically earmarked for conflict resolution programs provides funds to only 30 of the State's 1,055 school districts.

Only the State's Conflict Resolution and Youth Mediation Grant specifically targets conflict resolution. This grant provides 30 districts up to \$16,000 each for training school teams in conflict resolution. The remaining grants center on drug and violence prevention or general school improvement, compelling conflict resolution programs to compete against other funding priorities. For example, the federal Grants to Local Educational Agencies (Title I) provides funds to about half of California's schools, but the primary focus of the grant is improving learning for students from low-income families. In some cases, schools have used portions of this money to underwrite their conflict resolution programs.

In addition to their focus on broad school improvement or violence prevention, many of the funding sources are available only to a handful of California's schools. Some of these grants are competitive, such as the federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative, which awards up to \$3 million per district over three years to 50 districts nationwide, or the Student Leadership grant, which supplies funds to only 54 of the State's schools.

Schools and Districts Supplement Government Funding With Community Assistance

Many schools and districts that identified conflict resolution as a priority have been resourceful and have obtained program funding from nongovernmental sources, such as community organizations, local churches, or businesses. Some schools have established partnerships with private corporations or nonprofit organizations, used profits from student stores, or initiated school fund-raisers in conjunction with the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and other organizations. For example, a conflict resolution program at the Palms Middle School in Los Angeles, called the Palms Council Project, receives \$27,000 (approximately 30 percent of its funding) in grants from different foundations.

Recent Legislation Allots \$100 Million for School Safety

Recently, the Legislature approved \$100 million to fund school safety during fiscal year 1999-2000. The State will allocate the money to school districts based on their grades 8 through 12 enrollments, and will provide minimums of \$5,000 per school and \$10,000 per district. According to the Legislature's intent, districts will use these funds to teach students techniques for resolving conflicts without violence and to train school staff

and administrators to use conflict resolution and peer mediation techniques for resolving conflicts between and among students. In addition, the Legislature intends that schools reduce incidents of violence by providing on-campus communication devices and establishing cooperative arrangements with law enforcement agencies. We believe this new funding is a positive step toward helping those districts and schools that want to implement or expand their conflict resolution programs but may not have had sufficient funds to do so. However, because this grant allows districts the flexibility to choose from an array of safety-related measures, it is unclear how many districts will use the funds to implement or expand conflict resolution programs.

While the newly appropriated \$100 million is a positive step, we are concerned that some elementary schools may be ineligible for these funds.

Moreover, we are concerned that not all elementary schools will be eligible for these grant funds because they are only available to school districts based on their grades 8 through 12 enrollments. The grant does not restrict the district from spending the money at any of its schools. Thus, limiting the grant to secondary school enrollment may not adversely affect unified school districts with elementary, middle, and high schools, which may choose to spend these grant funds at their elementary schools as well. However, elementary school districts without grades 8 through 12 will be ineligible for the funds. This situation concerns us because we believe that all schools, including elementary schools, could benefit from the intended point of the grant: teaching students and staff the techniques of resolving conflicts to reduce incidents of violence at California schools.

We conducted this review under the authority vested in the California State Auditor by Section 8543 et seq. of the California Government Code and according to generally accepted government auditing standards. We limited our review to those areas specified in the audit scope section of this report.

Respectfully submitted,



KURT R. SJOBERG
State Auditor

Date: August 11, 1999

Staff: Elaine M. Howle, CPA, Audit Principal
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APPENDIX

Summary of the Conflict Resolution Programs At 14 California Schools

The following summary outlines the conflict resolution programs at each of the 14 schools we visited. It identifies which of the three approaches to conflict resolution (described in the report's Introduction) that the schools use and also discusses program highlights. In addition, the list includes the names of individuals who can supply additional information about each program.

Below are the names of the districts and schools we visited:

Los Angeles Unified School District

Dolores Street Elementary
Figueroa Street Elementary
Palisades Charter High
Palms Middle
Ulysses S. Grant Senior High

Modesto City Schools

Fairview Elementary
Grace M. Davis High

Oakland Unified School District

Calvin Simmons Middle
Edna Brewer Middle

Torrance Unified School District

Anza Elementary
North High
West High

Ukiah Unified School District

Nokomis Elementary
Pomolita Middle

Los Angeles Unified School District

The district's Office of Intergroup Relations empowers teachers to build a strong, academically focused, multicultural curriculum. The office plans to implement a program for ninth graders called Life Skills for the 21st Century that includes conflict resolution skills. It also plans to implement the Los Angeles Conflict Resolution Education Model for Educators (LA CRÈME) for sixth graders. In addition to using the district's programs, some schools have developed their own conflict resolution programs.

Dolores Street Elementary School

Carson, California

Contact: Mercedes Valazquez, Principal
(310) 834-2565

- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution Education
- Community Approach

Program highlights:

- Dolores Street Elementary engages a group of adult volunteers to train fifth grade students as well as teachers, playground staff, instructional aides, support personnel, and adults in conflict resolution.
- Teachers use an age-appropriate program of videos, discussions, and hands-on activities in their grades K-5 classes.
- After receiving training, fifth graders have the opportunity to sign up for further specialized training in peer mediation. These mediators resolve conflicts on the playground.
- The school uses a survey to evaluate how well students have learned the program concepts.

Figueroa Street Elementary School

Los Angeles, California

Contact: Miguel Campa, Principal
(323) 756-9268

- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution Education
- Community Approach

In contrast to the conflict resolution programs at most other school sites we visited, Figueroa Street Elementary uses a character education program called the Responsibility and Character Education Program in the curriculum in every classroom. The district pays for shortened days to allow time for new teacher training and workshops.

Program highlights:

- A leadership team, composed of two mentor teachers and the acting principal, guides the school's program.
- The school requires teachers to incorporate program principles into the classroom curriculum.
- Teachers attend staff meetings to discuss problems and strategies for implementing the program.
- Community partnerships with local restaurants allow schools to distribute rewards to students.

Palisades Charter High School

Pacific Palisades, California

Contact: Russell Kitagawa, Coordinator
(310) 454-0611

- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution Education
- Community Approach

Palisades Charter High incorporates a conflict resolution program for students into a broader program called United Communicators. This program focuses on conflict resolution training and management, tolerance, communication and listening skills, problem solving, and anger management. Conflict resolution principles are not integrated into the curriculum.

Program highlights:

- The program coordinator trains 50 students each year to be student conflict mediators.
- Student mediators meet once a week during alternating class periods for ongoing education.

Palms Middle School

Los Angeles, California

Contacts: Joe Provisor, Project Coordinator, and

Lana Brody, Assistant Principal

(310) 837-5236

- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution Education
- Community Approach

The Palms’ Council Project enables more than 1,100 sixth and eighth grade students in this multicultural school to meet each week in council to discuss the personal, racial, and community issues facing students. Councils take place during Language Arts classes and provide students and teachers with the opportunity to discuss these issues through storytelling and dialogue and to learn methods of nonviolent conflict resolution.

Program highlights:

- Private donations and support from foundations account for 87 percent of program funding, with parents and students contributing another 10 percent.
- The school covers the cost of substitutes during teacher training. The district allows three classroom periods for project coordination and replacement pay for teachers who facilitate councils.
- Parents were involved during the project’s inception. The school currently holds monthly evening councils for parents.
- Outside facilitators, drawn largely from the community, receive training and then must serve a minimum one-year internship under the supervision of a mentor facilitator and the program coordinator. Facilitator outreach develops a diverse staff that reflects the school’s cultural diversity.
- Each year, four groups of 25 students representing their classroom councils take part in three-day retreats. These trips build a sense of group unity and allow students to enjoy a deeper experience of the council.

Ulysses S. Grant Senior High School

Van Nuys, California

Contacts: Mel Rosen, Assistant Principal, and

Jeremy Lawrence, Dean

(818) 781-1400

- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution Education
- Community Approach

Grant High has an informal conflict resolution program. The program coordinator meets with different groups of students weekly to discuss the campus climate, control rumors, and resolve disputes. Grant High plans to implement a formal program next year and offer a conflict resolution class. The school would also like to formally incorporate conflict resolution in the discipline plan. Some teachers also include diversity education in the classroom curriculum, thus reaching about 500 students each year.

Modesto City Schools

The district offers its schools some character-education and antidefamation training and curriculum, but it has provided limited assistance for conflict resolution programs. In September 1999, the district plans to begin a four-year effort, in cooperation with the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP), which requires extensive district support and funding. The district will implement conflict resolution programs in 15 of its 33 schools.

Fairview Elementary School

Modesto, California

Contact: Janet Betcher, Program Coordinator

(209) 576-4693

- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution Education
- Community Approach

Fairview Elementary works with a local nonprofit organization to administer a student conflict resolution program. The nonprofit organization helps the school operate behavioral programs, such as youth court and suspension intervention. It also sends trained coordinators into the school for a few hours

each week to direct the different programs. A team of three teachers volunteers its time to manage the student mediation program.

Program highlights:

- Two teachers received a two-day training in conflict resolution and curriculum infusion in order to teach these skills to the school.
- All teachers receive a two-hour training on conflict resolution.
- After receiving two days of training, 31 students manage student mediations for grades 3 through 6. The student mediators also attend follow-up meetings throughout the year.

Grace M. Davis High School

Modesto, California

Contact: David Romano, Assistant Principal
(209) 576-4500

- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution Education
- Community Approach

Grace M. Davis High has established a peer mediation program to deal with student conflicts. All freshman students are introduced to the program through presentations during the first week of school. With the assistance of a student director, one counselor spends approximately 20 hours each week coordinating the program.

Program highlights:

- The coordinator trains 25 student mediators during an eight-hour Saturday class each year. The student mediators also receive three follow-up trainings during the year.
- The school covers all expenses, including overhead and the initial training for the coordinator.

Oakland Unified School District

Oakland Unified School District provides training and, according to the district, some funding for conflict resolution programs at individual schools. The district would like to see conflict resolution principles integrated into the curriculum at all schools. The district provides a variety of training classes for schools, including conflict resolution trainings for teachers, introductory sessions for school staff, student mediator trainings, and instruction on incorporating conflict resolution into the classroom curriculum. Schools may also attend trainings on diversity education, or TRIBES, a program used to create safe, nonviolent schools.

Calvin Simmons Middle School

Oakland, California

Contact: Mary Ellen Bayardo, Conflict Resolution Trainer
(510) 879-2050

- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution Education
- Community Approach

One teacher acts as the full-time coordinator for the peer-resources program, of which the conflict resolution program is part. The school also implements the Peer Educator program, in which students present a range of topics, including conflict resolution, to other students. Seven years ago, the district trained all staff. New teachers may attend district trainings at week-long summer institutes or shorter trainings. New staff trainings are also conducted each year. As a result of the training, teachers infuse conflict resolution principles into their curriculum.

Program highlights:

- To help defray the costs of the program, the coordinator uses profits of \$2,000 to \$3,000 a year from the student store.
- In addition to coordinating the conflict resolution program, the coordinator teaches both a year-long peer education and a peer tutoring class.

Edna Brewer Middle School

Oakland, California

Contact: Alanya Snyder, Coordinator

(510) 879-2100

- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution Education
- Community Approach

A team of three persons—an instructional aide and two teachers—coordinates this student mediation program. The school will offer conflict resolution next year as an elective class.

Program highlights:

- Teachers attend a monthly in-service training from the district for an hour each month; administrators also attend trainings.
- The school maintains partnerships with the police department and other outside organizations.
- All students currently receive a one-hour lesson once a month on conflict resolution principles and skills.

Torrance Unified School District

Torrance Unified School District has implemented a district-wide conflict resolution program that includes a student conflict resolution program and incorporates conflict resolution principles into the curriculum for all students. Each school must establish a leadership team, which includes the principal, to oversee the conflict resolution program. The district provided three days of conflict resolution training for all teachers, administrators, and staff before implementing the program at each school. The district also supplies the training, materials, and substitutes for staff-development days when needed.

Anza Elementary

Torrance, California

Contact: Dr. Frank Tyrrell, Assistant Superintendent

(310) 533-4249

- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution Education
- Community Approach

Program highlights:

- Student mediators receive two half-day trainings and engage in monthly debriefings with the leadership team.
- Four teachers of the School Leadership Team oversee the conflict resolution program and act as contacts for the students, staff, and parents.
- The School Leadership Team, along with conflict managers, conducts an annual “peace week” to promote peace and recognize the peacemakers at the school.
- Anza Elementary also plans to supplement its conflict resolution program with the six principles of Character Counts, a character-building program that emphasizes trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

North High School

Torrance, California

Contact: Dr. Frank Tyrrell, Assistant Superintendent
(310) 533-4249

- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution Education
- Community Approach

Program highlights:

- The leadership team helps teachers infuse conflict resolution principles into the curriculum and assists teachers with planning. In 1996 and 1997, the school developed conflict resolution template lessons for all levels of Language Arts, World and United States History, and Government classes. In subsequent years, North High encouraged teachers to refine these lessons.
- A diverse group of student mediators receives 16 hours of training from the leadership team.
- Campus security personnel handle the coordination duties for student conflict mediations, including monitoring the mediation and pulling the mediators out of class.

- The school holds a series of ongoing diversity retreats on campus or in space donated by a local church. At each retreat, 30 to 50 students discuss diversity issues they have faced.

West High School

Torrance, California

Contacts: Dr. Alexis Sheehy, Principal

(310) 533-4299

Cheryl Daugherty, Assistant Principal

(310) 533-4303

- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution Education
- Community Approach

Program highlights:

- A group of students obtained a student leadership grant to implement a human relations week, which is intended to promote peace and reduce discrimination.
- All students receive conflict resolution instruction each year in English or World History classes.
- A diverse group of student conflict managers receives three days of training from the leadership team.
- Each year, the school conducts one large-group mediation to help resolve misunderstandings or miscommunication between groups of students of different races or social circles.
- Because of the program, disputants and conflict managers have resolved conflicts promptly; disagreements have not turned into major disruptions.

Ukiah Unified School District

The district would like to see a conflict resolution program in each school. Currently, however, a local nonprofit organization—Mendocino County Youth Services—uses funding from a five-year federal grant to operate the conflict resolution program at three schools, including Nokomis Elementary School and Pomolita Middle School. The nonprofit organization pays for part-time coordinators to oversee the conflict resolution program at each school.

Nokomis Elementary School

Ukiah, California

Contact: Bob Frassinello, Principal

(707) 463-5242

- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution Education
- Community Approach

Program highlights:

- A leadership team of three teachers and the coordinator meet each week and train the student mediators.
- The school teaches conflict resolution curriculum in 15 lessons throughout grades during the first month of the school year.
- The leadership team trains all teachers in conflict resolution for one hour at the beginning of the school year.

Pomolita Middle School

Ukiah, California

Contact: Raymond Chadwick, Principal

(707) 463-5224

- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution Education
- Community Approach

Program highlights:

- Three Language Arts classes include the curriculum, which reaches one third of the student body.
- One instructional aide assists the coordinator in training the student mediators and the Language Arts teachers. The instructional aide schedules all student mediations.
- The principal plans to provide a four-hour training for all teachers, instructional aides, and campus supervisors next year.

cc: Members of the Legislature
Office of the Lieutenant Governor
Attorney General
State Controller
Legislative Analyst
Assembly Office of Research
Senate Office of Research
Assembly Majority/Minority Consultants
Senate Majority/Minority Consultants
Capitol Press Corps