

Recommended Standards for School-Based Peer Mediation Programs

Leigh Jones-Bamman, Chair of the ACR Peer Mediation Standards Committee

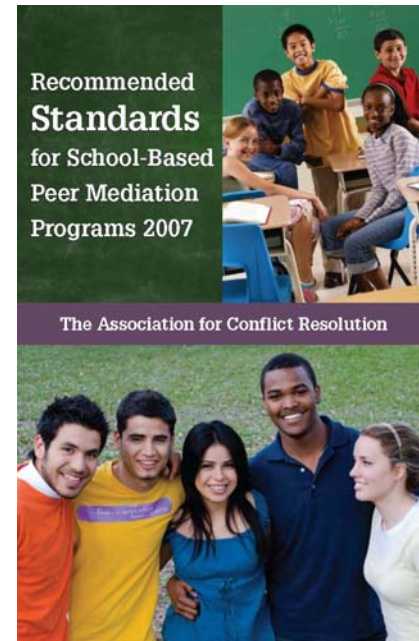
The Education Section of the Association for Conflict Resolution is proud to present the completed "Recommended Standards for School-Based Peer Mediation Programs." Originally published in 1996 by the Standards Committee of the National Association for Mediation in Education (a forerunner of ACR), this document has been revised and expanded by the Education Section's Peer Mediation Standards Committee, which drew upon diverse practitioner knowledge and relevant research to set forth the components necessary to develop and sustain an effective peer mediation program.

These standards are designed to enhance quality and stimulate thought among youth and adult participants in peer mediation programs.

This document is designed to establish model standards for peer mediator conduct and recommended standards for training (including professional development for adults), program evaluation, and program development & management. It is not intended to provide instructions on how to set up and manage a peer mediation program; such information is already provided in a number of manuals and other materials with that purpose in mind. While the primary focus of this document is K-12 school-based peer mediation programs, it can be adapted easily for use in other settings, such as community-based youth programs, before and after-school programs, and youth residential settings.

The Peer Mediation Standards may be downloaded at:

<http://www.mediate.com/acreducation/pg18.cfm>



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THE SEMI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF THE EDUCATION SECTION



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Peer Mediation in Preschool?

By Jessica Phengsiri and Pamela S. Lane-Garon

Peer mediation is a component of many conflict resolution education programs in elementary and secondary schools, but rarely found in the context of preschool conflict resolution education (CRE). Why is this? Are preschoolers too young to work together to resolve conflicts--and peer mediation flourished.

California's Central Valley, a university-based preschool conflict resolution education program -including peer mediation- was implemented. The participating group of three-to-five year-olds enthusiastically embraced this opportunity to help their friends resolve conflicts--and peer mediation flourished.

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An Interview With CRE Educator Kathryn Liss

By Jared L. Ordway

Q: Could you briefly tell *Fourth R* readers about your work in conflict resolution education?

A: As coordinator of HIPP, I have been working with people around the country and in some other countries to develop and present the Help Increase the Peace workshops. All our workshops are co-led by youth co-facilitators. We often present

to mixed groups of youth and adults. In addition to conflict resolution and communication skills, we also build self-esteem, practice cooperation and develop self-confidence. We focus on all kinds of differences which divide us, including racial, ethnic, class and sexual orientation building inclusion.

(Continued on page 8)

Feature Articles

Peer Mediation in Preschool

An Interview with Kathryn Liss

Creating Caring School Communities

Creating Caring School Communities from the Inside Out The Safe School Ambassadors Program

By Denise Palazzo

As I enter my 26th year of educating young people, 18 of them within the bustling walls of Florida's public schools, I am always buoyed by the fresh spirit of caring and community that students bring to the place they spend the majority of their young lives.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

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the Fourth R

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dents who intervene with their peers to prevent and stop acts of cruelty and reduce tension on campus in safe, cool and effective ways. Students are taught a group of skills and strategies during a trust-building and skill-crafting two-day session with other courageous young people and 5-7 adults who will act as family group facilitators (supporting the program after the training commences). Ambassadors are trained to notice, think, act and follow-through using the skills and strategies learned during their training to help create a campus of inclusion where all, not only some, feel welcomed and are treated with respect and dignity.

Executive Director Rick Phillips, creator of Community Matters (a nonprofit organization that focuses on positive youth development) and designer and deliverer of the Safe School Ambassadors program, is a staunch believer in reminding us that youth hold the key to improving school climate: While adults create the rules, students set the norms. Phillips earnestly puts forward that he believes we need to do more “with” youth, rather than “to, for or at” youth. He asserts, “I want us to see young people as contributors and allies, not just clients and learners. Safe School Ambassadors are a new set of eyes and ears who work in alliance with adults as they interact in the moment in the hallway, parking lot, bathrooms, on the bus...all the places adults aren’t. It’s all about building relationships from the inside out. We must believe in young people’s capacity to act courageously as they are offered the chance to give voice to their values and courage to their actions.”

The Safe School Ambassadors program creates real opportunities for students to bond to their school, especially students who do not typically participate and bond to school through traditional activities such as clubs and sports teams. Research shows that when students feel this connection or bond to their school — when they feel a sense of ownership

of their school, their academic performance increases and harmful behaviors are likely to decrease.

Two boys walked into American Literature class, arguing loudly. The teacher escorted them outside and helped them resolve their disagreement. As they reentered the class, one boy tried to get the last word in and make a provocative comment to the other. Before the other could respond, a student (a socially influential Safe School Ambassador) said to the boys (but loud enough so the class could hear) “Looks like it’s time to read Huck Finn (the book the class was reading.)” The arguing boys looked at him questioningly, took the hint, and sat down.

As of spring 2007, the program has been implemented successfully in more than 350 high school, middle school and elementary schools across the nation. Data is coming in from those schools via action logs completed by Ambassadors when they do their preventions and interventions, technical assistance meetings, and conversations with adult Family Group Facilitators. Data is also being created through year-end surveys completed by Ambassadors, and monthly accounts of youth who are called to the office for offenses in which Ambassadors are skilled to safely intervene. Finally and importantly, trend data has been compiled surveying numerous schools who have implemented the program. Successful findings such as a positive shift in a feeling of connectedness by Ambassadors and their willingness to intervene more often with peers after being trained have been documented.

The Safe School Ambassadors program has the ingredients for shifting school culture from the inside out, employing youth as they work in spirited collaboration with other youth and adults to break the code of silence that is so often held tightly by students. In addition to

allowing students to dialogue among peers from diverse cliques who possess social capital with others peers as they intervene in safe, cool and effective ways to cool hotspots and keep other tense spots from igniting. As Safe School Ambassadors decrease bullying and intimidation through practicing safe and effective interventions with friends, these brave and powerful youth also increase the level of respect and tolerance in school communities. And, as young people feel less distracted, more relaxed and safer, they are more able to focus on learning and living up to their full potential as unique and multidimensional human beings. Our twenty-first century workforce - the youth of today who are full of vitality and talent - are buoyed through the Safe School Ambassadors Program by seeing that they are “a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens who are making a difference in our world.”



De Palazzo is a conflict resolution educator with a deep interest in opening up dialogue with youth and adults who have diverse interests and backgrounds. De is President of Perspectives Unlimited, Inc. and in this role delivers intercultural understanding workshops, anti-bias trainings and writes violence prevention curriculum as a consultant and contractor with various school districts. She also delivers conflict resolution training to schools in the U.S. as a consultant and trainer for Community Matters, a nonprofit committed to empowering youth in K-higher education schools and universities to become change agents for a more peace-filled world.

Creating Caring School Communities from the Inside Out (continued from page 1)

One might ask, "Where have you been teaching and have you always worn rose-colored glasses!" On the contrary, I have observed, as so many good educators viscerally know, that students from preschool to graduate level can see, hear and feel when they are valued and respected. They also sense when they are viewed as contributors to their school communities and are respected enough to be asked to participate in creating peace-filled learning environments. They can feel when they are being invited in as creative collaborators while they walk their hallways and possibly even see their contribution as a legacy to their younger siblings. I have also noticed that even though, for young people as well as adults, being treated with dignity and holding a place at the table of creative thought is one of the determiners of a happy, healthy school culture, the ever growing diversity of our communities are clearly presenting challenges to our schools. These challenges sometimes bog down the best of our efforts if differences are not viewed as opportunities for learning and stretching, but instead are perceived as burdensome and even threatening. It's true that student and staff diversity takes on many hues, and this diversity is not only through identities that reflect beautiful similarities and differences through race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, age and ability. Weaved within these identities are also the varying ideals, values, perceptions, beliefs, work habits, time management skills and styles, languages and general mores of personal culture that are increasingly expecting our attention in our multicultural and multidimensional nation.

On the fifth anniversary of Columbine, the Safe School Ambassadors program was chosen by NBC's "The Today Show" as a national model program for violence prevention and intervention. To find out more about the Safe School Ambassador program go to www.safeschoolambassadors.org

With that said, most will agree that it is easy, and human, to make judgments about dimensions of diversity that are different from our own. However, the obstacles are not the comparisons, but our universal tendency to see those who hold "other" norms in a less favorable light than our own. Thus conflict, whether it be cultural, inter-group or neither ensues, creating disharmony and a shift in equilibrium. It is here that opportunity lies! The opportunity involves youth and adults coming together collaboratively to interrupt, prevent and stop mistreatment on their school campus in a manner that empowers youth within their cliques and groups to reduce

harassment and bullying of others who may seem different from them—on the spot.

Enter the Safe School Ambassadors Program; an incisive, youth empowerment program designed to reduce bullying, teasing and other forms of mistreatment far too common among youth of varying identities and backgrounds, by equipping students with skills they can use with their friends. When first encountering the program, my experience as a teacher allowed me to grasp the fact that the program holds what I believe to be three essential elements of a 21st century school violence prevention/intervention program. First, the Safe School Ambassadors premise is based on the identification and recruitment of 35-40 voluntary socially influential students from diverse cliques and groups on campus who have high verbal skills amongst their peers and an awareness of social justice (i.e. knowing right

"We must see young people as candles to be lit, not empty bottles to be filled." Robert Shaffer, Colleague of Rick Phillips, Executive Director, Community Matters

from wrong and often choosing "right"). Second, these "opinion leaders" of the school campus, already endorsed by youth through their social status, are now given credibility and empowerment by adult leaders who genuinely value their skill-sets and care about involving them as leaders and allies in creating a more peace-filled school culture. Finally, youth are regularly supported through ongoing meetings and collaborative adult-youth coaching sessions as a means of maintaining, as well as sharpening, the six to eight skills learned during their training session.

The Safe School Ambassadors program also holds four core assumptions that any classroom teacher and/or school leader would have a difficult time arguing against. The first posits that students are the primary aggressors – and the primary targets – of cruelty and violence in schools. Students also see, hear and know things that staff and other adults do not, and can intervene in ways adults cannot. Finally, students are much more likely to talk with their peers than with adults and tend to set the tone and standards of campus culture, determining what is "okay" and "not okay." Despite these hard-to-dispute truths, few schools have truly engaged all their students as partners in school-safety planning and implementation. If students are genuinely involved, doesn't this mean increasing the roles of youth? Doesn't this sound like increasing, and in some cases, inviting the voice of youth to the table? Doesn't this look like building safer schools from the inside out?

Safe School Ambassadors are a cadre of 35-40 committed and trained students actively on the lookout for hotspots and continually working to cool them off; stu-

Dear Fourth R Readership:
Greetings from the Education Section! We are excited to bring you the second annual edition of *The Fourth R*! As some of you may have noticed, your Ed-Heads and editors have decided to make *The Fourth R* newsletter a biannual release. This decision helps us focus in on the featured theme for each issue, as well as ensure a higher standard of quality.

Since our first issue in Spring 2007, much has happened in the world of Conflict Resolution Education (CRE). Major strides in the CRE world include the recently released Peer Mediation Standards for 2007 from October 14th (visit <http://www.mediate.com/acreducation> to download), and the upcoming Peer Mediation conference scheduled for Spring of 2008 in Virginia. Many section members are also gearing up for the Seventh Annual ACR conference happening from October 24-27 in Phoenix, AZ.

The ACR conference helps us remember that our efforts from across the country and around the world continually invite us back to the wonderful table of variety, whereupon the sharing of approaches, methods, and creative ideas can lead to promising partnerships and the creation of an effective learning environment for students and education professionals alike. Fortunately, the feature articles (and other goodies) in this Fall 2007 edition of *The Fourth R* reflects this metaphor, as they share various approaches to CRE philosophy, programs and peer mediation.

Our autumn edition begins in pre-school, where Jessica Phengsiri and Pamela Lane-Garon examine this ripe old

age for children to begin infusing problem-solving skills with the natural course of developing social skills and peer interaction. The article provides an overview of the process, as well as an example, and also discusses distinction of theories on levels of teacher intervention in classroom disputes.

Moving around the table, Denise Palazzo's article introduces readers to a peer empowerment and violence reduction program in Florida schools. Working on a set of four core assumptions, this program's approach to peace-building provides the opportunity for students to succeed as mediators as they bond to each other and the educational institution itself.

Our final feature article highlights the work of a special guest to our table. In our practitioner's profile, *The Fourth R* conducted an interview with seasoned trainer and CRE educator, Kathryn Liss, formerly with the American Friends Service Committee. In her interview, Kathryn offers lessons she has learned about CRE programs, as well as some strategic thinking that can help CRE colleagues succeed in the context of education and beyond.

We hope you enjoy the Fall edition of *The Fourth R* and look forward to receiving your submissions for the Spring 2008 issue!

Sincerely,

Jared L. Ordway, M.A.

Co-Editor of The Fourth R



**The Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR): Education Section, George Mason University
Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR), and Fairfax County Public Schools**

Present

Sustaining Conflict Resolution Education: Building Bridges to the Future

A conference for

educators and conflict resolution education professionals

March 9-11, 2008

George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

This conference is designed to bring together professionals dedicated to the field of Conflict Resolution Education (CRE). Although the program will highlight the active CRE and Peer Mediation Community on the East Coast, all CRE professionals are invited to attend.

Questions can be directed to ACR Education Section Chair Anne Smiley at (517) 316-7766 or smiley_aw@yahoo.com.

Peer Mediation in Preschool? (continued from page 1)

As all educators know, children in preschool are at a critical age for developing social skills and learning how to interact with peers. The ability to relate to one's peers develops during the first three years of life and the ability to relate to peers within the social structure of groups develops during the preschool years. Therefore, interventions that address social interaction among children should be introduced earlier rather than later (Hay, Payne, & Chadwick, 2004).

In work familiar to *Fourth R* readers, integrating conflict resolution procedures in a kindergarten friendship unit increased children's achievement scores (Stevahn, Johnson, Johnson, Oberle, & Wahl, 2000). The relationship between peaceful problem-solving and positive academic learning climate has been well established (Garrard, 2005).

ACR members in general and Education Section members in particular support the view that conflict provides opportunity—educational opportunity! CRE programs inclusive of peer mediation have demonstrated increases in: children's ability to use skills learned outside of school; cognitive and affective perspective taking (Lane-Garon and Richardson, 2003); knowledge of constructive conflict resolution, and; use of integrative negotiation (Jones, 2004).

What Preschool Teachers Believe

Preschool teachers often rely upon theoretical frameworks of both Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky in working with young children (1935; 1978). Both were developmental constructivists who believed that knowledge is 'constructed' by the learner in the context of interaction within the environment. In other words, knowledge is not poured into empty vessels, but children actively create their own. Although Piaget and Vygotsky have much in common as theorists, Vygotsky advocated for more teacher intervention than did Piaget. Preschool teachers demonstrate their theoretical leanings by preference for merely observing children's attempts at problem solving or by actively teaching and mediating. The project described in this article expresses a more Vygotskian view in which direct teaching, modeling and learner scaffolding were important to the preschooler's constructive con-

flict behavior.

Some research has shown that even children as young as two can resolve peer conflicts without a teacher (Chen, 2003). When teachers intervene excessively in student conflicts the children's negotiation and independent conflict resolution skills are not required and therefore dwindle (Gillespie & Chick, 2001). Children are more likely to come up with solutions on their own without teacher intervention or with 'optimum' teacher intervention (Wheeler, 1994). However, teachers can scaffold their students during conflicts by providing them with the vocabulary to express themselves clearly and appropriately

(Wheeler, 1994). When teachers offer guided practice in using a conflict resolution process, they provide a tool that can be used to the degree that children are capable and ready. 'Vygotskians,' as opposed to 'Piagetians,' might advocate more frequently for teacher intervention. Regardless of theoretical framework, it is important for teachers to view their students as competent enough to derive solutions to social conflicts that will inevitably arise in a school setting.

An underlying principle of conflict resolution education is that conflict resolution skills are essential for life and should be embraced at all educational levels (Jones, 2004). Members of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (2006) believe that preschool is a good place to start!

A CRE Preschool Project

The forty-two preschoolers participating in the project ranged in age from three to five years. **The program design was adapted from models frequently described in conflict resolution education research literature.** Strategies that relate to regulating feelings and behaviors that were taught included remaining calm by taking deep breaths, refraining from harming the other person by holding one's own hand, and respecting each other by turn-taking in discussion without interrupting. Participants learned to state their problems and to develop a solution with the assistance of a peer mediator. Parents were also given the opportunity to become involved by participating at home.



various levels?

A: Conflict resolution education requires a commitment on the part of the school as well as resources in the form of time for training and financial compensation to the trainer. It has been shown in studies that when the students learn conflict resolution skills from someone who is really invested in CRE, they come away with a much greater understanding of and ability to use these skills. Unfortunately, many teachers don't have the commitment to using these skills and don't really model the respect for young people that they are asking the young people to show to each other by using CR skills.

Q: Please share with *The Fourth R* readers about some "lessons learned" regarding your recent work in schools.

A: It is difficult to get schools to give us the time to work with the youth. The emphasis on passing exams for No Child Left Behind has decreased the commitment to "soft skills" like conflict resolution and communication skills. However, many teachers have told me that when they start the school year by teaching these skills and reinforcing them, they find that everything else becomes easier. More academic content can be taught in a classroom

where conflicts are being handled in a mature and skillful way. The best possible scenario is when the whole school invests in using a consistent system of conflict resolution methods so that the details can be repeated whether the student is in the classroom, the cafeteria, the bus or the gym. Consistency is the key to effective learning and use of these skills. Combining conflict resolution education with peer mediation creates a more harmonious school climate. Having teachers and other school personnel on board is crucial to success.

Q: Perhaps CRE educators should go on a united advocacy campaign to concretely bring this to the attention of administrators and states agencies which control funding and curriculum design?

A: Yes. We should be involved in advocacy on a national level. Right now, I think this field needs to become more coordinated in its efforts and better connected. ACR is one way people could be more connected. Unfortunately, the dues are set for people who make a living doing mediation and not for teachers. We need to have a category for educators which would have lower dues. I think the Education Section is mak-

ing progress in figuring out how to connect educators better. *The Fourth R* is certainly one way. The [First Annual Inter-American Education] conference we had last year in Ohio and will be doing again in VA in the spring is another.



Kathryn has worked with American Friends Service Committee as the National Coordinator for the Help Increase the Peace Program (HIPPP) for four years and as Youth Empowerment through Conflict Resolution Director for one. She has been a mediator and trainer in mediation and conflict resolution for over 20 years. To access the HIPPP website, follow this link - <http://www.afsc.org/hipp>.

Book Review: Open Minds to Equality (3rd Edition) by Nancy Schniedewind & Ellen Davidson

Review by Priscilla Prutzman

Rethinking Schools has recently published the new 3rd edition of Open Minds to Equality "A Sourcebook of Learning activities to Affirm Diversity and Promote Equity." This updated classic in appreciating diversity has many new activities and a revised resource section and bibliography.

This wonderful new book shares many activities that help educators understand and change inequalities based on race, gender, class, age, language, sexual orientation, physical/mental ability and religion. The activities also promote respect for diversity and interpersonal equality among students. These approaches encourage participation, cooperation and democracy.

Beginning with trust-building, communication and collaboration, the approach is sequential. The second stage is recognizing stereotyping and discrimination among people and institutions and the third stage is looking at how to create change, self-confidence and collective responsibility. The book is adaptable for many ages and situations as is especially useful for teachers, facilitators and curriculum specialists.

An Interview With CRE Educator Kathryn Liss (continued from page 1)

We also have a focus on social justice issues which often leads groups to think about ways they can make a contribution in their community.

In the last year, the position changed so that I am again teaching peer mediation and helping to set up programs in Maryland, as well as leading Help Increase the Peace workshops.

Q: As HIPP Coordinator, what have been some of your lasting achievements and most memorable projects?

A: I am most pleased with the five day institutes in which we train youth and adults to lead the work. We have brought together people from many different backgrounds and ages to work together to become facilitators. They have then brought the skills they have learned back to their communities. As a result we have flourishing programs in new communities in the U.S. and in Japan and Hong Kong.

Q: What do you mean by “new communities” and how does that relate to your goals as a conflict resolution educator? Are there any patterns you have noted worth mentioning which are useful for CRE research or practice?

A: People come from communities which have not previously used HIPP and learned to lead the work and then taken it home. For example, all the high schools in Arlington County, VA now use HIPP as curriculum to teach a class in leadership in diversity. All of the teachers have been through a five day HIPP Institute. A mother and son came from Florida and now do the workshops in their town. I have gone to Japan where the material has been translated into Japanese and there are now at least a dozen trained facilitators. I have worked with a school in Hong Kong where they continue to have youth facilitators share the material with their peers. There are too many others to mention.

Q: Some community mediation centers have developed programs to provide conflict resolution education in school, as well as simultaneous instruction for parents in the community so that the “culture” of CRE is maintained between school and home life. What are your thoughts on this approach with respect to your work?

A: I think that teaching youths and adults the same skills is very important. It is important for all staff in a school to know these skills so that they are used school-wide. The same goes for families using them to resolve their problems. The more consistency and reinforcement young people experience, the more likely they are to use

the skills. Very few adults today have been taught conflict resolution skills and so everyone can learn something from a class. Peer mediation is something which is taught to only a handful of students who then help others to solve their problems. To be really effective, it is best for it to be combined with school-wide teaching of conflict resolution and communication skills.

The model of peer mediation I use was developed by The Mediation Center of Asheville, NC. We present the “ABC’s” (Active Listening, Brainstorming and Choosing). A key to the work is the “bridge” between listening and brainstorming where mediators learn to identify the issue in a way that meets both party’s needs. I emphasize that the job of the mediators is to find the right question and that empowers the disputants to find an answer that will work for them both. This training is quite different from when I facilitate HIPP workshops, where the facilitators are more like mediators themselves, encouraging the young people to find their own answers to how to handle potentially violent situations.

Q: Most recently, you've been working in Montgomery County, Maryland. Can you describe the work you're doing, including partners and schools with whom you're working and project/training content?

A: This year in Montgomery County, MD, we have cooperated with the Conflict Resolution Center of Montgomery County (CRCMC) to develop peer mediation programs in two middle schools. The schools applied to the state wide organization (C-DRUM) which funds conflict resolution and mediation programs to obtain funding and additional support. I have been the lead trainer. CRCMC volunteers have assisted me both in the trainings and in following up with the youth to help them become excellent mediators. The volunteers are also available to support the school mediation coordinator as he or she learns to run the program.

Q: So you feel that volunteers are useful in CRE for students?

The advantage of collaborating with a mediation center is that when we do the peer mediation trainings, the youth doing role-plays can be coached by adults who are actually experienced mediators. Often the school personnel who are coordinating the programs have never been trained as mediators and really aren’t in a position to coach the role-plays and help the youth learn the skills.

Q: In your view, how can conflict resolution education be supported by agencies or entities at

The steps of the conflict resolution procedure were:

- Calm down.
- Take deep breaths.
- Tell yourself: “Calm down.”
- Take some time to be alone and think first if you are very upset. (Note: Tell the other person you will talk about the problem after you calm down.)
- No hurting.
- Hold your own hands.
- Ask for help.
- Take turns speaking and listening.
- One person states the problem while the other person listens.
- You can also say: “I feel ____ when ____.” and “I want ____.”
- No interrupting.
- Mediator restates each person’s problem, feelings, and wants.
- Find a fair solution.

Before: Preschool teachers observed that before the intervention, children typically responded to conflicts by screaming, crying, hitting, saying something mean, or withdrawing. Conflicts often occurred over an object that both children wanted or power struggles, in which they manipulated the other child into doing what they wanted. During the preliminary observation period the children resolved conflicts by asking a teacher to intervene, walking away from the conflict and peer, or arriving at one-sided solutions in which only one child gets his or her way.

During: After the preliminary observation, the preschool teachers trained the children in following the conflict resolution procedure and strategies incrementally throughout a six-week period. In group meetings with the entire class, teachers discussed emotions of anger, frustration, and sadness and what children could

PRESCHOOL MEDIATION EXAMPLE

C: “K, I need a mediator friend to help me with J.”

K: “What’s the problem?”

Child C: “He squirted my clay.”

J: “I didn’t know.”

C: “Yes you did. I’m making the ball.”

K: “So J squirted the clay you are using, is that the problem?”

C: “Yes.”

J: “Yeah.”

K: “What solution do you have?”

C: “I could walk away.”

J: “No, I don’t like that. We have to compromise.”

K: “O.k. how about both of you leave and then come back?”

J: “O.k. that’s fair.”

C (to teacher): “K solved our problem. That’s so cool!”

do when they experienced these emotions. Teachers modeled each step of the resolution process. Role-play scenarios were also used in which the children asked to help resolve the conflicts of teachers or puppets.

During the first five weeks, teachers acted as mediators whenever the children were engaged in a conflict. In week six the children learned to be peer mediators and teachers were only peripherally involved. The children took turns being mediators each day, since the children decided this would be the fairest way of deciding who would mediate. Whenever the children

encountered conflicts for the remainder of the project, they were encouraged to find a peer mediator and resolve the conflicts on their own. Observation of naturally-occurring conflict continued.

After: Once implementation of the conflict resolution project began some changes in how the children handled conflict began to emerge. Observations revealed that the children spoke to each other more calmly when in conflict than prior to the conflict resolution project implementation. The children were able to talk through their problems rather than getting upset and yelling. The teachers also noticed that children listened to each other and took turns more.

Once the children were taught how to be peer mediators, the teachers reported that the children were very excited to participate in this role. Some of the children used their skills of mediation to guide their peers through the conflict resolution process. They would ask what the problem was, restate the problem, ask about feelings, ask for possible solutions, and make sure there was agreement. The teachers found that by the end of the conflict resolution project, the children were not coming to them as much to solve their problems, but were seeking out their peers to mediate for them. What follows is a recorded dialogue and picture taken during a naturally-occurring preschool conflict.

After learning the conflict resolution process, the children were able to take on another person’s perspective. They were successful in learning to work out their problems without teacher involvement. According to the teachers, the number of conflicts also decreased. These informal findings suggest that preschool-age children can benefit from learning a scaffolded model of conflict resolution—especially when the information presented is incremental and the steps and strategies are amenable to modification to better fit participants and settings.

Peer Mediation in Preschool? (continued from page 5)

In sum, preschoolers benefit from the use of a conflict resolution model under specific conditions: 1) teachers must give careful attention to introduction of 'tool skills' and provide opportunity for adequate practice following each introduction of new steps; 2) teachers must take a flexible approach to using a model, modifying it to fit their setting, and; 3) the children must be consulted to provide ownership. Lastly, a reminder to all educators: although conflict resolution is a process we engage in regularly, conflict resolution *education* involves the purposeful teaching and practice of research-based skills and strategies that, once learned, may be called upon when needed. Without intentional teaching of conflict themes about feelings and hurtful or helpful actions, young children may not develop constructive conflict behaviors, to their own detriment and that of their peers. Preschool is *not* too young to start!

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Call for Submissions

May 2008!

Are you a scholar or practitioner in the field of Conflict Resolution Education?

Are you interested in sharing your work among your peers?

Here is your chance!

The Fourth R is the semi-annual newsletter of the Education Section of the Association for Conflict Resolution, and a venue for presenting conflict resolution education research, writing, and artistic works. After the success of the 2007 year, *The Fourth R* is back in action and pleased to announce the call for submissions for May 2008!

ACR's Education Section provides resources and support for practitioners, educators, students, young people, trainers, community activists, and administrators in the fields of peace and conflict resolution in pre-K-12 to higher learning settings. Accessible to all, *The Fourth R* is a great way for the conflict resolution education community to network and share their work with all.

We Invite your articles of approximately 800-1500 words related to your research and work in the field of conflict resolution education. ***The Fourth R's May 2008 issue will highlight works on Addressing Special Education Needs for Students in Conflict Resolution Education.*** Submissions for feature articles may cover current projects or evaluation of past endeavors, as well as related events or on-going research. Contributors are also welcome to submit book or curriculum reviews, poetry, pictures, cartoons, student reflections or work on peer mediation, short descriptions of innovative or peer mediation programs, news clips, announcements, and more.

Your work for the May 2008 issue must be submitted in an electronic, word-processing format (preferably Microsoft Word) by ***February 15, 2008***. ***All work must be the original work of the author, and will be thoroughly reviewed by the editors.*** Submissions must include the author's full name, affiliation, and contact information including physical and e-mail addresses, as well as a short bio.

Please direct all inquiries and submissions to: the4thr@gmail.com

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