

Yvonne Howard
Dawn Mathews
Eileen Morrison
March 15, 2004

Review of a Middle School Peer Mediation Program

The middle school that we visited developed a peer helper program, the first of its kind in the district. It was implemented in the 1993-1994 school year. The program is based on training materials from The CRU Institute (Conflict Resolution Unlimited), in Bellevue, Washington. Each year, about 15 seventh-graders are chosen to be trained in peer mediation, with the hope that they will continue to participate in the program through eighth grade. The CRU Institute training is intended to be a three day comprehensive training course. However, due to budget and time constraints, the training for this program was cut to a one day intensive course. Thus, the efficacy of this individual program may not be equivalent to the outcome research conducted by The CRU Institute. Please refer to <http://www.cruinstitute.org> for further information.

Process:

- Students are self-referred as a member of the conflict. If they are involved in the conflict, teachers can refer students as well (a mutual friend may not refer others, as there must be some buy-in on the part of at least one person involved).
- The referral form includes information such as: person making the request, date, students involved in the conflict, what type of conflict (rumor/gossip, personal property, threats, boyfriend/girlfriend, fight, putdowns, other).
- The school counselors receive the referrals and choose appropriate peer mediators. Two mediators are chosen for each problem referral. Whenever possible, this occurs the same day that the referral is made.
- Peer mediators are given a reminder sheet of their training, and are sent to a small private room next to the counseling center. Students involved are pulled out of class to participate in mediation.
- The mediators introduce themselves and explain their purpose and role. All parties involved initial on the referral form that they agree to the boundaries that have been set for the process.
- Peer mediators use the techniques they have been trained in to help the people solve the conflict.
- After the discussion, the mediators fill out the reverse side of the referral form with the results/conclusions and report back to the school counselor.

The three school counselors at this middle school report that this program has been very effective in their school. They also stated that this program has enabled them to spend less time mediating arguments and more time on other important counseling tasks such as facilitating groups and teaching classroom guidance. Unfortunately, the counselors have not conducted any outcome research to formally evaluate the efficacy of the program. Evaluation is very important in this case, especially in light of the condensed training of peer mediators.

