

Looking for Success:
Evaluating Peer Mediation and Conflict
Resolution Education Programs

A workshop for the Ohio Commission for
Dispute Resolution, 1999-2000

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Based on a book in process by

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Conflict Resolution Education in the United States

Conflict resolution education (CRE) has been defined as “a spectrum of processes that utilize communication skills and creative and analytic thinking to prevent, manage, and peacefully resolve conflict”.

The Conflict Resolution Education Network estimates at least 8500 schools have conflict resolution programs by 1998. Most of these are peer mediation programs, but many take a more comprehensive approach to making the skills of problem-solving a part of the formal or informal curriculum of the school.

CRE emerged out of the social justice concerns of the 60s and 70s with the work of groups like the Quakers. In the early 1980s ESR organized a national association that later led to the development of the National Association for Mediation in Education in 1984. NAME subsequently merged with the National Institute for Dispute Resolution and its Conflict Resolution Education Network. Concurrent developments were the inclusion of Law Related Education in social studies curricula; and, violence prevention efforts included in health curricula.

Contents of CRE:

A school conflict resolution curriculum or program includes certain components that are intended to help students develop critical skills or abilities for constructive conflict management.

Program Components

- (1) an understanding of conflict
- (2) principles of conflict resolution (win-win interest-based problem-solving)
- (3) process steps in problem-solving (for example, agreeing to negotiate and establishing ground rules for the negotiation, gathering information about the conflict, exploring possible solution options, selecting solution options, and reaching agreement)
- (4) skills required to use each of these steps effectively (for example, active listening, reframing, understanding, and factoring into the process the impact that cultural differences have on the dispute).

Essential Skills/Abilities

Crawford and Bodine identify six categories or skills/abilities that are essential components of all conflict resolution education initiatives:

- (1) orientation abilities: values, beliefs, and attitudes which promote nonviolence, empathy, fairness, justice, trust, tolerance, self-respect, respect for others, and appreciation for controversy.

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- (2) perception abilities: ability to understand how oneself and others can have different, yet valid, perceptions of reality
- (3) emotional abilities: the ability to manage and effectively communicate a range of emotions, including anger, fear and frustration
- (4) communication abilities: active listening skills, speaking to be understood and listening to understand
- (5) creative-thinking abilities: the ability to construct cognitive models and to perceive and solve problems in new ways.
- (6) critical thinking abilities: skills to contrast and compare data, predict and analyze situations, and construct and test hypotheses.

Goals of CRE Programs

There are a wide variety of goals for CRE programs, almost as many goals as there are permutations of the programs themselves. But, for the purposes of our discussion, we will talk about five major goals and give examples of more specific goals within each area.

Create a Safe Learning Environment

- Decrease incidents of violence
- Decrease anti-social behavior that often leads to violence (harassment, bullying)
- Decrease conflicts between groups of students; particularly intergroup conflicts based on racial and ethnic differences
- Decrease suspensions, absenteeism and drop out rates related to unsafe learning environments

Create a Constructive Learning Environment

- Improve school climate
- Improve teacher/administration/student relationships
- Increase the valuing of diversity and the practice of tolerance
- Promote a respectful and caring environment

Improve Classroom Management

- Reduce the time teachers' spend on disciplinary problems in the classroom
- Increase use of student-centered discipline

Enhance Students' Social and Emotional Development

- Develop competence in pro-active conflict management skills
- Increase perspective taking
- Develop problem-solving abilities
- Increase empathy
- Improve emotional awareness and emotional management
- Reduce aggressive orientations and hostile attributions
- Increase the students' use of constructive conflict behaviors in schools and

in home and community contexts

Create a Constructive Conflict Community

Increase parental and community involvement in school affairs

Link school CRE with larger community CRE efforts

Develop more peaceful communities

All of these goals are related in the sense that each has, at its core, recognition of the importance of peaceful approaches to social interaction. However, the goals also differ to the extent that they reflect social justice ideologies. Some people believe that CRE is best used for the purposes of creating safe, orderly and constructive learning environments. Hence, their program goals reflect this orientation. However, some people have criticized the field of CRE for over-emphasizing an individually-oriented, skill building approach which fails to take into consideration larger social justice issues and underlying causative factors of conflict and violence. They argue that important goals of CRE should include the creation of communities that empower students and promote the development of tolerance that promotes social change and the reduction of oppressive systems.

Relationship of CRE to Other Fields

One of the difficulties in selecting, implementing, and evaluating a CRE program is the apparent overlap between these efforts and a variety of other initiatives. Understanding the overlap may help you decide on the kind of program you want and on the goals you are most interested in achieving. This, of course, will help clarify the focus of your evaluation process. CRE has commonalities with violence prevention, social and emotional learning, anti-bias education, and law-related education.

Violence prevention

Violence prevention (VP) and CRE share the goal of helping people realize that violence is learned and that non-violent alternatives and solutions are possible. However, there are differences:

- (1) VP is more limited in scope in that conflict resolution education is concerned with issues and situations beyond violence. CRE is broader in the sense that it focuses on nonviolent as well as violent episodes. But, VP is interested in violence that occurs outside of conflict situations.
- (2) VP tends to be more systemic than CRE, to look more at the history and environment of the violence; analyzing risk factors for violence and ways of reducing those factors. CRE focuses more on the event itself, trying to find alternatives for resolving the conflict and repairing the relationship.
- (3) VP emphasizes policy change while CR emphasizes individual skill building and community education.

Anti-Bias Education

Many people have argued convincingly that CRE does and should overlap with anti-bias education because prejudice may be an underlying cause for conflict and we need to realize the impact of prejudice on the school and community.

Anti-bias education probably encompasses the broadest mission of the disciplines. It not only seeks to educate people on issues of oppression, but also strives to undo social injustice in all its forms. The programs are designed to foster positive intergroup relations and promote social justice. Most anti-bias education efforts fall into one of the following four categories:

- 1) cross-cultural awareness: learning about one's own and other's cultures
- 2) prejudice reduction and appreciation for diversity: becoming aware of prejudices and providing cognitive skills to avoid responding in a prejudiced manner
- 3) hate crime prevention: providing information and education about hate crimes and their consequences for the offenders, targets, and society as a whole
- 4) examining the systemic roots of oppression and strategizing to dismantle them: exploring issues of power and privilege, including the way in which our institutions can change these structures.

Social and Emotional Learning

Suggests there are two ways that the concepts and tools of social-emotional learning overlap with conflict resolution education. Even when conflict resolution training is reduced to its most simplistic form, it requires students to authentically express feelings. And, social and emotional learning concepts can help students identify and understand triggers to conflict, and the importance of impulse control; and the need for perspective taking, empathy and compassion

SEL programs vary in their emphasis on the attention given to affective dimensions, but they all include:

- 1) some sort of initial emotional awareness/feelings assessment step followed by: identification of the problem
- 2) assessment of goals
- 3) consideration of solution
- 4) consideration of consequences
- 5) planning for action
- 6) means of assessing impact.

Many SEL educators are guided by the goal of fostering emotional intelligence through the accomplishment of the basic skills of self-awareness, self-regulation of emotion, self-monitoring and performance, empathy and perspective taking, and social skills in handling relationships.

Law-Related Education

Law-related education is an interactive educational approach which guides people in exploring the foundations and applications of law. Like CRE, SEL, and Anti-Bias Training, LRE helps us understand and define the boundaries of socially acceptable behavior. It focuses on helping students develop sensitivity to dynamics which create conflict, to learn intervention skills which prevent the escalation of conflict, and to understand how law enforcement and other methods are applied in resolving conflict or the consequences of that conflict.

CRE Program Models

There are four basic approaches to CRE operation in schools:

- 1) process curriculum approach (an entree to CRE characterized by devoting a specific time to teaching the foundational abilities, principles, and one or more of the problem-solving processes of CR as a separate course, distinct curriculum, or daily or weekly lesson plan)
- 2) mediation program approach (trains select individuals in the principle and foundation abilities of CR and in the mediation process in order to provide neutral third-party facilitation services to help those in conflict reach a resolution)
- 3) the peaceable classroom approach (a whole classroom methodology that includes teaching students the foundation abilities, principles, and one or more of the three problem-solving processes of conflict resolution. CRE is incorporated into the core subjects of the curriculum and into classroom management strategies)
- 4) the peaceable school approach is a comprehensive whole-school methodology that builds on the peaceable classroom approach by using CR as a system of operation for managing the school as well as the classroom. CR principles and processes are learned and used by all members of the school (including parents).

Obviously, the program models differ in their ability to achieve some of the goals that were discussed earlier.

Does CRE work? Overview of Research Findings on CRE

A number of reviews have recently been written overviewing the research on the impact of CRE. In a 1996 review, the authors state that the current research indicates that:

- 1) These programs are effective in teaching students integrative negotiation and mediation procedures
- 2) After training students tend to use these conflict management strategies, which generally leads to constructive outcomes, and
- 3) Students' success in resolving their conflicts constructively tends to reduce the number of student-student conflicts, and results in reduced suspensions

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Since that review, the Comprehensive Mediation Evaluation Project has added to our understanding of comparative program efficacy.

Comprehensive Peer Mediation Evaluation Project

Two-year research project, in twenty-seven schools in three communities (Philadelphia, Laredo, Denver) In each community a 3 x 3 field experiment (peer mediation only or cadre programs, peer mediation plus or whole school programs, and control schools) by educational levels (elementary, middle, high school).

Research Questions:

RQ #1: Does Peer Mediation Impact Students' Conflict Attitudes and Behavior?

- how frequently they are involved in conflict?
- how frequently they help others who are in conflict?
- their values about pro-social behavior in general?
- their conflict styles?
- their tendency toward aggressive behavior?
- their development of perspective-taking and collaborative conflict orientations?
- their ability to demonstrate or enact the skills taught in training?

RQ #2: Does Peer Mediation Impact School Climate?

- teachers' and staff's perceptions of school climate?
- students' perceptions of school climate?
- general rates of suspension and incidents of violence?

RQ #3: Do Peer Mediation Programs Effectively Handle Disputes?

- How many cases use mediation?
- What types of disputes are involved?
- Who refers disputes to mediation?
- What is the agreement/settlement rate?
- How satisfied are mediators and disputants with the mediation process and outcome?

RQ #4: Are Cadre Programs Better than Whole School Programs (or vice versa)? In terms of impact on students' attitudes and behaviors, school climate, and program utility

RQ #5: Are Peer Mediation Programs Equally Effective (or Ineffective) for Elementary, Middle and High Schools? In terms of impact on students' attitudes and behaviors, school climate, and program utility

RQ #6: Is the Gender and Race/Ethnicity of Students Related to the Impact of Peer Mediation Programs? Are programs more or less impacting depending upon the race or gender of the students involved?

Training and Program Models

Peer Mediation Only or Cadre Programs:

- Grades trained 4th, 5th (Elementary); 6th, 7th, 8th (Middle); 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th (High)
- 18-25 students were trained per school
- A minimum of 15 hours of training in elementary schools and 20-30 hours in middle and high schools.

Peer Mediation Plus or Whole School Programs:

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In addition to the peer mediation training:

Curriculum Infusion:

- 6-8 hours of training
- given to teachers who committed to using at least 1 period (45 minutes) per week of class time to teach from the conflict curriculum
- 1-2 teachers per grade in elementary schools and 2 teachers p.g. in middle/high schools

Conflict Skills Training:

- 6-8 hours of conflict skills training
- offered to all adult staff of the school (teachers, non-teaching staff, administrators)

Sampling

- 27 schools with an approximate total student population of 26,000, an approximate total teacher population of 1500, and an approximate total staff population of 1700.
- Exhaustive sampling was used for peer mediators, students in conflict training, and teachers.
- Sampling of control students was done by random selection of classes for ease in data administration.
- In control schools and for within-school control classes in treatment schools 1 class per grade was randomly selected from elementary schools and 2 classes per grade were randomly selected from middle and high schools.

OVERALL:

430 peer mediators
5400 control students
1400 conflict training students
1225 teachers/ administrative staff

Measurement and Data Collection

- Age appropriate measures
- Pre-tests and multiple post-tests of all measures
- Case files were collected on mediations throughout the two year period.
- Qualitative data (case narratives, interviews, open-ended responses on questionnaires, audio-tapes of mediation role plays, etc.) was collected throughout the course of the project..
- Yearly summaries of violence and suspension data were obtained from most schools to enable comparison of a baseline prior to program implementation and after implementation.

RQ #1: Does Peer Mediation Impact Students' Conflict Attitudes and Behavior?

GENERAL FINDING: PEER MEDIATION PROGRAMS PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT BENEFIT IN DEVELOPING CONSTRUCTIVE SOCIAL AND CONFLICT BEHAVIOR IN CHILDREN AT ALL EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

It is clear that exposure to peer mediation programs, whether cadre or whole school, has a significant and lasting impact on students' conflict attitudes and behaviors. Students who are direct recipients of program training have the most impact, however, students without direct training also benefit. The data clearly demonstrate that exposure to peer mediation reduces personal conflict and increases the tendency to help others with conflicts, increases pro-social values, decreases aggressiveness, and increases perspective-taking and conflict competence. Especially for peer mediators, these impacts are significant, cumulative, and are sustained for long periods. Students trained in mediation, at all educational levels, are able to enact and utilize the behavioral skills taught in training.

RQ #2: Does Peer Mediation Impact School Climate?

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GENERAL FINDING: PEER MEDIATION PROGRAMS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

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 educational levels. Peer mediation programs had a limited to moderate impact on students' perceptions of climate. There is no evidence that peer mediation programs impacted overall violence or suspension rates.

RO #3: Do Peer Mediation Programs Effectively Handle Disputes?

GENERAL FINDING: PEER MEDIATION EFFECTIVELY HANDLES PEER DISPUTES.

When used, peer mediation is very effective at handling disputes. There is a very high rate of agreement at all educational levels and high mediator and disputant satisfaction. However, the number of cases documented suggests that mediation may be underutilized given the effectiveness.

RO #4: Are Cadre Programs Better than Whole School Programs (or vice versa)?

GENERAL FINDING: BOTH PROGRAM MODELS YIELD SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS. CADRE PROGRAMS YIELD BETTER INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES WHILE WHOLE SCHOOL PROGRAMS YIELD BETTER CLIMATE OUTCOMES.

The results do not support the assumption that whole school programs are clearly superior to cadre programs. Cadre programs have a stronger impact in terms of students' conflict attitudes and behaviors and whole school programs have a stronger impact in terms of school climate. Based on this evidence, schools that cannot afford a whole school approach may secure similar, or even superior, benefits with a cadre program that is well implemented.

RO #5: Are Peer Mediation Programs Equally Effective (or Ineffective) for Elementary, Middle and High Schools?

GENERAL FINDING: PEER MEDIATION PROGRAMS ARE EFFECTIVE AT ALL EDUCATIONAL LEVELS.

Peer mediation programs have more impact on climate at elementary school levels, largely due to the ability to diffuse impact in the smaller population. Otherwise, differences between middle and high school levels are relatively unimportant. Peer mediation programs have significant positive impact at all levels.

RO #6: Is the Gender and Race/Ethnicity of Students Related to the Impact of Peer Mediation Programs?

GENERAL FINDING: RACE AND GENDER DIFFERENCES DO NOT IMPACT PROGRAM EFFICACY.

Program impacts were affected by race and gender, but not significantly. Differences were found only in the students' conflicts attitudes and behaviors and the differences confirm other research on gender and diversity impacts in conflict.

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Why Evaluate Your Program?

What is evaluation?

It's useful to make a distinction between going through the planning process necessary to start a new conflict resolution education program in your school and assessing how well a current program is operating or the effects it is having. The former activity is program planning and implementation. The latter activity is program evaluation. Evaluation is a means of getting feedback for two general purposes: (1) to summarize the nature and impact of the program and (2) to change or alter the program to better serve the school.

Two Orientations to Program Evaluation

Process Evaluation

What are some of the processes that one might be interested in monitoring in conflict resolution education? Although the processes may differ depending upon the program model being used, all programs will have some concerns in the following areas.

Assessment Process: How well were the needs for the program assessed prior to program development and implementation? Were key stakeholders identified? Were all relevant voices heard? Were needs clarified and well articulated? The more elaborate the program model the more complex the assessment process should be.

Planning Process: What planning processes were used to identify program goals and objectives, to secure needed resources, and to develop an implementation strategy? Did planning consider how the program would be integrated into existing activities? Or, for more complex program models, did planning deal with problems of coordination between program components?

Orientation Process: Once the assessment and planning is completed, the program needs to be introduced to the teachers, staff and students at the school. Process evaluation could focus on how the orientation was accomplished.

Selection Process: This is the issue of who is chosen to directly participate in the conflict resolution education program and what the impact of those participation decisions are for the program and school.

Training Process: All conflict resolution education program models use some form of training. In all training processes there are questions about the nature of the training and the adequacy of the training. How long did the training last? Who delivered it? Were the trainers qualified? What kinds of pedagogical approaches were used? What instructional or supporting materials were involved? What was the quality of those materials? What was student/staff/parent/community member reaction to the training?

Program Implementation Process: The process of implementation itself differs considerably by program model. In peer mediation programs the program implementation processes involve issues of program publicity, referral to mediation, utility of mediation, and linkage to other disciplinary activities. In curriculum integration models, process evaluation can explain how the curriculum was actually integrated in the classroom situation and the factors that influenced the integration process. You can also assess how teachers using the curriculum used team process to coordinate and orchestrate the activity across classes or grades. In whole-school models, especially those that have multiple components and involve external and internal groups, process evaluation allows emphasis on program development and coordination. In terms of development, process evaluation helps you explain the stages that the school went through in developing and implementing the various components. Difficulties or successes in one stage can be linked to the progress in an other stage. Issues of coordination, especially when school programs involve a strong link to community, are particularly important to document. How was the community involved? In what ways did the interaction between community and school facilitate program success in each venue?

Program Maintenance Process: If a program is long-lasting it will have to face the issue of turnover in personnel and participants. Some questions that can be asked of program maintenance include the following. What is the degree of turnover that is experienced in the program? How is the selection, initiation and orientation of new members or participants handled? How are record keeping procedures used to maintain a working history and continuity of the program?

Context/Environmental Factors: For the purposes of process evaluation, we suggest attending to at least four contexts. The **school context** involves anything happening in the school that is outside the specific operation of the program. The **district context** involves changes at the level of the school district and how that impacts school activity. The **community context** concerns the pressures and supports that are present in the surrounding neighborhood, community, or city in which the school is located. And finally, at the larger **societal level**, there may be events that achieve statewide or national visibility that impact a school program.

Outcome Evaluation

Outcome evaluation focuses on whether and to what extent specific, tangible goals and objectives established for the program are achieved. The emphasis is on the outcomes of the program and your ability to document them. Most of us are more familiar with this type of evaluation than process evaluation.

The crux of outcome evaluation is twofold: (1) to document what happened in terms of utility or frequency (as opposed to how it happened in process evaluation) and (2) to document what changed as a result of the program. In the first area of outcome

evaluation, people attend to questions about the extent of involvement or activity. For example, how many students were actually trained? How many parents attended the workshop sessions? How many cases went to mediation? How many cases were resolved in mediation? How many times were student mediators linked with community mediators in community mediation situations?

In the second area of outcome evaluation, the notion of proving change requires that you have some way to compare what the situation was before the program with what happened during and/or after the program. Most of us are familiar with pre-test and post-test designs and the use of control groups that are necessary for this kind of outcome evaluation.

The types of outcomes that can be evaluated are as varied as the types of programs that exist. However, we can talk about six general kinds of outcomes that most programs are interested in at some level.

Skills/Abilities Learned: Outcome evaluation may focus on questions about how well children learned the skills of active listening, perspective-taking, empathic response, generation of alternatives, anger control, etc. How well do mediators learn the actual process of mediation? How well do parents learn the process of emotional coaching and anger management?

Attitudes Changed: Many conflict educators are interested in helping students adopt more pro-social attitudes.

Behaviors Changed: Given the link between conflict resolution education and violence prevention efforts, an important outcome to be evaluated for many people is the degree to which violent behavior is decreased or constructive conflict behavior is increased as a result of the program.

Program Utility: Questions of program utility have to do with the extent to which conflict processes taught have actually been used in the school.

Resources Created: First, there are the **tangible economic** resources. Second, there are the **instructional products**. Finally, there are **relationships and infrastructures** that are formed.

When and How to Use Information Gained From Program Evaluation

One of the decisions you will have to make concerns when and how to use the information gained from your program evaluation. Once again, there are two general approaches: (1) summative evaluation and (2) action research evaluation. Summative evaluation waits until the end of the evaluation period to report findings to the audience for evaluation. Action research evaluation assumes that information gained from the evaluation should be fed back to the program as a relatively immediate feedback mechanism that allows the program to be revised and altered in midstream in order to maximize performance (Carruthers, et al, 1996).

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Both approaches have advantages. Summative evaluation is advantageous when the highest priority is to demonstrate the impact that the program had on certain outcomes and strong change indices are needed as evidence. Action research evaluation is advantageous because it allows you to make improvements quickly that can prevent wasting resources and effort.

Why Evaluate Your Conflict Resolution Education Program?

The main reason to do program evaluation is to see if the program works. But that is a deceptively simple statement. When you actually contemplate a program evaluation you assuming what “works” means and why it may be important to you.

Because it is Mandated:

It is becoming increasingly common for school boards, and external funders to require that programs be evaluated in order for them to be approved and funded.

Monitoring a Program to Make Sure It Is Operating As Planned:

One of the most compelling reasons to evaluate a program is to determine whether those needs have indeed been addressed or whether the goals have been achieved.

Improving a Program By Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses:

A good program evaluation will help you identify strengths that were expected as well as those that were not. Sometimes, the reasons a program works are unanticipated and program evaluation helps us recognize and perpetuate those.

Expanding a Program:

Whenever program expansion is a possibility, and certainly when it is a goal, program evaluation provides a means of forecasting needs and planning for strengths. For example, program evaluation can provide a good estimate of the staff support necessary for maximum impact of the program. In any expansion effort, whether in the same school or across schools, program evaluation provides the road map for success. It offers the opportunity to learn from previous mistakes, to preserve best practices, and to enhance the efficiency of the process.

Gaining Additional Resources:

One of the main reasons to do program evaluation is to make the strongest case for why you should continue to receive support for your efforts.

The Steps of Evaluation

Step 1: Assessing Your Needs

Why do we need this program?

One of the reasons it is important to assess your needs for a conflict resolution education program is that needs are motivating forces that ultimately influence expectations and define success. If you understand what your needs are, you are empowered to select interventions that have a higher chance of addressing them and you will be more motivated to implement the intervention.

Who are “we”?

Who are the stakeholders in the program? Stakeholders are the “we” whose needs are being addressed by the program; people who should be most directly involved in decisions about the program.

- students, teachers, aids, staff, administrators, parents--just about everyone involved in the day to day life of the school
- people who provide the conflict resolution training
- funders for the program
- community members-- local police department, business news agencies, and civic organizations.

Who should be given the opportunity to voice their needs and have those needs influence the design and implementation of the conflict resolution education program? Give priority to stakeholders who will be most closely involved with the daily operation of the program (e.g., teachers, students, parents).

What are our needs and concerns?

In order to determine whether you need a conflict resolution education program you have to consider the available information, the quality of the information, and additional information you can obtain to make the most informed decision. Once the major stakeholders are identified you can include them as valuable information resources. A good place to start is to formalize our understanding of stakeholders’ perceptions and interests by surveying and/or interviewing the stakeholders.

Some sample questions that you may want to include on a basic survey of your stakeholders are the following:

- What kinds of conflicts are occurring that need attention?
- How common are these conflicts?
- Who tends to be involved in these conflicts?
- How are conflicts usually dealt with?

- Why does the school need a conflict resolution education program?
- What would you like to see such a program accomplish? What are your goals for the program?
- What are your concerns about having this kind of program?
- Who should we talk to in order to get their input before proceeding with the development of such a program?
- How interested are you in participating in the development and implementation of a conflict resolution education program?

What information do we have to support our assumptions and plans?

Archival data are documents produced by the school or the school district that provide context and information on the nature of conflicts in the school and how they have been dealt with.

Current school discipline and code of conduct policies
Employee or student handbooks
School demographics or report data
Discipline referrals

Conflict experts are an invaluable resource. While there are a variety of options, we'll mention two: local training organizations and state or national organizations.

Training organizations
State or national organizations

Fellow educators who have had experience with conflict resolution education programs can help you learn from their experience. If they work in the same district they will also have much better information about the process of securing support for the program.

What resources do we have available for this program?

Commitment of Stakeholders: You should have at least a majority of stakeholders who have expressed a strong commitment to actively supporting the program. Conversely, if you anticipate active resistance to the program from more than 5-10% of stakeholders, you do not have adequate backing to begin.

Conflict Resolution Education Experts: Do you have access to training organizations and experts in the area who can provide training and program implementation guidance?

Staffing: Do you have people in the school who are willing to act as program coordinators. Usually you should have a site leadership team of 4-8 people. In the best situations they should be given paid release time for this work. But, in reality, many program coordinators donate their efforts on top of their regular work load.

Ideally, this person should have at least a quarter time release for program coordination.

Money: Do you have the money to pay for training support, to buy curriculum, instructional materials, and small incentives for the students (t-shirts, publicity materials, pizzas for after school meetings, etc.)

Time: Given the demands being placed on schools today, such as state proficiency testing, you may find your school schedule does not allow for any additional programs at this time.

Space: Do you have space to use for training, for meetings, for mediation sessions if your program has a mediation component?

The type of evaluation you can do will depend upon your goals for the evaluation and the resources you have available. In fact, the assessment process for program evaluation parallels the basic questions for the assessment process for program implementation.

Who are “we”? Stakeholders in the evaluation

In most cases, the stakeholders for the program are also going to be stakeholders in the evaluation process since the evaluation is a component of the program. But, there are others who should be considered.

External Evaluators: They have an interest in the evaluation quality, wanting to make sure that their work is a high quality, accurate, and objective assessment of the program.

Funders: Funders often have strong expectations for what constitutes quality program evaluation. It is very important that you dialogue with funders to determine what their expectations are.

Other Educators: Often, educators are interested in what research can tell us about program efficacy, even if they are not involved in the program.

What are our goals for the evaluation?

- Ask stakeholders what kind of information they would consider valuable from a program evaluation.
- Connect the goals for the evaluation with evaluation design.
- Realize that there is likely to be disagreement among stakeholders about what the evaluation goals should be.
- Realize that, just as conditions change, so will the evaluation goals.

What information is available?

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- Consider the available information about related research in the area. Don't re-invent the wheel.
- Find out whether information is available or can be made available to assess program impact.

What resources do we have available for this evaluation?

Commitment of Stakeholders: Now we are talking about the willingness of the stakeholders to participate in program evaluation processes.

Program Evaluation Experts: Do you have access to program evaluation experts who can serve as mentors or guides during your initial program evaluation experiences?

Staffing: Do you have people in the school who are willing to act as program evaluators? Do you have people who can help prepare surveys, collect data, record data, read reports, analyze data, and write reports?

Money: Do you have the money to pay for research support, office supplies, copying costs, etc.

Time: Do you have the time to do the evaluation? Does the school staff have time to devote to it? Do teachers have time to allow data collection in their classes?

Technology: If you are doing statistical analyses, or are planning on using graphs in your report, do you have the necessary computer software?

Step 2: Setting Your Goals

There is a strong relationship between goals for the program and goals for the program evaluation. At the heart of the program evaluation is the need to demonstrate whether the effort expended has been valuable. Value is defined in any situation, at least in part, by the extent to which goals and needs have been met. Thus, a good program evaluation attends to the goals for the program. But, in addition, there are goals for the evaluation itself. These goals have to do with the questions of utility of the evaluation--why are you doing the evaluation and how do you hope to use the information from the evaluation?

If you are engaged in a long-term program implementation and evaluation process, you will also need to monitor your goals and decide whether they are stable or are changing as events unfold. In most program evaluation, even that considered summative and outcome based, there is a realization that information from the evaluation process is part of a larger whole. Your goals for the program and change, necessitating a change in goals for the evaluation. Your information about program success or failure

may suggest other questions about program efficacy that develop into new goals for the evaluation.

Assessing Goals for the Program

What are your program goals?

Whose goals should be considered?

What is the time frame for achieving goals?

How do you prioritize goals?

How can you articulate your goals in terms of objectives?

How do program goals change?

Assessing Goals for the Evaluation

What are your evaluation goals?

Whose goals should be considered?

What if goals are divergent?

What is mutual goal attainment?

What is the time frame for achieving goals?

How do you prioritize goals?

How can you articulate your goals in terms of objectives?

How do evaluation goals change?

Do changes in program goals effect evaluation goals and vice versa?

Are there evaluation goals that should not change?

Step 3: Deciding What To Look For

Measurement in research, whether it is traditional research or evaluation research, is very important because the measures we use to document something dictate what we will be able to say about it. Measurement is one of the basic tools of the researcher. If we select the right tool for the right job, we will have confidence in the quality of the overall product. But, if we mistakenly use measures that are inappropriate for our needs, we will have little to say and much to justify in terms of wasted resources.

Perhaps the most fundamental distinction is between qualitative and quantitative measures. Qualitative measures produce qualitative data, which is information that is not expressed in numerical form. Quantitative measures produce quantitative data, or information that is expressed in numerical form. The relative advantage of qualitative data is the richness of information provided. Narrative, quotes, statements of concern, are much richer in their ability to portray a reality and illustrate a concern than a number. But, quantitative data has the relative advantage of manipulability and comparability. You can do many things with numerical expressions, like find averages and monitor the amount of relative change over time, that you cannot do with qualitative data. Quantitative data also provides more ability to compare responses or scores across large groups of people. While thematic comparison among people is possible with qualitative measures, the comparison is quite limited in number and the exactness of the comparison.

There are a number of qualitative measures that yield valuable information: documents or written text, observation of behavior and interaction, and interviewing. Each of these has been used effectively in program evaluation; usually with an emphasis on process concerns. Similarly, there are a variety of quantitative measures and scaling methods that are available for use: quantitative content analysis of behavior, survey questionnaires with closed-ended questions, and paper and pencil measures of attitudes, tests of ability, etc. Given the ability of quantitative measurement to provide exact comparisons and change indications, it is reasonable that much outcome evaluation research relies heavily on quantitative data of some sort.

What kinds of measurement are available and what are their relative advantages?

What are qualitative measures and data collection issues?

- interviews
- document analysis
- observation

What are quantitative measures and data collection issues?

- surveys
- behavioral observation
- questionnaires

What kinds of measurement are best for process concerns?

What kinds of measurement are best for outcome concerns?

How can measures be used together or triangulated to provide assessment of both process and outcome concerns simultaneously?

How does type of measurement impact how immediately one can give feedback to the program staff?

Step 4: Getting What You Look For

Choosing the right measure does not guarantee that the measure will be used appropriately. I can buy a wonderful chainsaw to cut down a tree, but if I don't know how to operate it, I might as well have bought an ax. This step in evaluation research requires that you assess the best ways to use the measure you have chosen and, if necessary, adjust its use to your research context.

For both qualitative and quantitative measures, it is important that you know the measure is truly measuring what it purports to measure (the issue of validity) and that it measures it consistently and accurately (the issue of reliability).

The appropriate use of measures is much easier in the laboratory than in the real world. An important topic of discussion for this step is the reality of using measures with children and ways to guard against poor data and frustrated students. When children are involved in your program evaluation, measures need to be modified to insure they are appropriate for this age group. This raises several issues including: using age appropriate measures (what children of certain ages can and can't handle), using graphic presentation to make measures "user friendly" for children, using administration techniques that help

insure they will respond accurately to the measures, timing data collection so it does not negatively effect results, and modifying measures so they are culturally sensitive.

What makes a good measure?

Why should a measure be reliable?

Why should a measure be valid?

How can your use of measures increase reliability and validity?

Matching measures with a population

insuring age appropriate measures

insuring culturally sensitive measures

Tips for administering measures

instructions for completing measures

how timing data collection can affect results

oral presentation as support

group versus individual administration

how fatigue affects data

How to design data collection to allow you to make certain claims

When you are interested in claims about "what happened"?

(For what happened - the issue is comprehensiveness - making sure you have comprehensive data collection of every incident of the behavior in questions)

When you are interested in claims about "what has changed"?

(For what changed- the issue is comparability - making sure that you can contrast the condition before the program and how it has changed because of the program).

Step 5: Making Sense of What You See

The fifth step in the process of program evaluation is to analyze the data in order to make sense of what you have gathered from qualitative and quantitative measures.

Analyzing qualitative data is primarily a task of interpretation. If you have conducted interviews, observed behaviors, or collected documents, you have a great deal of text that you need to inductively identify a coherent set of themes or insights. The process of induction means that you start by noticing specific, individual insights; then you recognize patterns of insights or themes in the data. Yet, each form of qualitative data presents its own challenges. Interviews, even when standardized, may differ in terms of questions asked and information given. These nuances need to be appreciated when drawing comparisons across interviews. Observed behavior, especially nonverbal behavior, must be interpreted in a manner as close to the person's intent as possible. Sometimes, this means that you have to be very sensitive to the context that the behavior occurred in in order to make an accurate interpretation. And documents, especially organizational ones, need to be analyzed in terms of the content of the document and the possible interpretations of that content.

The process of analyzing quantitative data is a task of data reduction and statistical manipulation. In most program evaluation research, statistical analyses fall into three general categories. First, there are reports of basic descriptive data. These statistics tell you how much of something occurred or was displayed. Second, there are data that show a relationship between things. For example, you may use statistical analyses that show a relationship between the satisfaction with mediation training and the number of cases mediated in a year. Finally, there are statistics that allow you to draw conclusions about differences between groups. For example, analyses may indicate that students who received conflict curriculum integrated into regular classroom settings had a greater increase in perspective-taking skills than students who were trained in after school programs.

How to analyze qualitative data?

How to prepare qualitative data?

Organizing and prioritizing the data (making sure that you have separated the data in terms of who you got it from, when you got it, and where you got it).

Getting the data ready for analysis (transcribing interviews, typing open-ended question responses, etc.)

How to make sense of qualitative data?

Looking for themes - inductive analysis

Creating useful categories (types of categories, guidelines for effective content categories)

Determining what is important (what's confirming, what's new, what's different, what's unexpected, what's contrary to common sense?) and how it relates back to your question/goal?

How to analyze quantitative data?

How to prepare quantitative data?

Organizing and prioritizing the data (making sure that you have separated the data in terms of who you got it from, when you got it, and where you got it).

Getting the data ready for analysis (coding data, cleaning data, entering data, tabulating data)

How to make sense of quantitative data?

Frequencies

Changes/Gains or Losses

Comparisons

Determining what is important (the difference that makes a difference) and how it relates back to your question/goal?

How qualitative and quantitative data may be used together to provide additional information?

Step 6: Letting Others Know What You Found

Your research is a valuable thing. You have planned it carefully. You have worked diligently to collect the right kinds of data from the right kinds of people. Hours

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have been spent analyzing data and making sense of your findings. You have something to say to all of the stakeholders who you considered at the very beginning stages of this evaluation research. Your research deserves a decent presentation.

Unfortunately, most evaluation research is not presented well. In fact, the norm is often to have research findings presented in a manner that is so difficult to make sense of the reader doesn't even try. Why?

The most common problem is that the research is presented without a sense of who the audience is and how they may use the information from the research. Before writing a research report, you should review the various audiences that will receive the report and ask yourself two questions about each audience: (1) what information is valuable to them?, and (2) how can I summarize that information in the most effective way? Since some of your audiences will be stakeholders, your earlier efforts at identifying stakeholders and their goals for an evaluation will enable you to answer the first question. For audiences that are not stakeholders, you may want to talk with others who have written reports that were favorably received by that group, or look at sample reports to see the variety sent to that audience.

The issue of presenting valuable information in the most effective way means that you should consider the form of evidence that is most persuasive. For some audiences, statistical results are the most persuasive evidence that impact occurred. For example, say you are writing your report to a funder who has made clear their interest in traditional scientific documentation of program effects. You would want to concentrate on providing figures in a way that works. That may be creative use of table, charts, and illustrations that bring the statistics to life. However, assume you are presenting your findings to an audience of parents. Perhaps the evidence that is most compelling to them is the narratives provided by children like their own of why the program made a difference in their lives. If you are preparing your report for this audience, a judicious use of quotes and personal stories would be far more persuasive than graphs and statistics.

Finally, it is also important to think about how to disseminate the information once the analysis and report or summary is ready. How can you let people know that your information is available? Suggestions are presented for getting media coverage of your program and disseminating your information beyond your school or community. Overall, if you are prepared to deal with the sixth step of program evaluation, you will be able to answer the questions below.

Disseminating Your Results

What kinds of evidence may be valuable?

statistics

stories

analogies

How to package your results with the nature of your audience?

Assessing Your Needs

Assessing Needs for the Conflict Resolution Education Program

Why do we need this program?

One of the reasons it is important to assess your needs for a conflict resolution education program is that needs are motivating forces that ultimately influence expectations and define success. If you understand what your needs are, you are empowered to select interventions that have a higher chance of addressing them and you will be more motivated to implement the intervention.

Who are “we”?

Who are the stakeholders in the program? Stakeholders are the “we” whose needs are being addressed by the program; people who should be most directly involved in decisions about the program.

- students, teachers, aids, staff, administrators, parents--just about everyone involved in the day to day life of the school
- people who provide the conflict resolution training
- funders for the program
- community members-- local police department, business news agencies, and civic organizations.

Who should be given the opportunity to voice their needs and have those needs influence the design and implementation of the conflict resolution education program? Give priority to stakeholders who will be most closely involved with the daily operation of the program (e.g., teachers, students, parents).

What are our needs and concerns?

In order to determine whether you need a conflict resolution education program you have to consider the available information, the quality of the information, and additional information you can obtain to make the most informed decision. Once the major stakeholders are identified you can include them as valuable information resources. A good place to start is to formalize our understanding of stakeholders’ perceptions and interests by surveying and/or interviewing the stakeholders.

Some sample questions that you may want to include on a basic survey of your stakeholders are the following:

- What kinds of conflicts are occurring that need attention?
- How common are these conflicts?
- Who tends to be involved in these conflicts?
- How are conflicts usually dealt with?
- Why does the school need a conflict resolution education program?

- What would you like to see such a progress accomplish? What are your goals for the program?
- What are your concerns about having this kind of program?
- Who should we talk to in order to get their input before proceeding with the development of such a program?
- How interested are you in participating in the development and implementation of a conflict resolution education program?

What information do we have to support our assumptions and plans?

Archival data are documents produced by the school or the school district that provide context and information on the nature of conflicts in the school and how they have been dealt with.

Current school discipline and code of conduct policies
Employee or student handbooks
School demographics or report data
Discipline referrals

Conflict experts are an invaluable resource. While there are a variety of options, we'll mention two: local training organizations and state or national organizations.

Training organizations
State or national organizations

Fellow educators who have had experience with conflict resolution education programs can help you learn from their experience. If they work in the same district they will also have much better information about the process of securing support for the program.

What resources do we have available for this program?

Commitment of Stakeholders: You should have at least a majority of stakeholders who have expressed a strong commitment to actively supporting the program. Conversely, if you anticipate active resistance to the program from more than 5-10% of stakeholders, you do not have adequate backing to begin.

Conflict Resolution Education Experts: Do you have access to training organizations and experts in the area who can provide training and program implementation guidance?

Staffing: Do you have people in the school who are willing to act as program coordinators. Usually you should have a site leadership team of 4-8 people. In the best situations they should be given paid release time for this work. But, in reality, many program coordinators donate their efforts on top of their regular work load. Ideally, this person should have at least a quarter time release for program coordination.

Money: Do you have the money to pay for training support, to buy curriculum, instructional materials, and small incentives for the students (t-shirts, publicity materials, pizzas for after school meetings, etc.)

Time: Given the demands being placed on schools today, such as state proficiency testing, you may find your school schedule does not allow for any additional programs at this time.

Space: Do you have space to use for training, for meetings, for mediation sessions if your program has a mediation component?

Assessing Needs for Your Program Evaluation

The type of evaluation you can do will depend upon your goals for the evaluation and the resources you have available. In fact, the assessment process for program evaluation parallels the basic questions for the assessment process for program implementation.

Who are “we”?: Stakeholders in the evaluation

In most cases, the stakeholders for the program are also going to be stakeholders in the evaluation process since the evaluation is a component of the program. But, there are others who should be considered.

External Evaluators: They have an interest in the evaluation quality, wanting to make sure that their work is a high quality, accurate, and objective assessment of the program.

Funders: Funders often have strong expectations for what constitutes quality program evaluation. It is very important that you dialogue with funders to determine what their expectations are.

Other Educators: Often, educators are interested in what research can tell us about program efficacy, even if they are not involved in the program.

What are our goals for the evaluation?

- Ask stakeholders what kind of information they would consider valuable from a program evaluation.
- Connect the goals for the evaluation with evaluation design.
- Realize that there is likely to be disagreement among stakeholders about what the evaluation goals should be.
- Realize that, just as conditions change, so will the evaluation goals.

What information is available?

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- Consider the available information about related research in the area. Don't re-invent the wheel.
- Find out whether information is available or can be made available to assess program impact.

What resources do we have available for this evaluation?

Commitment of Stakeholders: Now we are talking about the willingness of the stakeholders to participate in program evaluation processes.

Program Evaluation Experts: Do you have access to program evaluation experts who can serve as mentors or guides during your initial program evaluation experiences?

Staffing: Do you have people in the school who are willing to act as program evaluators? Do you have people who can help prepare surveys, collect data, record data, read reports, analyze data, and write reports?

Money: Do you have the money to pay for research support, office supplies, copying costs, etc.

Time: Do you have the time to do the evaluation? Does the school staff have time to devote to it? Do teachers have time to allow data collection in their classes?

Technology: If you are doing statistical analyses, or are planning on using graphs in your report, do you have the necessary computer software?