



# ***Seeds of Peace: Ohio's School Conflict Management Grant Program***

***An Evaluation of the 1996 High School Conflict Management Grant Program of  
The Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management  
and The Ohio Department of Education***

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## **Seeds of Peace: Ohio's School Conflict Management Grant Program**

### **Fertile Soil**

Seeds have been sown across the state of Ohio. Some fell on rocky soil and sprouted quickly but shriveled in the heat of the sun. Some were choked by weeds. But most fell on fertile soil and have born fruit tenfold, fiftyfold and even a hundredfold. These seeds are the seeds of peace. In 1996, The Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management, in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Education sowed these seeds in the form of fifty grants to high schools across the state to begin conflict management programs in their schools. Conflict management is a philosophy and a set of skills (such as negotiation and mediation) that assist individuals and groups in better understanding and dealing with conflict as it arises in all aspects of their lives. As the result of countless hours of dedicated service, these programs have grown and flourished. Many of the grant recipients have become passionately committed to the conflict management philosophy, provoking teachers and administrators to go well beyond the hours for which they are paid to teach students constructive nonviolent means of resolving conflicts. One Ohio teacher aptly expressed the sentiments of many:

Clearly violence has gotten out of control. Kids are scared and our hands are tied. We have to do something as an entire country about violence and certainly we need to take a stand. But just saying we have zero tolerance hardly solves the problem. Kids have to learn better ways to solve problems without knives or fists.

Students have reasons to be afraid. In the United States 25.7 out of 1,000,000 children under age 15 are killed, compared with an overall rate of 5.1 out of 1,000,000 in twenty-five other industrialized countries. Deaths caused by firearms amount to 16.6 out of every 1,000,000 compared to just 1.4 out of 1,000,000 in other nations. Teachers are also frightened and discouraged. The Centers for Disease Control found that one in 25 high school students carries a gun. One out of every five teachers can cite incidents of verbal or physical threats from students in the past twelve months (Bodine & Crawford, 1998).

Students with inadequate conflict and anger management skills who are striking out violently have created a crisis for schools across the nation. For schools to fulfill their mission of educating young people and preparing them to function effectively in adult society, learners must feel both physically and psychologically safe. Students need to be free from threats and danger. An advisor for a conflict management program in one Ohio high school reiterated this truth:

It is a critical part of education. You can't learn when the environment is conflicted or when there is a lot of hostility and tension. Kids can be present physically here, but that doesn't mean that education is taking place. I don't see this as a option. We've got to do this program.

Ohio has, thus far, been spared some of the worst of gun violence in schools. But we cannot afford to sit idly by. In the wake of the shootings in Littleton, Colorado, schools are understandably more security conscious. But educators familiar with conflict management education in schools know that the key to solving the problem of violence in schools is

prevention. Suspending or expelling students who engage in violent activities is an inadequate solution. Students need to be taught skills to resolve their differences with others. Conflict management programs in schools are providing hope through concrete strategies to help students gain these skills. One Ohio administrator commented:

This sort of program is key. It is more effective than trying to lock your school up. It's a people thing. You're a lot better off spending your time trying to get to the root of the kids' problems than you are trying to make the place a prison, you really are.

Students who lack conflict management skills tend to resort to "fight or flight" when they get into a conflict situation. When untrained students do attempt to negotiate a solution to a dispute they tend to press for distributive or "win-lose" solutions. These solutions tend to be temporary as the loser seeks an opportunity to redress the loss. Students who engage in effective conflict management are able to work toward integrative or "win-win" solutions where the needs of both parties are met. These solutions create a lasting settlement (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

Ohio's School Conflict Management Grant Program has given schools across the state access to resources and training to begin to implement these powerful conflict management strategies in their schools. Through stories and statistics, this report recounts the impact this program has had in these 50 high schools, three years after receiving their initial grants.

## **Methodology**

This study was undertaken to evaluate the impact of the 1996 grant program that awarded grants of \$3,000 to 50 high schools in Ohio. In addition to these initial grants, 43 schools received follow-up grants of \$1,450. Three primary sources of data were collected. Document analysis was made of the grant applications, action plans and final reports from the first year. In addition, interview data was collected from 30 schools. Site visits were made to ten of the recipient schools – 3 urban high schools, 4 suburban schools, and 3 rural schools. Between one and three teachers and administrators were interviewed at each school for a total of 16 interviews. Telephone interviews were conducted with core team members from 20 schools. These interviews were audio-taped and transcripts were analyzed. Finally, faculty surveys were sent to schools on the degree of implementation and impact of the conflict management programs (Lindsay, 1997). Perceptions of school climate and the level of trust in schools were also assessed. These data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlational analysis. Results of these investigations are reported below.

## **Bountiful Harvests**

The seeds planted by the Ohio School Conflict Management Grant Program have certainly born fruit. Good things are being done by dedicated people across the state. For many of the educators who became involved in the grant program, conflict management became a passion. These educators went well beyond their job descriptions and the hours they were paid to be in school to make these programs a success. Schools have experienced a significant impact for an investment

of \$4,450. In light of the price tag on other school reform initiatives, the amount of money involved in these programs was small. One teacher had to overcome resistance from district leadership to get started given the limited grant money available:

I laugh because when we first applied to get the grant I had to make sure that the superintendent knew what was going on and get his approval. He looked at me and said, “That is such a small amount of money. Think about it, in two years when they aren’t supporting you anymore, will it survive?” He really didn’t think that it was enough money. It is a secret pleasure of mine to realize that it was worth doing. We’ve done all that we planned and more.

This school, as many others in the program, was able to stretch a small amount of money to make a significant impact in their school. Despite skepticism from her superintendent, this teacher was able to extend the resources she received through the grant program into a larger than expected impact. Because of her contagious enthusiasm, the effects of the grant program were felt not only in her school but the entire district. She recounted:

I think we did pretty good with what we got. It was an unusual process because I had to keep filling out new budgets. Every time I would plan something, I would get so much enthusiasm from the speakers that I had come in or the community, that they would say, “Oh, no, I’m not going to charge you.” Because they believed in it so much. And so at the end of the year, I had almost all of that \$3,000 left and we were able to compile a library of resources which we shared with the elementary schools who were interested in starting up a program. So now we have resources that are used by the whole system.

A program was not only begun in the high school, but participants were able to assist in the start up of programs in all five elementary schools. In this school, conflict management became a passion for students as well. Due to some ingenuity on the part of students, the program is now extending to the middle school:

We started that [conflict management program], and it’s now in all of the elementary schools. The missing link was the middle school. It is at the middle school that the five elementary schools come together for the first time. The cultural background of those five schools is very different, so the middle school is their introduction to diversity. Some of my student mediators came to me and said, “We’re sending these letters [explaining the program] out to the school board and the administration and some teachers at the middle school.” I didn’t change a word. It was a little rough, but that was the charm of it. So just in the last week they went down, all by themselves, and [the middle school principal] has been convinced. The students have volunteered to spend part of their summer training mediators and doing workshops for the teachers in the middle school. I was really excited that they took that kind of initiative.

Although the superintendent thought the grant was too small to be worth bothering with, there has been an impact district-wide. Peer mediation programs are in place in all the schools in the district and at least several departments of the high school have incorporated concepts and ideas about conflict management into their regular curriculum.

## **Creating Safer School Environments**

Results of the survey on the degree of implementation and impact of the conflict management programs in schools indicate the ways that these small seeds have begun to take root and sprout. A total of 452 teachers from 14 schools completed surveys. A year after the end of funding,

- ‘ almost 90% of the teachers surveyed said that the school was safer to some degree as a result of the implementation of the conflict management program, and
- ‘ nearly half (47%) said that the conflict management program had contributed to a safer school environment to a moderate or a great degree.
- ‘ More than 80% said that the degree of physical fighting had decreased in their school to some degree since the start of the conflict management program, and
- ‘ 40% of the teachers saw a decrease of a moderate or a great degree.

These are remarkable results given the typically poor track records of programs continuing past the end of funding, and the small size of the initial grants. Not only are schools safer as a result of the implementation of these conflict management programs, teachers saw benefits extend to their classrooms.

- ‘ 70% of the teachers surveyed said that the conflict management program had reduced the amount of time they spent resolving student disputes, and
- ‘ 87% said that they had used conflict management techniques for dealing with classroom management and discipline to some degree.

Teachers also witnessed changes in their students as the result of instruction in conflict management.

- ‘ 87% saw an increase in students’ willingness to cooperate with each other, thought students had begun to use the skills taught, and observed students begin to use negotiation skills to deal with interpersonal problems to some degree.
- ‘ 86% had seen students begin to take responsibility for solving their own problems without asking for adult help.

The degree of implementation and impact of conflict management programs had an impact that was felt school wide. It was significantly positively correlated to teachers perceptions of a number of important variables such as school climate (Hoy, Hannum, & Tschannen-Moran,1998), the collective sense of efficacy among teachers (Goddard, 1998), and the level of trust in the school (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy,1998). Teachers who witnessed a greater degree of implementation and impact of conflict management programs also tended to perceive a more positive school climate ( $r=.37$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Within the construct of school climate implementation of conflict management was positively related to the collegial leadership of the principal ( $r = .31$ ,  $p <.01$ ), to the degree of teacher professionalism ( $r = .30$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and a greater emphasis on academics within the school ( $r = .38$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Conflict management implementation was related to the collective sense of efficacy, that is, the degree to which teachers believed they and their colleagues could have a positive impact on student learning, regardless of external environmental factors ( $r = .28$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Collective efficacy has been shown to have a positive effect on student achievement (Bandura, 1997; Goddard, 1998). And the degree of implementation was positively related to the level of trust in the principal ( $r=.26$ ,  $p<.01$ ), fellow teachers ( $r=.17$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and trust in students ( $.30$ ,  $p<.01$ ). These correlations demonstrate the potentially far reaching impact conflict management programs may have in contributing to overall school renewal.

Clearly, these small seeds fell into fertile soil. Teachers made use of these strategies because they felt a need for help in these areas. They continue to use them even after the end of funding because of the positive results they see in their schools, in their classrooms and in their students.

### **Three Approaches**

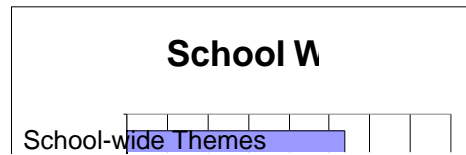
Three approaches characterized the means schools used to instruct students in conflict management philosophy and skills: curriculum infusion, peer mediation, and special events. Schools in the grant program often combined two or more of the approaches. Curriculum infusion is an approach that seeks to make students aware of conflicts and choices for negotiating and resolving conflicts across the curriculum in academic as well as applied classes. Peer mediation involves a small group of students who are trained to mediate conflicts among fellow students. A third approach which schools used, often in conjunction with one or both of the other two approaches, is holding special events.

#### **Curriculum Infusion**

In the curriculum infusion approach, teachers make use of conflict management concepts and strategies to enhance students' learning of the curricula they teach. They also make use of the conflict management skills to discipline students and to foster their ability to discipline themselves. Of the teachers surveyed for this study, 71% said they had integrated the skills and concepts from the conflict management curriculum into the curricula they taught to some degree. Some schools were able to train the entire faculty in conflict management techniques so that they could use them in their classrooms and so there would be a consistent approach throughout the schools.

Schools were asked to complete a Program and Fiscal report at the end of the first year of funding. Data from 37 of the 50 schools were available and are reported here. About half of the schools reported a school-wide program and a quarter said that they had instituted programs grade-level wide. One approach schools used was to incorporate conflict management training into a health class or some other class required for all entering freshmen. Eighty-six percent of the schools reported that their teachers designated class time for special lessons in conflict management. Anywhere from 2 to 30, with a mean of 8 teachers per school implemented such lessons on conflict in their classes during the first year of the program. Almost three quarters (73%) of schools indicated that they utilized "teachable moments" as a strategy to get across conflict management skills. That is, when conflict was evident in the lesson they were teaching such as an episode from history or from a novel, or when student conflict erupted in class, they used those moments to discuss the relevant concepts of conflict management and how they could be applied to the current situation. A mean of 20 teachers per school utilized the teachable moments strategy, with a range of between 3 and 83 teachers in each school during the first year of the program.

Because of the newness of this approach, schools chose a variety of means to get the message out about their conflict resolution efforts. Two-thirds (68%) of the schools reported using posters to encourage the use of constructive nonviolent conflict management strategies, to advertise the mediation services available in the school, and to remind students about the steps of conflict resolution. About half held assemblies to educate students about alternative conflict



management strategies, to demonstrate the mediation process, and to give testimonies to the power of these ideas. One principal described the assembly at his school:

We have an assembly at the beginning of the year. We talk about respect. We talk about accepting people who are different than you. With 600 people in a building for 180 days, there are going to be people problems. We tell them that. And we give them an option for handling those problems constructively. We have seen a reduction in the number of fights. We believe in this. We believe this is a nice option.

**Figure 1**

Announcements to promote conflict management and sometimes to recognize students who had demonstrated random acts of kindness or other acts of peace were a strategy employed by 43% of the schools. Professional videos demonstrating conflict management concepts and strategies were used by 41% of the schools. Over half of the schools (54%) said that they used school-wide themes, such as Peace Week, to teach and publicize their conflict management initiatives. (See Figure 1.)

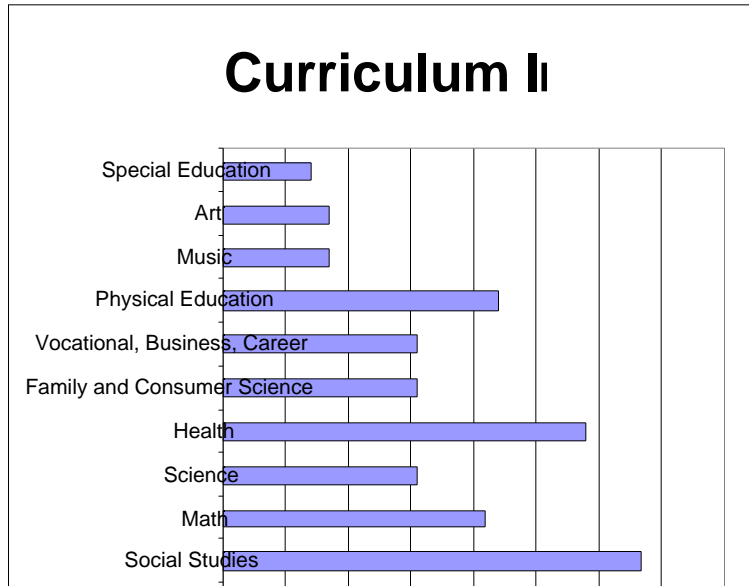
Some subject-matter teachers were easily able to see how issues of conflict could be incorporated into their subject matter. English teachers were able to see the connections to literature and writing and were among the early adopters. Almost 75% of the schools reported at least one English teacher who was using the conflict management curriculum. There is compelling evidence that teaching conflict management skills not only helps students get along with one another, it also helps them better comprehend core curriculum. English students in one study received conflict training in conjunction with the study of a novel in a two-week unit. A control group spent the same two-week period studying only the novel. At the end of the unit the students who had received conflict training scored significantly higher on a test over the novel than the students who had spent the whole time studying the novel. The trained students not only learned the factual information better but also were better able to interpret the information in insightful ways (Stevahn, Johnson, Johnson, Green, & Laginski, 1997). Two thirds of the schools reported that Social Studies teachers had made use of the curriculum in their classes. Health and Family and Consumer Science teachers reported that conflict management was already represented in their curriculum to some extent. Some used the materials offered at the grant program training to supplement the curriculum. One teacher particularly liked the introduction of the idea of seeing a situation from different perspectives:

I teach the personal development module for Work and Family Life. There is a unit on conflict management, and I have taken this section, expanded it, supplemented it with the materials from the training (because I have got the big, four-hundred-pound notebook). ...

We spend a lot of time working on seeing other people's perspective. That's one of the strongest things that's happened in the class, next to developing skills for conflict resolution, is to see a situation from multiple perspectives. To be able to respect their diversity. Not seeing it as something that's horrible that somebody is different, but seeing how exciting it is and how wonderful.

Physical education, math, and science teachers made use of conflict management skills, as their students were expected to work together cooperatively on teams, doing labs, or challenging one another's conceptions in order to provoke cognitive growth. Science teachers were also able to make use of conflict skills in exploring ethical issues within science that invite debate, generation of options, and thoughtful examination of consequences of possible strategies. Teachers of vocational, career, and business courses acknowledged the importance of having constructive means of dealing with conflicts that inevitably emerge in a work setting as an important skill contributing to student employability. Finally, special education teachers found it valuable to teach their students skills to get along with others. (See Figure 2.).

Figure 2



In addition to using the lessons from the *Ohio Conflict Management Resource Guide* for regular classroom lessons, several schools indicated that the supervisors of in-school suspensions and Saturday School made use of the materials to give students who were being punished skills to make better choices in the future. Aiken High School in Cincinnati offers a six-week anger management class that students can elect as an alternative to reduce out-of-school suspension time. The coordinator in this urban school described the process:

I have a prevention specialist who comes in and handles the anger management classes we have as alternatives to out-of-school suspensions. He has been here consistently for two groups a week for every week after the second week of the school year....The size is generally six to eight per group. We stagger them by two weeks, ending and beginning at different times, so that we can add more kids....I am estimating that 75 percent of the kids have not had further difficulty or have had minimal difficulty.

Aiken has instituted a comprehensive violence prevention program that includes a variety of support groups, services, and prevention initiatives. For the coming school year, the school has been restructured into four houses. For all ninth and tenth graders, the last class period of the day will be devoted to a variety of intervention strategies, including tutoring to assist students to pass proficiency tests, and support groups for a variety of the traumas these students face, such as living with a drug-addicted parent or being the victim of sexual assault. Building on the success of a pilot program with one group of ninth graders this school year, one day a week will be devoted to teaching conflict management skills.

Teachers across Ohio have capitalized on conflict management concepts and skills in their classrooms to increase students' interest and understanding of the subjects they teach.

Teachers perceive it as working smarter, not harder (Bodine & Crawford, 1998). They have made use of the conflicts that have emerged in the subjects they teach and between the students in their classes to polish their students' negotiation skills and to reinforce constructive means of responding to conflict.

### **Peer Mediation**

Peer mediation is another strategy that schools in Ohio have employed to teach effective conflict management and prevent violence. In peer mediation, students who have an unresolved dispute are referred to a student mediator who assists them in finding a mutually acceptable solution to the dispute. Advisors report durable solutions to conflicts that have been mediated. Very few conflicts have had to be addressed again. Peer mediation can be a powerful means of addressing sometimes intractable problems of violence and fighting in schools. Of the teachers surveyed for this study, 86% reported that students had begun to use peer mediation to resolve conflicts to some degree, and 54% stated that they had referred students to mediation. In interviews, most schools reported a reduction in fighting and physical violence as a result of peer mediation and conflict management training. One assistant principal described the effect the peer mediation program was having in his high school:

I tell them that this is the last stop before the bus stop because if they don't [go to mediation], they will get some sort of punishment. I cannot think of one incident where we've had two kids get into a fight, gone to peer mediation, and then some time down the line gotten back into a fight with each other. That just does not happen. All the kids have been able to come to some common ground and not lose face. ... We just don't have as many fights as we did, say, two years ago. Especially in the spring time-- there would be several every week. But now I can count on two hands the number of students I have suspended for fighting this year. That's easily an all-time low. I would say, if it weren't for the program this year, you could easily double the number of suspensions I had this year. It's been very good. Even without additional grant money, we are going to do our best to continue some of the things we're doing.

Peer mediator advisors talked about trying to get a diverse group of students trained as mediators, and making use of that diversity in assigning mediators to disputants. One advisor commented that when he had two students from one peer group fighting he might use a student of a different race or economic level as the mediator. He felt it helped the disputants to gain a new perspective on their dispute. In selecting mediators, advisors also were sensitive to who would have credibility with their peers. One assistant principal explained:

We chose the kids that probably had been in a few fights themselves, instead of taking what some might call "the really good kids" that really don't understand what it's like to get in a fight. If we get some kids involved that have a reputation that they've been a little bad from time to time, then some of the kids that go in there will be more open to an equal, somebody who understands what they are talking about. And it's funny how those kids who are now trying to keep peace in the school are taking a different approach to what their role is in the high school.

Sometimes being referred to mediation has turned out to be a life-changing event, a moment of conversion. For one student in an urban high school, this was the case:

One of my peer mediators is just dynamic. She's a junior this year. I don't think anybody thought she was going to make it because her behavior was so out of control her freshman and sophomore year. At the very beginning of the year, she was referred to a mediation. She and her best friend had separated because her friend, who's a senior this year, had matured and thought that her behavior was so outrageous that she couldn't be around her. And that affected her a great deal. We went through the mediation process. This young lady was impressed by that. I invited her to the training and she came. She has been wonderful this year. She doesn't skip school this year. She's passing with good grades. There have been no disciplinary actions against this girl this year, which I just find amazing if you could look at her past records. We had a celebration at Christmas before we went on winter break, and she thanked the group for including her. She said, "I never thought I could be a part of a positive group."

Another advisor in a rural school told of another instance where becoming a peer mediator made a significant difference for a child for whom many people held low expectations. She described a special mediator she had:

One of my most successful mediators in terms of really being able to help students work through things, to understand other students, to kind of see the peripheral problems and work through them, is a DH [Developmentally Handicapped] student. He is very strong in mediation. He won recognition within the state. He was on stage accepting his award with all of the kids that are getting scholarships and going off to Harvard and Yale, and he was up there, too! The newspaper picked up on that -- put his picture in the paper and did a story on what he was doing. That was very exciting! He was number eight out of eleven children in his family, and he was the first one to graduate from high school.

Many schools reported that they used peer mediation as an alternative to reduce time spent in suspension. Most have found it to be a useful option to reduce the amount of learning time lost when students miss schools due to suspensions. Several administrators and teachers expressed the desire to eliminate out-of-school suspensions altogether, seeing the teaching of conflict and anger management skills as a much more constructive response to student misbehavior. Mediation services in schools have not been limited to resolving student-to-student conflicts. Some schools have used the mediation service to mediate conflicts between students and teachers. They have also used the adults trained as mediators to resolve conflicts between cafeteria workers or other adults within the school. A few schools have made it a priority to train bus drivers, cafeteria aides, secretaries, and custodians and other non-certified personnel in these skills.

Peer mediation has proven to be a powerful mechanism for responding to conflicts within schools. Several factors seem to be of particular importance in making peer mediation programs work. These include gaining administrative support, winning over reluctant faculty, breaking into peer culture, training, overcoming logistic challenges, and empowering students to make broader use of the skills they have gained. These factors are discussed below.

### **Administrative Support**

Advisors repeatedly commented on the importance of having administrative support in order to make a peer mediation program work. They said that it was the principal who set the overall vision and philosophy for the school, and that if peer mediation was not a part of that vision it was difficult to get cooperation from other faculty members. To be most effective, conflict management philosophies need to be written into the school discipline code and reinforced through the kinds of disciplinary actions taken. Without administrative support it is very difficult to overcome logistic obstacles such as scheduling, finding space, and facilitating communication. One teacher reiterated the importance of administrative support:

Oh, I think that's the whole issue. If you don't have administrator support, the staff isn't going to buy into it. It's just not going to happen. You have to have some leadership who believes that this has some value. You just don't get the referrals. You don't get the buy in from the faculty.

Principals of effective programs talked about the benefit they had felt personally from the success of the peer mediation program. It freed them up from the time consuming task of addressing student disputes themselves. They saw the value of giving students the skills to work through problems on their own as an effective means to prevent violence. A student body that was skilled in positive conflict management strategies made their lives and work easier.

### **Winning Over Faculty**

One challenge to program implementation has been to convince faculty members that peer mediation is a realistic approach and to get them to make referrals for mediation. Teams have attempted a variety of strategies to get the word out about the value of the services they offer. They have done mock mediation demonstrations at faculty meetings and school-wide assemblies. One teacher used drama students and student mediators to produce a video tape of the mediation process, so that administrators and teachers could observe the process outside of busy school hours. She also used it as a way to have mediators critique their own performance. One media specialist had teams of students produce public service announcements demonstrating the use of conflict management strategies in realistic conflict situations. These tapes were broadcast as part of the morning announcements to teach and promote the use of conflict management skills. One spot was selected to air on the local public access channel on television. Other schools made announcements and sent memos to continually remind the faculty that their services were still available and to encourage referrals. Despite these efforts, communication to a large faculty was a challenge. One advisor, after making concerted efforts at communication, was taken aback to have a faculty member near the end of the year express surprise that the program was still on-going. At the same faculty meeting, another teacher retorted "The problem with your program is that you send too damn many memos!"

Winning over fellow faculty members can be a slow process, but those schools with an active peer mediation program reported steady progress once teachers and administrators began to see positive results. One teacher told the story of persuading an entire department in one incident:

I'm still lacking in the support of all the faculty. One by one we're winning them over, when they've had the opportunity to actually see how it can help solve problems and see

what the impact is in their classrooms. We ended up doing a mediation of an entire class. The whole class had divided into two factions and nothing was getting done because there was this constant bickering. And it was a class that was dependent on doing projects and working together. We had each of the groups select a spokesperson and make a list of their grievances. Then the two spokespersons went to mediation and worked out all of the issues. Everyone in the class signed the agreement. And it did work. Well, then the entire department was sold on it. We also mediated the percussion section of the band. They weren't speaking to each other and they really have to be in sync or the band doesn't function. The music reflected the fact that the percussion section wasn't together in many ways. We worked that one out, too.

Once teachers make referrals that are successfully resolved through mediation, many of them become believers. But this process can take a number of years. The most well established peer mediation program in the sample had been in place for five years or more.

### **Peer Culture**

Breaking into the youth culture, making it acceptable to use peer mediation can be one of the most challenging obstacles in implementing a peer mediation program. As more elementary and middle schools are implementing peer mediation programs, however, it is in some cases having the unintended consequence of making high school students less willing to make use of the service. One assistant principal explained:

I think the most frustrating thing was that although now we have kids in this building who have been exposed to mediation from about the sixth grade up, it's still culturally not acceptable for the high school student to use mediation. When we have, they have been very satisfied. But it's very difficult to talk a student into using mediation. What they say, when you press them hard enough, is "That's kids' stuff."

Yet, mediators have been able to diffuse some emotionally charged and very complex situations. Occasionally, the adult advisors will stay present during a mediation if they feel that it is a potentially volatile situation. In most cases, however, the adults are just on call in a nearby office or hallway. That's what mediators and disputants alike seem to like about the process— that it is student led. One student found a creative way to make mediation more acceptable in her school:

One student had the idea to go into the lunch room because that is where the conflict happens. She would start a mediation right there in the lunch room. She began to change the way she thought about it because she was so excited about what she was doing. She started getting it more into the school culture.

Once students experience a successful mediation, they are more willing to use the process again in the future.

### **Training**

On-going training is an important part of sustaining a peer mediation program. Many of the schools used the grant money to have students and adult advisors trained in the peer mediation process. Some of the adults have gotten additional training in order to be trainers themselves. Where that hasn't happened, schools are having difficulty now that their trained mediators are beginning to graduate and move on. Finding additional funds to pay for training

has proven difficult. One advisor spoke in frustration of having made a request for \$250 from his district to pay to have more student mediators trained. The request was denied due to serious budget constraints within the district. As a result, this advisor doesn't know what will become of a program that he felt had begun to make a significant impact on his school. Several schools have addressed the issue by incorporating the training into an already established class. Dublin Scioto High School developed a semester-long class devoted to conflict management skills. Students who completed the class could be recommended to become peer mediators. Not all the students from the class had the time or were interested in becoming peer mediators. Others who wanted to be mediators and were not able to work the class into their schedules were trained through the more common workshop method. Two schools offered students a quarter credit for 30 hours of service in mediation.

### **Logistic Challenges**

Schools struggled with a variety of logistic challenges in implementing their peer mediation programs. Even when advisors were committed to making the program work there were a number of obstacles to be overcome. Scheduling was a major problem in some schools. Finding time when a mediator and the disputants could all meet was often difficult. Some teachers were unwilling to have students leave class for mediation. Some schools began by just offering mediation during lunch periods, or sometimes just during the first period of the day. In schools where the advisor was a classroom teacher, it was difficult to work around that teacher's schedule. One school had trained enough teachers to have them available throughout the school day during their preparation periods. But budget cuts forced those teachers to have to supervise study halls during their free period so they were no longer available for mediation. One faculty advisor recommended that the advisor be someone in the administration, or someone with some level of authority. Otherwise it could be difficult to get the cooperation of other faculty members. Finding private space was also a challenge for some schools, as one teacher related:

We don't have space for this. You have to have a room designated for the activity to go on. Because we are saying to the kids that this is a private situation, that we want you to be at ease and what you say is going to stay in the room. We tried to get an old, defunct bathroom, but there were problems with that. We tried to use the AV room, but then that didn't work I had to do mediations in a stairwell. That was tough.

These challenges have hampered programs from being as active or as effective as the participants would like. However, most are struggling to continue because of the value they see the programs bringing to the students and to the school community.

Probably the biggest obstacle faced by schools was when key members of the core team left the school. Changes in leadership were not always detrimental to the program, however. In at least two schools, struggling programs were revived by new leadership. In one case a new principal arrived who was sold on the program from his work in a previous school. Only two schools of the fifty reported that the programs were not continuing. One was an urban school that was being converted to an alternative program. All of the faculty on the core team, including the principal, were either leaving or had left the school. Other schools had managed to maintain their programs to some degree but were struggling under budget constraints and had difficulty finding even minimal resources to cover the costs of copying, paying for training for new students or faculty, or buying incentives for student participants. Some schools were finding it a challenge to

maintain their conflict management programs in the midst of restructuring to block scheduling, houses or teams.

### **Empowering Students to Train Others**

Another stumbling blocks to fledgling peer mediation programs was that they did not have enough referrals to keep all of their trained mediators busy. When they weren't being used regularly some mediators became discouraged and dropped out of the program. One of the positive ways that schools have found for using their trained mediators is to have them do outreach into the community to teach others the skills they have learned. Several schools began by teaching mediation skills to teachers and students in the elementary schools in their own districts. The Dublin Scioto High School decided that they could increase their impact by reaching out to the nearby Columbus Public School District to train elementary students.

We have been training elementary schools in the fall. The elementary schools have a program where they train "Playground Pros" and they do mediation on the playground. The young kids really look to our kids as leaders and that really reinforces our kids .... I think they are hungry for some more ways in which they can use their skills, to develop it and help others develop it. It's the outreach and the helping others that keeps our program going strong. We had a group visiting from Ireland. There was a situation of conflict and we were able to show them how peer mediation worked. It was wonderful because they were really looking for some solutions that they would be able to use. It gave our students an opportunity to share and be affirmed. There is nothing more empowering. That experience was so vital for students. At this age, it's important for kids to feel needed and useful. They begin to look at themselves differently.

Dublin students were also asked to do a mock mediation for students at the Capital University Law School, an invitation the students felt honored to fulfill. Outside recognition of their work and of the value of the skills they possessed helped students in several schools to recognize for themselves the power of these processes. Empowering students to reach out to train others in the skills they have gained generated renewed excitement and vigor in the programs. One advisor talked about the dynamic of empowering students through the mediation process:

It's the peer mediation programs that make everything come alive. If you just do infusion into the curriculum and classroom management, these kids aren't empowered to use the skills themselves. It's just "the teachers told me to do it this way," another adult-to-kid, telling them what to do. It's the peer program that empowers the kids. But teachers don't get student empowerment. They just don't get it.

Schools that had taken the risk to empower their students to act as peer mediators enthusiastically reported the many positive benefits they had gained.

### **Special Events**

One strategy that schools have employed to publicize their conflict management programs and to raise awareness of issues of diversity and tolerance is to sponsor special events. Dublin Scioto High School held a Peace Breakfast in the fall. They invited parents, central office personnel,

and members of the community who they looked to for support of their work. This year Westerville North High School held its third annual Multicultural Fair, a day-long event in March that celebrates different cultural traditions represented in the community. Booths included food, games, and cultural artifacts from various countries and cultures around the world. Each year the fair has expanded as parents and members of the community have pitched in to help. After the first year the event had to move to the gymnasium because the response was so great that they outgrew the space where it started. Among those from the community who attended were students from the elementary school that the high school worked with on conflict management activities.

Several schools designated a whole week of activities as Peace Week or Conflict Management Week. During Peace Week at Aiken High School, the students wrote a pledge that they adapted from Martin Luther King's Birmingham Pledge. It had to do with eradicating racism, pledging to live nonviolently and to utilize nonviolent techniques in relationships and in interacting with others. The pledges were condensed to pocket-size cards and laminated. Students who signed the pledge got a sucker and a pocket-size pledge. They also had a poster contest on the theme of peace, diversity, and nonviolence. There were announcements every day on nonviolence. And there was a big celebration assembly at the end of the week. At Dublin High School they created a Unity Quilt in which all of the groups in the school, from various clubs to cooks and custodians, decorated a square to become part of the quilt. There was a Peace Vigil and a Peace Rally. They also had a door decorating contest on the theme of peace and had a local media personality judge the contest. Dublin also extended their Peace Week activities to the elementary school where they were working on conflict management. They made a poster on the theme "What peace means to you," made peace bracelets, and had a pinata to "crack the conflict." At Lakewood High School, during their "Conflict Management Week" they designed and displayed "Peace Graffiti Walls." Student also received "Random Acts of Kindness Cards" if staff members believed individual students should be acknowledged for something they did to make the school a better place. Students were also recognized during the morning announcement for their contributions to the community.

Another kind of special activity is putting students in a situation where they are forced to cooperate with a diverse group of students. Newcomerstown High School has used the grant money, in conjunction with other funds, to take students to a camp that offered a high ropes course and ground initiatives. They have taken groups of 35 to 40 students twice a year for the past three years. They have been careful to select a diverse group of students who do not generally have much to do with each other. The principal explained:

They are forced to work together to solve these problems. We've seen unbelievable things happen. We've seen people who would not even talk to each other and it's like an equal partnership by the end of that day. They learned cooperation and trust were important.

The number of fights in this school has declined by more than half. The principal feels that the combination of conflict management training and the camp program has had a significant impact on the school culture.

## **Community and Parent Involvement**

Core Teams made a number of efforts to inform parents of their activities. They made presentations at the parent association meetings and wrote articles in the parent newsletter. A few were successful in getting local newspapers to write articles on their conflict management services. Getting parents directly involved was more of a challenge. This is not surprising because parent involvement typically lags in high school. When schools offered workshops in conflict management strategies that parents could use in the home, typically few parents attended. In the wake of the school shootings in April 1999 at Littleton, Colorado, however, school officials felt that parental and community attitude had begun to shift. One teacher who directs a center for conflict management that has received state-wide and even national attention, was nonetheless having difficulty garnering the support of her own school community. That changed for one opponent as the result of the media coverage following the Littleton shootings:

We have a community aide here who has never really gotten along with most of us. So last week he says, "You know, I have never liked your program, but I was watching T.V. and a national expert said that there should be conflict resolution programs in all schools. And I'm now on your side. I'm just trying to tell you that I think you guys are doing a really good job and now I understand what you do." He took one of my senior students aside and told him the same thing. And see, I had taken this kid to meet the president of the United States and this guy knew that and he still didn't give him any respect until he saw it on T.V.

Advisors were often too busy to make a priority of boasting about the skills their students were gaining. Most advisors did not have release time for the time they were putting into organize the peer mediation programs, so they were doing that work on top of their other responsibilities. It is understandable that there was little time or effort left over for celebrating successes. One teacher told the story of a parent who was taken aback when he witnessed his daughter mediating a conflict,

On Saturday we had a big fair down at the convention center and schools could bring down displays. One of my friends who teaches at [another high school] came by, so I gave him one of our [Conflict Management] shirts to wear. He had one of his students with him. When he went out on the sidewalk a little girl came over and said, "I have one of those shirts. I do that." He said, "Well, I have a conflict with this girl. Could you work it out?" So they did this fake conflict for this little girl. She said, "Well, first you have to agree to ground rules." And she went right through the steps. Her father was amazed. He said he had not a clue that she knew how to do that.

A few schools did send letters home to parents of peer mediators, and some sent notification to the parents of students who had successfully mediated a conflict.

One way that schools were successful in getting large numbers of parents to turn out was to invite them to special events. Dublin Scioto had over three hundred parents and community members attend a Peace Breakfast. And Lakewood High School had over four hundred parents and community members attend a talk by a guest speaker on "Parenting and Strategies for Saving Your Sanity." Parents may feel they need help, but have not been used to finding it at school. Newcomerstown High School offered mediation services to parents and teens. Although it had not been used by a great many families, those that had used it were very pleased with the outcomes. Some schools reported that parents had told them they had noticed a positive change in their children's demeanor at home after training in conflict management skills.

There were schools that included parents and community members as part of their core team that did the initial planning for the grant. More said they wished that they had been more successful at sustaining this kind of involvement. At Mentor High School they initiated a Community Advisory Board for their conflict management efforts. They made it a district-wide, K-12 committee and invited a wide variety of community representatives. This kind of positive community involvement is especially important for building community support in the current climate when schools often feel under attack. Teachers and administrators don't always feel like their hard work on behalf of students is appreciated. One administrator expressed his frustration:

We save kids lives. But then those kids don't necessarily pass the proficiency tests, then that's a black mark on our record. We're working hard, developing relationships, and we keep getting bashed. We get bashed by the media, we get bashed by the legislature.

Letting the community know about the positive efforts that schools are making to teach constructive conflict management strategies may be one means to bridge that gap.

## **Conclusions**

Although a few of the fifty schools already had conflict management programs in place and used the grant to expand or build new facets into the program, for most of schools this program provided an introduction to conflict management skills. These schools said that receiving the grant was crucial to getting the program underway. One administrator explained,

The funding was very important for the project. It was the spark, the seed that got this thing going. It gave us a focus, a goal to shoot for to implement something we felt was needed. We felt like our kids were beating up on each other and squabbling all the time. We thought this was something we could use to help us to cut down this problem. If the grant hadn't come along, we probably wouldn't have peer mediation here, I'd almost bet you. I would have to say that it has significantly helped us bring peace to our students and give them a positive way to resolve conflict. This has given us hope that there is a way to deal with our kids other than dealing out punishments, that we can help resolve problems in a positive way.

Receiving the grant not only provided schools with necessary resources, it also provided legitimacy and prestige. Schools reported that their efforts were taken more seriously because of the grant and because of the sponsorship of The Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and The Ohio Department of Education.

Schools used the funds in a variety of ways. The most important resource that the grant bought was time, in terms of stipends and travel expenses for teachers and administrators to come to the training. It also bought access to expertise. Schools used the funds to bring in outside trainers to train their faculty and students. It bought instructional resources such as videotapes, books, and games. Schools also used grant money for incentives for their peer mediation program. These included name badges, jackets or T-shirts for peer mediators, and tokens for disputants. Students who successfully mediated a conflict were sometimes given pencils, with slogans like "Don't hate -- Mediate" or book marks with "Ten ways to effectively revolve disputes nonviolently." Although these items were small, programs that were not able to find the money to continue these items missed having them after the end of the grant.

As important as the grant was to getting schools started with conflict management, it did

not last long enough to get programs solidly established. Schools felt that two years was too short a time to get a new program institutionalized. Two years was too short a time for reluctant administrators to see enough positive results to be willing to come up with the money to continue the program. A teacher explained:

I don't think that two years is really any kind of time to institute a major change in a building where the whole culture has to change. You're changing a whole system of beliefs so it takes longer than two years.

Those who were most successful had been implementing their programs for a number of years before receiving this grant. One recommendation for change is to extend the grant cycle to three years, and then allow schools to apply for a second round of three years if they want to expand or extend their program in significant new directions. The payoff is that schools with successful programs had really become resources to other schools and to their communities. So although a longer funding cycle might mean fewer schools were in the program at any one time, there would be more examples of really vital programs to offer support to new programs.

The most successful programs around the state had found other sources of funds to combine with those of the grant. Some schools had received Venture Capital, others used Safe and Drug Free Schools money. One guidance counselor who had taken over the leadership of the conflict management program felt overwhelmed by the demands of the various grant initiatives. She expressed a wish that there could be a more integrated approach to funding programs for character education, conflict education, anger management, drug, alcohol, and tobacco prevention, and pregnancy prevention because she could see that they were all related. One of the biggest unmet needs schools reported was staff time. Few schools were able to provide release time to teachers for their involvement in this program. It was difficult to expect faculty members to sustain a program on volunteer time above and beyond their regular responsibilities. Most high schools felt the need for a full-time prevention specialist or coordinator to oversee these programs and keep them functioning over the long haul.

Conflict management education is an important and effective strategy to help schools combat the problems of youth violence and to give students essential skills that they need to be productive citizens. The Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management, in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Education, has done an effective job of disseminating these strategies throughout the state through its grant program. Of the 50 schools that received grants in 1996, 48 of them still have programs in place three years later. In some schools, the programs have grown and flourished. Others are limping along, struggling to cope with obstacles and challenges that have made implementation difficult. Some schools have noticed only modest improvements as a result of these programs, others have experienced dramatic reductions in the number of fights and suspensions. All schools expressed appreciation for having received the grant and the training and materials that had come with it. Providing constructive nonviolent alternatives for students to resolve the conflicts they face has become an imperative for schools.

## **Recommendations**

Each of the people interviewed were asked for suggestions that would have made their participation in the grant program more helpful or productive. Below are their ideas, along with those of the researcher, and comments from the first year team reports.

### **Training**

Most of the schools found the training to be helpful. When asked how beneficial was the initial training team leaders completing evaluations gave it an average rating of 7.0 on a ten-point scale. For those schools that were new to conflict management concepts, the training provided a good introduction and overview. Others who were already familiar with the concepts felt that it was too much of a review and wished there had been more flexibility in meeting the needs of teams who were at different levels. Participants also reported uneven quality in the break-out sessions. Some were very practical and well-run by presenters whose enthusiasm was contagious. Others were lackluster and disorganized. In general, teams appreciated having time to work together on planning and time to meet with their consultant.

### Grant Application Process

- ‘ Offer a grant writing workshop two to three months before the applications are due to help teams clarify their thinking and establish general goals. Have teams establish goals before the training.
- ‘ Distinguish peer mediation and curriculum infusion as two different models. Give schools a choice of which they want to implement first. Allow schools to reapply to implement the second strand after they have the first one going.

### Gathering the Team

- ‘ Configure teams differently depending on whether they intend to implement curriculum infusion or peer mediation.
- ‘ For curriculum infusion, gather a team of 2-4 classroom teachers from each of a few selected departments within the school that are interested in this approach.
- ‘ For peer mediation, the team should consist of administrators, particularly those who handle discipline, guidance counselors, prevention or intervention specialists, discipline committee members and others who will be involved in the implementation of the program. Include support staff, such as security, lunchroom staff, bus drivers, custodians, and office aides.
- ‘ Encourage student and community involvement on the teams to foster a sense of ownership.

### Training

- ‘ Offer separate training in both curriculum infusion and peer mediation.
- ‘ At the beginning or near the beginning of the training, have teams meet with their consultant in regional groups. This would allow people to begin to develop a relationship with their consultant and with other schools in their area that they might want to partner with in the future, and to learn about the parameters of the program.
- ‘ Develop a library of conflict management resources for teachers and administrators to review at trainings. Have books, games, videos, and curriculums resources on display. Maintain an informal rating system (4 stars) for schools that have used the materials to relate whether they found them helpful or not. Perhaps allow limited lending privileges.
- ‘ Help schools with strategies to keep the program going after the end of funding. Help

schools locate other sources of funds (such as Safe And Drug Free Schools money or community resources such as Kiwanis or P.T.A.) and links to other compatible programs (such as S.A.D.D. -- Students Against Destructive Decisions).

### Curriculum Infusion Training.

- ‘ For curriculum infusion, trainings should be done by those subject-matter teachers who are using the curriculum in their own classes.
- ‘ Promote strategies can make teachers’ work easier and provide evidence of enhanced student engagement and comprehension.

### Peer Mediation Training

- ‘ Provide specific training for setting up a peer mediation program for those schools that select that option Peer Mediation Training could also address classroom management, and the development of an overall school discipline policy.
- ‘ Have more demonstrations by students. Have teams practice mediations.
- ‘ Anticipate logistical challenges and offer ways to address them.
- ‘ Address strategies for helping peer mediation become an accepted part of the student culture.
- ‘ Point schools to other community resources around the state where they can get on-going services.

### **Follow-up**

Almost all of the participants gave positive ratings to the follow-up training in which schools shared what progress they had made and what challenges they still faced. The mean rating was 8.4 out of 10. The comments of one team leaders were typical:

The one-day follow-up training was especially helpful because schools shared so many ideas of things they had done throughout the year. It was also very helpful to see all the resources available. It helps to hear what has been successful and what has not worked very well. This follow-up gave us the opportunity to see where we are in comparison to other schools.

Some of the schools found the sharing so helpful they said that they would have liked to have a session earlier in the year so as to benefit from hearing how others were approaching implementation. Others were satisfied with when it took place. It would be have teams bring a one page summary of best things they have done.

### **Consultation**

In general the feedback on the consultation portion of the program was quite positive. The mean rating for the consultation was 7.3 out of 10. However there was a wide discrepancy of opinion. Some found their work with the consultant extremely valuable, as was the case for this teacher:

At least for our school, we found this part of the grant to be extremely

important...perhaps worth more than the monies! We would be thrilled to see additional consultation hours provided in any renewal grants.

Other schools did not find their consultant as helpful. One of the biggest problems was one of access. One school reported that their school was released at 2:30 but their consultant was not available to meet with her team until 4:00. It was unrealistic to expect her team to wait around until 4:00 to begin their meeting. Others complained that they had only had telephone contact with their consultant and some had had no contact at all. On-going technical assistance in the form of consultants seemed to be a valuable part of the program. This part of the program could be improved by more careful selection of consultants who could more readily be available to schools.

- ‘ The consultant should plan to meet monthly with the team for the first year and quarterly thereafter.
- ‘ Consultant could point to other resources, workshops, consultants, conferences, books, videos, and additional sources of funds.

### **Communication**

People who were involved in implementing conflict management programs in schools seemed hungry for communication from others who were attempting the same changes. It would be useful for the commission to facilitate communication about these programs.

- ‘ Gather best practices and success stories. Publish those on the Web site and through the newsletter.
- ‘ Start a listserv to schools with conflict management programs.
- ‘ To promote curriculum infusion advertise the program through teacher professional organizations (e.g., Ohio Association of Consumer and Family Science, the Ohio English and Social Studies Teacher organizations). Offer workshops at the annual conferences of these professional associations. Make the workshops specific to particular subject areas and taught by teachers with experience in implementing it in their own classrooms. Make presentations at the annual Teaching and Learning Conference on using conflict in the curriculum.
- ‘ Promote the program through administrator gatherings like the Ohio Superintendents Academy or the Ohio Principals’ Academy. Provide data on how conflict management programs can help schools perform better on at least two areas of the state report cards – reducing suspensions and drop out.

The grant program was a positive experience for the schools involved. They were very appreciative of the kinds of resources and support they had received. They were excited by the results they were having with students. Summing up her experience with the grant program, one teacher concluded:

It seemed at the time like it was a lot of work, but the students benefitted so much. It was a minimal amount of time for me compared to what we got.

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## Further Recommendations

Each of the people interviewed were asked for suggestions that would have made their participation in the grant program more helpful or productive. Below are their ideas, along with those of the researcher, and comments from the first year team reports.

### Training

Most of the schools found the training to be helpful. When asked how beneficial was the initial training team leaders completing evaluations gave it an average rating of 7.0 on a ten-point scale. For those schools that were new to conflict management concepts, the training provided a good introduction and overview. Others who were already familiar with the concepts felt that it was too much of a review and wished there had been more flexibility in meeting the needs of teams who were at different levels. Participants also reported uneven quality in the break-out sessions. Some were very practical and well-run by presenters whose enthusiasm was contagious. Others were lackluster and disorganized. In general, teams appreciated having time to work together on planning and time to meet with their consultant.

### Grant Application Process

- ‘ Notify schools of the grant possibility in October with a deadline in April.
- ‘ Offer a grant writing workshop two to three months before the applications are due to help teams clarify their thinking and establish general goals.
- ‘ Distinguish peer mediation and curriculum infusion as two different models. Give schools a choice of which they want to implement first. Allow schools to reapply to implement the second strand after they have the first one going.
- ‘ Have teams establish goals before the training.
- ‘ Provide several sample budgets in the application packet.

### Gathering the Team

- ‘ Configure teams differently depending on whether they intend to implement curriculum infusion or peer mediation.
- ‘ For curriculum infusion, gather a team of 2-4 classroom teachers from each of a few selected departments within the school that are interested in this approach.
- ‘ For peer mediation, the team should consist of administrators, particularly those who handle discipline, guidance counselors, prevention or intervention specialists, discipline committee members and others who will be involved in the implementation of the program. Include support staff, such as security, lunchroom staff, bus drivers, custodians, and office aides.
- ‘ Team size should be related to the size of the school. Allow larger teams for larger schools.

- ‘ Encourage student and community involvement on the teams to foster a sense of ownership.

### Training

- ‘ Hold the training right after school is out in June so schools can use the summer to make their plans.
- ‘ Three days of training is expensive for schools in terms of stipends and travel expenses. Schools complained that a large portion of their grant money was spent covering these expenses. Keep the training to two days.
- ‘ Offer an optional pre-session the evening before the start of training for teams that want to come and meet with their consultant to get more focus before the start of training.
- ‘ At the beginning or near the beginning of the training, have teams meet with their trainer in regional groups to learn about the parameters of the program. This would allow people to begin to develop a relationship with their trainer and with other schools in their area that they might want to partner with in the future.
- ‘ Provide more hands-on activities at the training. Participants need to practice using the conflict management skills, dealing with resistance, and developing group skills.
- ‘ Encourage teams to set up a time line and a meeting schedule for the whole year. Assign what needs to be done when and by whom. Decide who will be responsible for bringing snacks to the meetings.
- ‘ Develop a library of conflict management resources for teachers and administrators to review at trainings. Have books, games, videos, and curriculums resources on display. Maintain an informal rating system (4 stars) for schools that have used the materials to relate whether they found them helpful or not. Perhaps allow limited lending privileges.
- ‘ Offer separate training in both curriculum infusion and peer mediation.
- ‘ Carefully screen trainers for the quality of their presentation. It would be better to have fewer offerings and make sure they were of good quality than to have people sit through a training that is disorganized or lackluster.
- ‘ Don’t try to train elementary, middle school, and high school people all at the same time with different manuals.
- ‘ Help schools with strategies to keep the program going after the end of funding. Help schools locate other sources of funds (such as Safe And Drug Free Schools money or community resources such as Kiwanis or P.T.A.) and links to other compatible programs (such as S.A.D.D. -- Students Against Destructive Decisions).

### Curriculum Infusion Training.

- ‘ For curriculum infusion, trainings should be done by those subject matter teachers who are using the curriculum in their own classes. Teachers are more likely to implement something they have learned in that context

- ‘ Break down the training manual. Separate out subject matter resources and create subject-specific manuals. Put out a call for exemplar lessons in subject areas.
- ‘ Promote the idea that these strategies can make teachers’ work easier and that students level of achievement will improve.
- ‘ Advertise the program through teacher professional organizations (e.g., Ohio Association of Consumer and Family Science, the Ohio English and Social Studies Teacher organizations). Offer workshops at the annual conferences of these professional associations. Make them specific to that particular subject area and taught by teachers with experience in implementing it in their own classrooms.
- ‘ Make presentations at the annual Teaching and Learning Conference on using conflict in the curriculum.

### Peer Mediation Training

- ‘ Provide specific training for setting up a peer mediation program for those schools that select that option. This training could also address classroom management, and the development of an overall school discipline policy.
- ‘ Have more demonstrations by students. Have teams practice mediations.
- ‘ Offer special training and resources to encourage administrator support. Their role is crucial.
- ‘ Promote the program through administrator gatherings like the Ohio Superintendents Academy or the Ohio Principals’ Academy. Provide data on how peer mediation programs can help schools perform better on at least two areas of the state report cards – reducing suspensions and drop out.
- ‘ Anticipate logistical challenges and offer ways to address them.
- ‘ Address strategies for helping peer mediation become an accepted part of the student culture.
- ‘ Point schools to other community resources around the state where they can get on-going services.
- ‘ Encourage schools to select someone other than a classroom teacher to be the coordinator.

### Follow-up

Almost all of the participants gave positive ratings to the follow-up training in which schools shared what progress they had made and what challenges they still faced. The mean rating was 8.4 out of 10. The comments of one team leaders were typical:

The one-day follow-up training was especially helpful because schools shared so many ideas of things they had done throughout the year. It was also very helpful to see all the resources available. It helps to hear what has been successful and what has not worked very well. This follow-up gave us the opportunity to see where we are in comparison to

other schools.

Some of the schools found the sharing so helpful they said that they would have liked to have a session earlier in the year so as to benefit from hearing how others were approaching implementation. Others were satisfied with when it took place. The biggest complaint was that the facilitator had not been assertive enough to get the teams to stick to the time frames that had been set, or the rule that only one person per school should speak. That meant that some schools that had come prepared to share had very little time to do so.

- ‘ Have teams bring a one page summary of best things they have done.
- ‘ Stick to ground rules and time limits so that every group has an equal opportunity to share.

### **Consultation**

In general the feedback on the consultation portion of the program was quite positive. The mean rating for the consultation was 7.3 out of 10. However there was a wide discrepancy of opinion. Some found their work with the consultant extremely valuable, as was the case for this teacher:

At least for our school, we found this part of the grant to be extremely important...perhaps worth more than the monies! We would be thrilled to see additional consultation hours provided in any renewal grants.

Other schools did not find their consultant as helpful. One of the biggest problems was one of access. One school reported that their school was released at 2:30 but their consultant was not available to meet with her team until 4:00. It was unrealistic to expect her team to wait around until 4:00 to begin their meeting. Others complained that they had only had telephone contact with their consultant and some had had no contact at all. On-going technical assistance in the form of consultants seemed to be a valuable part of the program. This part of the program could be improved by more careful selection of consultants who could more readily be available to schools.

- ‘ The consultant should plan to meet monthly with the team for the first year and quarterly thereafter.
- ‘ Consultant could point to other resources, workshops, consultants, conferences, books, videos, and additional sources of funds.

### **Communication**

People who were involved in implementing conflict management programs in schools seemed hungry for communication from others who were attempting the same changes. One useful thing that the commission could do would be to facilitate communication about these programs.

- ‘ Be clear about reporting requirements and deadlines from the start.
- ‘ Get data in electronic form. Request reports on disk, e-mail or through the commission’s

Web site.

- ‘ Gather best practices and success stories. Dedicate a phone line with an answering machine to gather stories of success. Publish those on the Web site and through the newsletter.
- ‘ Start a listserv to schools with conflict management programs.

The grant program was a positive experience for the schools involved. They were very appreciative of the kinds of resources and support they had received. They were excited by the results they were having with students. Summing up her experience with the grant program, one teacher concluded:

It seemed at the time like it was a lot of work, but the students benefitted so much. It was a minimal amount of time for me compared to what we got.

## Summary of Seeds of Peace: Ohio's School Conflict Management Grant Program

In 1996, The Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management, in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Education awarded fifty grants to high schools across the state to begin conflict management programs in their schools. A survey on the degree of implementation of the conflict management programs in schools taken by 452 teachers in 14 schools indicated the far-reaching impact these grant has made. Three years after the initial grants were made,

- ‘ Almost 90% of the teachers surveyed said that the school was safer to some degree as a result of the implementation of the conflict management program.
- ‘ More than 80% said that the degree of physical fighting had decreased in their school to some degree since the start of the conflict management program.

These are remarkable results given the typically poor track records of programs continuing past the end of funding, and the small size of the initial grants. Not only are schools safer as a result of the implementation of these conflict management programs, teachers saw benefits extend to their classrooms.

- ‘ 70% of the teachers surveyed said that the conflict management program had reduced the amount of time they spent resolving student disputes.
- ‘ 87% said that they had used conflict management techniques for dealing with classroom management and discipline to some degree.

Teachers also witnessed changes in their students as the result of instruction in conflict management.

- ‘ 87% saw an increase in students' willingness to cooperate with each other,
- ‘ 87% thought students had begun to use the skills taught, and
- ‘ 87% observed students begin to use negotiation skills to deal with interpersonal problems to some degree.
- ‘ 86% had seen students begin to take responsibility for solving their own problems without asking for adult help.

In addition, the degree of implementation of conflict management programs was significantly positively correlated to teachers' perceptions of school climate (include the collegial leadership of the principal, teacher professionalism, and academic press), the collective sense of efficacy among the faculty, and the degree of faculty trust in the principal, in colleagues, and in students.

Clearly, these small grants had a impact. Teachers made use of these strategies because they felt a need for help in these areas. They continue to use them even after the end of funding because of the positive results they see in their schools, in their classrooms, and in their students.