

## Ohio's Colleges and Universities Integrating Conflict Resolution Education

By Jennifer Batton

Ohio leads the nation in preparing university education faculties to integrate school conflict resolution education (CRE) into the pre-service and in-service curricula. On September 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, 2002, the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) sponsored the third annual Conflict Resolution Education Institute for higher education faculty. Professors representing 12 colleges and universities from across the state attended.

The goals of the two-day Institute were threefold: (1) to improve individual conflict resolution skills; (2) to learn how to integrate conflict resolution into pre-professional courses; and (3) to begin institutionalizing conflict resolution into the professional preparation curricula at each college or university.

The Institute culminated with participants creating action plans describing how they will integrate school conflict management into higher education courses, conferences, and pre-professional programs. They are committed to improving their individual conflict resolution skills as well as focusing on activities such as training all teacher education staff in conflict resolution education skills and offering professional development on this topic to pre-service and in-service staff.

The Institute began in 2000 as a joint project between the Commission, the ODE, the American Association of Health Education, and the Conflict Resolution Education Network, now known as the Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR). Over the last two years 26 colleges and universities have participated in the Institute, including the University of Akron, Bluffton College, Bowling Green State University, Capital University, Cedarville College, Cleveland State University, the University of Cincinnati, Defiance College, Denison University, Kent State University, Lourdes College, Malone College, the Miami University, Mount St. Joseph College, Muskingum College, Oberlin College, Otterbein College, the Ohio University, the Ohio State University, Shawnee State University, the University of Toledo, Urbana University, Wilmington College, Wittenberg University, Wright State University, and Youngstown State University.

There will be a follow-up Institute for all 26 colleges and universities on April 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003, in Columbus. This two-day institute will focus on developing effective school based conflict resolution staff development for pre-service and in-service educators on seven basic themes of comprehensive school conflict management. A review of national best practices in institutionalizing school conflict management programs will also be discussed with panels of educators from schools K-12, and university faculty from the participating Ohio colleges and Universities will describe how conflict management is being integrated into higher education. Specific examples of the varied ways that universities are integrating conflict resolution into their coursework and programming using Commission and ODE resources, as well as other materials are outlined below.

Under the guidance of Dr. Morris Jenkins, undergraduate students at **The University of Toledo** have developed conflict resolution training and restorative justice workshops for inmates at the Toledo Correctional Institute. Dr. Morris Jenkins and Dr. Roadruck from **Lourdes College** are developing a mediation workshop for higher education faculty and administrators from the University of Toledo, Lourdes, Bowling Green, and Owens Community College.

Faculty from **Miami University's** School of Education are working with the Education Librarian, Dr. Frances Yates, to develop a premier collection of children's books that will help teach conflict resolution. Students in the Early Childhood Program at Miami have created lesson units that feature books and activities to help children resolve conflicts. Miami plans to sponsor a workshop in late 2003 that will feature specific ways teachers can integrate books into the curriculum to promote understanding and peace. Dr. Kathy McMahon Klosterman teaches a course on *Teaching Students with Behavior Disorders* in which she presents various case studies involving conflicts that arise between student behaviors and school rules or expectations. As part of the case analysis, students work through a set of steps to find mutually agreeable solutions. They then decide how the solutions will be written in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) format.

Dr. Valerie Ubbes at Miami University is preparing teacher candidates to learn conflict resolution content and skills in two health education courses: Personal Health & Pedagogy for the Early Childhood Teacher (pre-K-grade 3) and Wellness Perspectives for Adolescents (grades 4-9). Teacher candidates use self reflection to determine their conflict response styles and practice recognizing conflict response styles in others. Content and skill development around positions, interests, and needs are also addressed. Miami will be offering a summer workshop for pre-service and in-service teachers this summer, and graduate credit is available.

**Wilmington College** is the only university in Ohio that currently requires all graduate education students to take a specific course in conflict resolution education prior to graduation. Dr. Donna Myers is integrating various lessons in conflict resolution into her *Foundations* courses for Education students as well as partnering with the College's Peace Resource Center, directed by Dr. Jim Boland, to integrate specific conflict resolution training.

**Cedarville College's** Dr. Cheryl Irish teaches conflict management in two of her classes, *Survey of Behavior Disorders and Behavior* and *Instructional Management*. She has added conflict management objectives to the syllabus for each class, is integrating conflict management lessons, and is focusing on proactive approaches dealing with prevention and teaching students to demonstrate responsibility for their own behavior.

Dr. Jim Judge of **Urbana University** is working with students in his course *Introduction to Working with Youngsters with Social, Emotional and Behavior Issues* to research how conflict resolution strategies are being incorporated into the school curriculum at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. In addition to sharing information that has been gleaned from research, students also participate in activities appropriate for use with children at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Other states that are working in the area of integrating conflict management in higher education are North Carolina and Georgia. North Carolina recently mandated that all pre-service educators receive training in conflict resolution education before graduation. More information on their mandate and curriculum is available through the University of North Carolina's Center for the Prevention of Violence Web site at:

[www.ncsu.edu/cpsv/whatsnew.htm](http://www.ncsu.edu/cpsv/whatsnew.htm). The state of Georgia mandates that all colleges and universities offer mediation services. For more information about this mandate and training, please visit Georgia State University's Consortium on Negotiation and Conflict Resolution at: [www.law.gsu.edu/CNCR.htm](http://www.law.gsu.edu/CNCR.htm). Additional conflict management resources for higher education may be obtained by going to the Campus Conflict Resolution Resources Web site at: [www.campus-adr.org](http://www.campus-adr.org).

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