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Implementation of a Conflict Mediation Program in an Elementary School

Ruth Ann Moreno Belland
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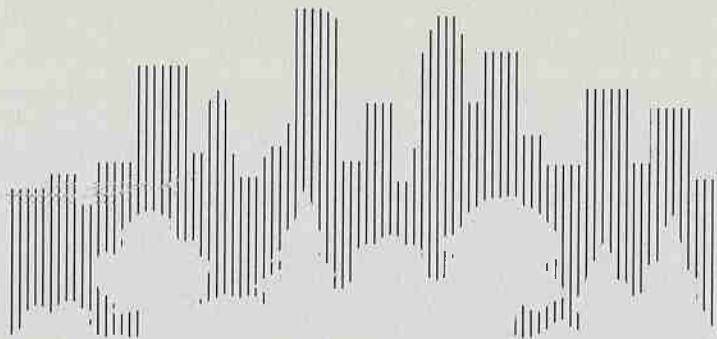
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MASTERS IN SOCIAL WORK THESIS

Ruth Ann Moreno Belland

**MSW
Thesis**

**Implementation of a Conflict Mediation Program
in an Elementary School**

Thesis
Belland

1997

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK
AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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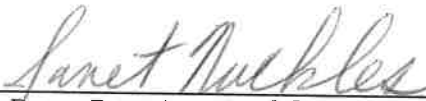
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Implementation of a Conflict Mediation Program
in an Elementary School;
MSW Thesis
by
Ruth Ann Moreno Belland
A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of
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1997

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In dedication to the loving memory of my beloved Father,

Matilde M. Moreno Sr.

June 25, 1923 to February 5, 1994

He was our soldier, friend, husband, father and pa-pa.

In his heart he wished he would have had the opportunity to complete his education. In my heart I have completed my masters for him. He dedicated his life to all six of his children. He was always working hard. He instilled in me, a promising work ethic that nothing comes easy; that learning is endless; the honor one has when the American Flag passes by;

To be proud of our Mexican heritage;
that life is always full of surprises; to have a good sense of humor and to roll with the punches. He taught me to appreciate the grain of wood, that nature is close to God, that family is all you have, that Glenn Miller "The Big Band" sound is never to be lost and that George Shearing is the soul of all music!

He was my scholar, my philosopher, and my first educator.

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God Bless You,

Ruth Ann Moreno Belland 1997.

Abstract

Schools are looking at how violence in the school contributes to students' stress levels and how it interferes with the academic abilities and performance of students. If schools are to be orderly and peaceful places in which high quality education can take place, students must learn to manage conflicts constructively. Studies show that conflict mediation plays a role in creating an environment where students regulate their own behavior in regards to conflict in school. This research study surveyed students about their attitudes and opinions towards conflict mediation at Beaver Lake Elementary School. This study also evaluated whether staff to student disciplinary contacts decreased after the implementation of the conflict mediation program.

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Chapter one

Introduction

School administrators are beginning to examine the idea that the increase in school violence indicates that students lack the skill to deal with problems and believe that violence is the only way to assert oneself and resolve a conflict. As educators, we need to help children learn other problem solving skills. We must teach our children how to deal with conflicts and problems. If we are to break the cycle of violence in our children's lives we need to show them that they have choices in dealing with conflict and that alternatives to violence do exist. Schools can provide better opportunities to teach children how to deal with conflict in a positive, productive way. Administrators are beginning to examine the role of conflict mediation and what role this plays in the process of creating an environment that helps empower students to regulate their own behavior in dealing with conflict in school.

To decrease the violence among students, some schools have focused on teaching nonviolent methods as life long skills so that children will learn to manage conflict constructively. The more children know about how to manage their conflicts and the greater their ability to analyze situations and to think through decisions, the better able they will be to envision the consequences of their actions, respect differing viewpoints, learn a variety of strategies for dealing with conflict, and engage in creative problem solving.

To assist in the academic success of our students, the Beaver Lake violence prevention program decided to promote and implement a conflict mediation program. The intentions of the school's conflict mediation program are to help students find peaceable ways of dealing with conflict in volatile times, as well as to create a kind of "preventive maintenance" to help reduce school violence overall.

In elementary schools today, educators need to acknowledge that students are witnesses to physical and emotional fights. These behaviors and actions displayed by the students stem from unresolved conflict and the children's choice to use violence to resolve their disputes. These actions contribute to an adverse school environment that jeopardizes the well being of our students. When attending school in an environment where disturbing incidents of teasing, bullying, stealing, and verbal or physical attack can occur, the majority of students might have witnessed at least one of these incidents and they may have an impact upon students' sense of security (1993, National Household Education Survey, NHES:93). The impact of this violence on the the students leads to higher levels of stress that potentially contribute to less effective learning (NHES:93). In addition, students may worry about being victimized as well as becoming a victim at school (NHES:93). Students exposed to crime or threats and/or worried about becoming victims at school are experiencing a learning environment that is seriously deficient (NHES:93).

Conflict mediation training offers opportunities to

positively impact students and ultimately reduce violence in schools and in society (N.Kaplan, School Safety, Winter 1996, pg.9). Conflict mediation training is a proactive way to help young people learn positive life skills and thus is a means of making a priority investment in this nation's future (N.Kaplan, School Safety, Winter 1996, pg.9).

Educators need to ensure that schools are communities of teachers and learners where learning can take place in a secure and safe environment (NHES:93).

One week of in school education at Beaver Lake School took place about conflict mediation and how it is a way for the students to learn how to help other students work out a problem. Afterwards, the third, fourth, and fifth grade students were encouraged to apply for a conflict mediator position. There were twenty-one students who were accepted and began training for the positions of conflict mediator.

Part of training of students into full-fledged conflict mediators means teaching that conflict mediators are a part of a team. Conflict mediation training also conveys the concept that the program recognizes that conflict is a natural process and seeks to find peaceful solutions to problems. The conflict mediation program also recognizes that students can solve their own problems and that students are responsible people. When young people are trained to be mediators, they develop not only more effective ways to help others, but also more practical ways to use conflict mediation skills in their own lives.

The students chosen as conflict mediators must fulfill several expectations. They must be trustworthy, dependable

students in every part of their school day. They can not take sides and can not be the judge and jury. Instead, conflict mediators need to learn that their role is to be fair, to be good listeners, and to help identify the disputants' feelings. They then may help to settle a situation by defining the problem, exploring possible solutions, and writing an agreement that both sides can try.

There is a lack of research that provides a clear answer to whether or not conflict mediation makes a positive impact on a school environment. Existing evaluation research provides descriptive information about program usage and longevity, but does not clearly confirm or deny efficacy. If schools are beginning to invest time in a conflict mediation programs, we need to ask whether it benefits the participants and schools? The key questions requiring empirical answers are the following: What is the short-term or long-term impact of peer mediation and conflict skills programs on students' attitudes toward conflict and conflict behaviors? Do these programs affect attitudes? Do these programs change behaviors (especially in reducing violence)? Which program models are best in terms of impact and cost-benefit? Are these programs equally beneficial for students of different educational levels and cultures?

The focus of this research study is to investigate the perceived effect of a conflict mediation program on the trained conflict mediators. In addition, this study looks at whether the program results in a reduction in staff-to-student disciplinary incidence at Beaver Lake School.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

This review of literature will focus on how violence in the school setting impacts the stresses that children experience in this environment and how violence can interfere with academics. It will also touch on conflict mediation and its contribution's to the school environment.

The Impact Of Violence In Our Schools

Land where the bullets fly-
Land where my brothers die-
From every street and countryside-
Let us run and hide-

(sung to the tune of "My Country 'Tis of Thee)

-Author unknown

During the last decade, "the U.S.Department of Justice estimates that over 100,000 young people took guns to school every day while another 160,000 stayed home out of fear" (Prothrow-Stith & Weissman,1991). Eight percent of urban junior and senior high school students missed at least one day of classes a month because they were afraid to go to school. Three percent reported that they were afraid most of the time. Six percent of students avoided places in or around their school because they were fearful of attack or harm.

More than 2,000 students are physically attacked on school grounds each hour. Twelve percent of the crimes committed in school buildings were committed by an offender with a weapon (Prothrow-Stith & Weissman,1991). Shootings or

hostage situations have occurred in schools in 35 states and the District of Columbia. By the age of 18, it has been estimated that the average child has witnessed 200,000 acts of violence, including 18,000 simulated murders on television (Prothrow-Stith & Weissman, 1991).

School administrators are now looking at how violence in the school setting contributes to the students' stress levels (Johnson & Johnson 1995). Such stress interferes with the academic abilities of students (Johnson & Johnson 1995). In addition, violence in schools forces school social workers, teachers and other school staff to use precious time responding to problems rather than focusing on their primary mission of education. The education community is learning that by reducing school violence, schools can become safe places where learning and teaching can again be their primary goal (Watson, 1995). Children in schools at all grade levels seem to be more disruptive and have less internal control (Curwin, 1995). Fighting is the only way that some students know how to keep their dignity, earn the respect of peers, or to be successful (Curwin, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Watson, 1995). What is perhaps most alarming is that violence is becoming so commonplace in many communities and schools that it is considered the norm rather than the exception (Johnson & Johnson, 1995).

Schools can no longer choose between academics and social/emotional issues (Minnesota Department of Education, 1994). They must recognize that children behave better and are more ready to learn when their personal needs are met (Minnesota Department of Education, 1994). However, violence

prevention programs alone are not enough; students also need to learn how to manage conflicts constructively (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). If schools are to be orderly and peaceful places in which high quality education can take place, students must be trained in conflict resolution so that they can manage their conflicts without physical or verbal violence (Johnson & Johnson, 1995).

To decrease the violence among students, some schools are focusing on teaching nonviolent methods so children will learn to manage conflict constructively (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). The more children know about how to manage their conflicts, to analyze situations, and to think through decisions, the better able they will be to envision the consequences of their actions, respect differing viewpoints, learn a variety of strategies for dealing with conflict, and engage in creative problem solving (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Conflict mediation can play an important role in the process of creating an environment that helps empower students to regulate their own behavior in dealing with conflict in school (Johnson & Johnson; Watson 1995).

The Perceptions Of Conflict

When it comes to conflict, the attitudes of most people are negative. When asked to list words associated with conflict, most adults, as well as children, respond in a negative way saying such things as: "It's trouble," "war," "violent," "eye for an eye," "anger," or "I'll get you." (Folger & Jones, 1994). These negative attitudes about conflict are likely the result of messages from a person's

family beliefs, the media, police and government officials, and society in general. The reality, however, is that everyone in every conflict has a choice: to be driven by one's negative attitude or to take control of the situation and act in a positive way. When conflict is viewed as an opportunity to learn and to look at differences, a climate is created that nurtures the self-worth of individuals and provides opportunities to successfully resolve conflict. This positive climate empowers individuals and helps them to control their own lives in ways that respect the needs of others (Folger & Jones, 1994). Conflict itself is not positive or negative. Rather, the actions chosen can turn conflict into a competitive, devastating battle or into a constructive challenge where there is opportunity for growth.

The Responses To Conflict

Possible actions in response to conflict include avoidance, confrontation, and negotiation. These actions affect the outcome of the conflict and will either increase or decrease the problem (Crawford, Schrumpf, & Usadel, 1991).

When people choose to avoid conflict, they may withdraw from the situation, ignore the problem, and/or deny their emotions. This avoidance response is considered a lose/win approach to conflict. People who avoid conflicts lose in the sense that they have little courage to express their own feelings and convictions and are easily intimidated by others. When conflicts are avoided, basic psychological needs for power and self-confidence also are not acknowledged or met (Crawford, Schrumpf, & Usadel, 1991).

People who avoid conflicts are not in effective control of their lives. They may see themselves as victims and their relationships with others invariably suffer. What is gained by the avoidance response is a temporary decrease in the problem (Crawford, Schrumpf, & Usadel, 1991).

Avoidance can also be a lose-lose approach to conflict when both people deny the existence of the conflict or when they will only deal with superficial issues and not those at the root of the problem. In either situation, the conflict is not resolved and both people lose (Crawford, Schrumpf, & Usadel, 1991).

The confrontation response to conflict is characterized by threats, aggression and anger (Crawford, Schrumpf, & Usadel, 1991). Confrontation can also frequently involve bribery and punishment, the latter including withholding money, favors, and affection. Such tactics are usually viewed as being successful by the aggressor (Crawford, Schrumpf, & Usadel, 1991). Confrontation can squelch the immediate issues but at the price of continued hostility. This response to conflict is a win/lose arrangement: the aggressor wins and the other person loses. Hostility and physical damage can also result from this win/lose mentality. In addition, individuals find it difficult to engage in cooperative exchanges with others who use a win/lose model (Crawford, Schrumpf, & Usadel, 1991).

Confrontation can also be a lose/lose approach. In a desire to punish or get even, some individuals can take vindictive actions that may harm themselves as well as their opponent (Crawford, Schrumpf, & Usadel, 1991).

People in conflict who seek first to understand, then to be understood, produce win/win results. This win/win conflict resolution style requires the skill of empathic listening or listening with the intent to understand. People who are empathic listeners get inside another person's frame of reference. They can see the problem as that person does and recognize that person's feelings. The goal of empathic listening is not to agree; rather, it is to comprehend the other person's emotions and beliefs as they relate to the conflict. When people listen with empathy, they create the opportunity for each participant to meet his/her psychological need for empowerment (Crawford, Schrumpf, & Usadel, 1991). When people are empowered, they are able to be responsible for finding their own solutions to conflicts.

Effective communication in conflict must be proactive, not reactive. When people use reactive language to communicate, they are attempting to defer responsibility: "There is nothing I can do. I am not responsible." They perceive their emotions and actions as being governed by something outside of their control. Conversely, proactive language indicates that a person takes responsibility for his or her actions and has the ability to choose a response: "Lets discuss the situation to see how we can resolve the problem" When people communicate proactively, they do not feel victimized and out of control nor do they blame other people or circumstances when involved in a conflict. Instead, they take charge of their actions and feelings in a way that makes resolution possible (Crawford, Schrumpf, & Usadel, 1991).

Proactive communication offers the best possibility for a lasting solution to conflict. When differences are communicated proactively, conflict can deescalate and threats can be eliminated. People are better able to remain calm and are willing to listen to opposing view points. Those involved can focus on the problem, not on each other. Under these circumstances, a lasting, mutually agreeable resolution to the conflict can be found (Crawford, Schrupf, & Usadel, 1991).

Academic Interference

Although debate continues about the effectiveness of our educational system to prepare citizens as future contributing members of society, most of the dialogue has been focused on the intellectual development of youth, while little attention has been given to their affective and personal development. Specifically, intellectual and occupational skills have been emphasized, while skill development to meet the emotional demands of current and future roles has been virtually ignored.

Stress-related physical and emotional problems affect people both at work and at home. School itself can be a major stress for students. For example on a daily basis students may deal with the risk of bad grades, bullies in many areas of the school, and peer rejection. They may dread going out for recess for fear of being picked on. Some children worry about going to the bathroom for fear of who might be there. Others experience the feeling of trepidation when going to lunch for fear of being teased or tripped on

the way to discard trash. A child might feel apprehensive to state his/her personal beliefs for fear of being called a name. He/she may worry about answering a question or walking across the room for fear of being ridiculed. Others may feel apprehensive that a neighborhood issue will surface in the hallway at school (Burrell & Vogl, 1990; Sylwester, 1994). Schools must not overlook these in-school factors that may place students at risk for engaging in violence and other destructive ways to manage conflicts. "Anything that allows students to fail, remain apart from classmates, and be socially inept and have low self-esteem increases the probability that students will use destructive conflict strategies" (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). In addition when short term stress related situations in the school environment occur, student learning is affected. "It is hard for children to concentrate on academics when they are experiencing emotional stress in the school environment" (Sylwester, 1994). When the environment is permeated with fear, the whole academic process of learning can be disrupted (Sylwester, 1995).

Although we often find children who are resilient and thrive in spite of stressful challenges many others are overwhelmed by the stresses in their lives and may learn to behave in self-destructive or anti-social ways (Sylwester, 1995). Stress is a normal part of life but when peer and/or family conflict, poverty, and dangerous neighborhoods and/or schools are present and stress is prolonged, children can adopt styles of defensive behavior (Sylwester, 1995). They may become hostile toward adults, carry a menacing

interpersonal demeanor to school and may come to believe that troubled behavior is self-perpetuating and that respect can be gained only through intimidation (Brendtro & Long, 1994).

Given these possible negative outcomes, it is imperative that at a young age, children learn about stress and stressors and develop healthy strategies to cope with them. The schools are an excellent place for students to learn these skills. In today's world, such skills may be just as important to know and to use as intellectual skills, which unfortunately, are more traditionally emphasized in school (Romano, 1992).

Mediation In Schools

A "silent majority" of students, when they observe the behaviors and interactions of students in conflict, tend to identify conflict as a win-lose confrontation. Most often these students live with uncomfortable feelings about their own safety, and often believe that if they get involved, aggressive actions will be transferred to them. Fear and power struggles are a reality in elementary schools. One of the goals within schools must be to bring these issues in line so that they are manageable. This "silent majority" is the untapped reservoir of strength, the leverage for impacting change, in creating a safe school environment for all children (Lee, 1993).

The increase of violence and threats of violence in school settings have prompted schools to take more aggressive action in providing greater security and a more positive learning environment. Schools are learning that they need a

more appropriate and effective system to deal with conflict other than expulsion, suspension, court intervention, or detention. One such system, conflict mediation, can result in improved communication between and among students, teachers, administrators and parents. Conflict mediation also helps to improve the school climate while at the same time, providing a forum for addressing common concerns.

"Peer to peer interaction is seen as an equal exchange of ideas and makes students more confident that their views may be heard. In addition children learn self-control more effectively when they are given the opportunity to solve their own conflicts rather than depending on a teacher to solve them" (Brophy, 1983 pg. 171).

Mediation training helps both young people and teachers to deepen their understanding about themselves and others and provides them with lifetime dispute resolution skills. Mediation training also increases students' interest in conflict resolution, justice, and the American legal system while encouraging a higher level of citizenship activity (Johnson & Johnson 1995). In addition shifting the responsibility for solving appropriate school conflicts from adults to young adults and children frees both teachers and administrators to concentrate more on teaching than on discipline (Davis, 1985).

Conflict resolution also recognizes that young people are capable of resolving their own disputes. This attitude encourages student growth and gives students skills in listening, critical thinking, and problem-solving which are basic to all learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). Mediation

also provides a system of problem solving that is suited to the nature of young people's problems. It is frequently used by students for problems they would not take to parents, teachers or principals (Ditchman, 1988).

Research

Conflict resolution programs, including peer mediation, play an integral part in the National Educational Goals adopted by the nations's governors (1990). One goal specifically stated that American schools will be "free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning" by the year 2000 (National Education Goals, 1990).

In general, conflict mediation goals are: (a) to decrease violence and anti-social behavior among children, (b) to further children's socialization and maturation by providing education in critical conflict management and social skills (Koch & Miller 1987; Maxwell, 1989), and (c) to provide a method for reducing teacher and administrator time devoted to disciplinary problems (Burrell & Vogel, 1990).

Despite these laudable goals, school systems are questioning whether conflict mediation programs are beneficial to participants and schools, and are challenging the wisdom of continuing to invest resources in conflict mediation without evidence of efficacy. Currently, there is limited research that provides a clear answer to questions about the efficacy and impact of peer mediation programs.

The main questions which require empirical answers are the following: What is the short-term and long-term impact

of peer mediation and conflict skills programs on students' attitudes toward conflict and conflict behaviors? Do these programs change attitudes? Do these programs change behaviors (especially a reduction in violence)? Of the two broad models to choose from in peer mediation programs (1) the cadre programs or (2) curriculum programs, which is best in terms of impact and cost-benefit? And finally, are these mediation programs equally beneficial for students of different education levels and cultures?

A review of existing research on peer mediation reveals that some evidence of program efficacy exists, but is not sufficient for answering the above questions. More attention has been given to designing and implementing peer mediation programs than to evaluating them. Many efforts rely on anecdotal, "testimonial evidence that may suggest the possibility of peer mediation efficacy but does not demonstrate it" (Jones, 1995).

Some studies attempt to establish a relationship between peer mediation programs and specific outcomes in relatively controlled field experiments. The Social Science Research Consortium (SSRC) project investigated the relationship between peer mediation and tendencies toward juvenile delinquency (Social Science Research Consortium, 1987). The Urban Center for Peace Research Implementation, Development and Education (UCPRIDE) study examined the relationship to suspensions and disciplinary actions (Berlowitz & Kmitta, 1993). While any efforts of research should be applauded, the studies were limited. In one study, a principal estimated that during the first year of the

conflict mediation program at his school, the number of conflicts sent to his office after recess dropped from about 10 to 15 per week to one every two weeks (Schmitz, 1994).

Wakefield Junior High School is located in a predominantly Mexican-American area of Tucson Arizona. For the past five years, since the introduction of peer mediation, Wakefield has been below the district's average for the number of students suspended for fighting. Results indicate that this mediation program has been responsible for a 47% reduction of in-school conflicts (McCormick, 1988).

Two elementary schools in Las Vegas Nevada reported the effects of a peer mediation program. This report has some encouraging statistical information, for example, one school mediated 145 conflicts of which 126 (87%) were successfully resolved. In addition, teachers reported that a reduction in discipline problems has occurred (Kmitta, 95).

In another school district outside of Chicago, students filled the halls with anti-violence posters, put on an assembly and invented the following slogan to say when tensions got high between students: "It's okay to walk away " (Curwin, 1995).

In some cases peer mediation programs have been evaluated as part of a larger systemic initiative. A good example is the work done by Johnson, Johnson and Dudley (1992) on peer mediation efficacy within cooperative learning initiatives. This study focuses on the impact of peer mediation training programs on rates of conflict handled by teachers, and the ability of students to learn new skills. However, this research is limited in that it only pertains to

systems employing similar cooperative learning structures where peer mediation implementation is comprehensive and long-term.

Many schools do not meet this narrow description. The most common type of peer mediation research tends to rely more on descriptions of the intervention rather than measurement of the program impact.

The Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution (OCDRCM) and Conflict Management has produced two studies. The initial study by Kaufman in 1991, involved qualitative and quantitative assessments of seventeen schools and the demonstrated critical factors that affect the development and implementation of the program. Opinion survey responses were intended to establish a baseline for follow-up research.

The subsequent report of the OCDRCM (1994), reviewing programs in thirty Ohio Schools, suggests that some programs experienced decreases in disciplinary actions and suspension rates. The report also identified factors which are critical to the longevity and continued utilizations of peer mediation programs, specifically, administrative support, resource provision, and publicity of the program (Jones, 1995). There is also evidence that mediation, when used, is successful at helping disputants reach agreement and that disputants and mediators are generally satisfied with the process and outcome of mediation (Jones, 1995). The literature also states that peer mediators do appreciate and enjoy the training experience and that certain pedagogical techniques are more useful and appreciated than others (Jones, 1995).

Overall, there is limited evidence that goes beyond the description of programs to demonstrate the impact of peer mediation on an array of individuals and school outcomes. Also, there are few studies which evaluate the efficacy of program models or their impact in different situations and with different populations.

Theory

(A) Control Theory

Peer mediation is based on control theory, conflict theory and problem solving. Dr. William Glasser's book, Control Theory explains that conflict originates from within (Glasser 1984). He writes that humans are not controlled by external events but rather are motivated by the desire to satisfy certain needs that internally exist. Glasser calls these needs genetic instructions. He explains that some of our genetic instructions are needs that are satisfied psychologically rather than physically. These psychological needs are:

- 1) The need to *belong*--loving, sharing, and cooperating with others;
- 2) The need for *power*--achieving, accomplishing, and being recognized and respected;
- 3) The need for *freedom*--making choices in our lives;
- 4) The need for *fun*--laughing and playing (Glasser, 1984).

Meeting all these needs can be a conflict because it requires a person to continually negotiate and to find a balance between the four psychological needs in order to be satisfied.

Dr. Glasser also explains that each individual's beliefs

about what will satisfy his/her needs or wants is different. He refers to these beliefs as "pictures" that the mind stores in a personal "picture album." This personal picture album has a number of pictures for every need or want. Anything that is believed to satisfy a need or a want is stored here. Life experiences add to the enlargement of each person's picture album and as no two individuals are alike, neither are their picture albums.

If two people wish to satisfy their needs to belong through a friendship, for example, they must learn to share commonalities and respect the value of their differences. However, since their two pictures albums are not alike, these people may have conflicting wants and needs in their relationship. As a result, the necessity to renegotiate and balance the relationship will persist throughout the friendship and conflict of some type will be inevitable (Glasser 1984).

At the most basic level, these conflicts involve an attempt by the disputants to meet their psychological needs for belonging, power, freedom, and fun. Although limited resources and different values may appear to be the cause of conflicts, Glasser believes that unmet needs are truly their root or cause. In fact, he says that if the unmet psychosocial needs are not expressed and dealt with, the conflict will often reappear later, even when a solution was reached earlier by the disputants. In addition, Glasser writes that psychological needs can only be satisfied by people, not by things.

Glasser says that conflicts that involve issues about

limited resources such as time are typically the easiest to resolve. In these situations people quickly learn that cooperating instead of competing is in their mutual best interest. In cooperating, disputants share in problem solving by recognizing each other's interests and by creating choices. In this process, the psychological needs of belonging and power, and perhaps freedom and fun, are met in an equitable allocation of limited resources.

Conflict involving different values (convictions, priorities and/or principles) tend to be more difficult to resolve. Glasser states that a specific belief or attitude toward an object, situation or individual is a value that is a standard that guides a person's actions. When values are in conflict, disputants often perceive the differences between them as a personal attack. Each disputant may personalize the conflict and feel threatened. Under these circumstances, people tend to become defensive and cling strongly to their own convictions. Other difficulties often seen when values are in conflict include rigid value systems that can in the long run, restrict a person from meeting his or her need to belong. Inflexible values are also almost always destructive to the basic psychological need for freedom. The tendency in this value system is to see others as wrong if they do not see it "my way." This attitude can result in limiting one's options in life as well as one's choice of friends.

The challenge in resolving a value conflict is learning that one does not have to give up one's values, but rather, learn to understand and respect other's differences in

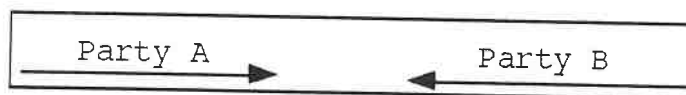
beliefs.

(B) Conflict Theory

Conflict theory does not look at psychological needs as Glasser does, but rather at conflict resolution, alternative dispute resolution, and mediation and negotiation concepts (Parsons 1991). These methods are based on a win-win model of collaboration or interest-based bargaining. In negotiation and mediation, the goals are to have two disputing parties air their grievances with each other, communicate their feelings, listen to each other, explore their differences and options, and decide on solutions to which both parties can agree (Parsons, 1991). To clarify conflict theory, the difference between negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and litigation are illustrated in the diagrams below in (Parsons, 1987).

Negotiation involves direct communication between two parties. Negotiation is the most typical way in resolving conflicts between friends, family and co-workers. If conflicting parties cannot negotiate a solution directly, a third party may be needed to mediate to promote communication and conciliation.

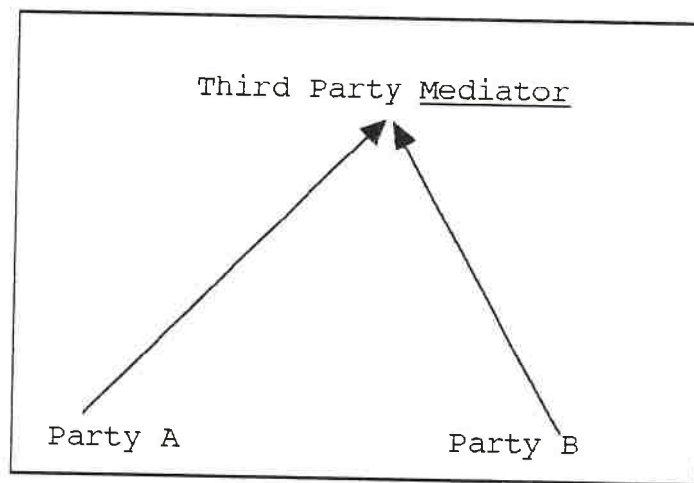
Figure 2.1 Negotiation



Mediation involves the intervention in a dispute of an acceptable, impartial and neutral third party who has no authoritative decision-making power in the dispute. The

mediator promotes reconciliation, settlement, compromise or understanding among two or more conflicting parties. Mediation is problem based and problem solving the sought for out-come is a mutually acceptable agreement. The mediation process focuses on facilitating problem solving and assumes that the parties are able to isolate issues, interests, positions, alternatives, and resources to find agreeable solutions. If a third party is unable to mediate negotiation, communication, and conciliation, arbitration and litigation may be the next process an individual would pursue (Parsons, 1991).

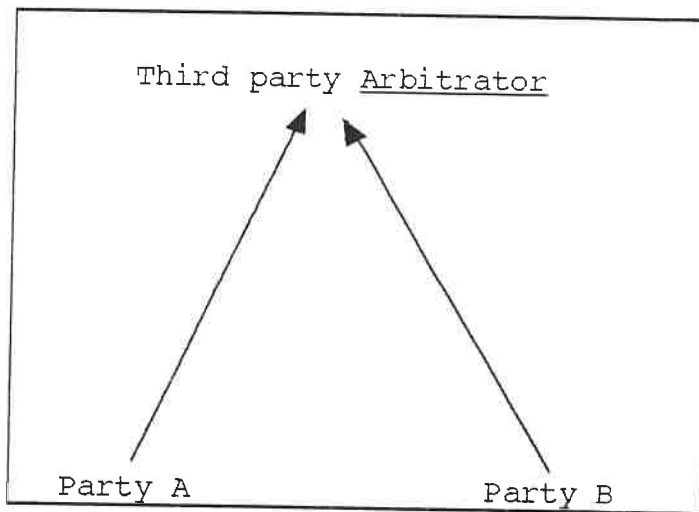
Figure 2.2 Mediation



The arbitrator is the third party appointed to the parties in dispute. The arbitrator does much of the communicating to the parties engaged in a dispute and the disputants communicate to the arbitrator. The arbitrator facilitates the communication between the parties similar to a judge giving the arbitrator the ability or power to make

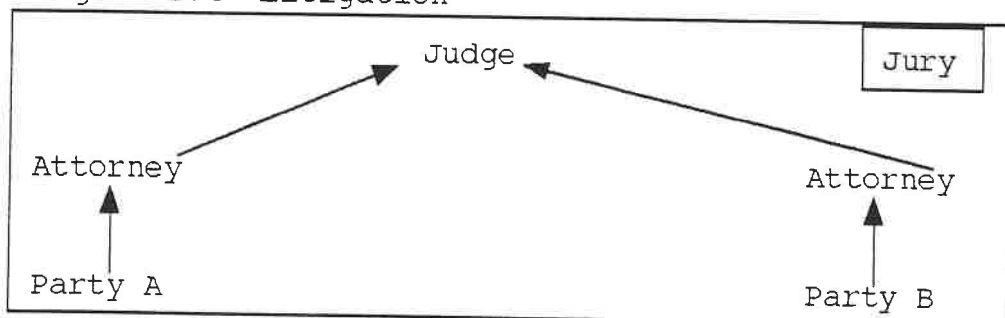
authoritative decisions to settle the dispute (Parsons, 1991).

Figure 2.3 Arbitration



If arbitration is unsuccessful the parties may resort to litigation: each party is represented by an attorney and if a jury is involved the decision is made by an outside group through the intervention of attorneys. The parties in conflict do not have to talk to one another. In this conflict resolution strategy the participants retain the least power (Parsons, 1991) .

Figure 2.4 Litigation



(C) Problem Solving

Maria O'Neil McMahon in her book The General Method of Social Work Practice, describes problem solving as a generalist method that includes: assessment, intervention, evaluation, and termination.

The three components of the assessment stage are; (a) an assessment statement, (b) problem prioritization and (c) the contracted plan.

During the assessment stage, the priority is to open up the boundaries between the disputants and the person identified to help facilitate problem solving. The four components of the intervention stage of problem solving are a variety of activities that the facilitator may be involved in such as:

- (1) Direct intervention. The goals are to give ongoing support to disputants as they carry out contracted tasks, and to help disputants to bring about change in themselves.
- (2) Information and referral. This process directs disputants to other resources for help and for identification of the problem, if needed. It is imperative to find resources that are appropriate and available and every referral should have some type of follow-up by the facilitator.
- (3) Case management or teamwork. The facilitator mobilizes and brings together the various services needed for efficient, effective problem solving.

When multiple service providers are involved, they work together in planning, decision making and consolidated actions in order to facilitate problem solving.

- (4) Indirect intervention. The facilitator may need to intervene directly with one or more outside systems in order to bring about changes needed for clients to achieve their identified goals.

The evaluation stage of problem solving is a time to study and measure the effectiveness of the problem solving.

The final stage of problem solving from the generalist method perspective is the ending of the relationship between the facilitator and the disputants. It is a time to evaluate whether stated goals have been accomplished a time to plan for the future.

The mediation process is a problem solving intervention that has been used since the 1970's (Parsons, 1991).

In the field of social work, mediation is described as joint advocacy where the social worker promotes the interests of each participant (Chandler, 1985). The social worker also works to empower each participant to own the responsibility for decision making and for determining an outcome that is satisfactory to both parties. The profession places a high value on the expression of feelings, listening, and communication. It also values goal identification and working towards respectful and fair solutions to problems. Thus, social work values and mediation goals compliment one another, making the social work profession an ideal place to promote and practice mediation techniques.

The Rational For, And Benefits Of,
A Conflict Mediation Program

The need exists for programs that teach a peaceful expression and early resolution of conflict. Conflict arises not only from disruption and violence in overcrowded schools and the tensions inherent in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural student bodies and communities, but also from the range of day-to-day conflicts typical in any school setting. National polls in education show that discipline in schools has been a prevailing issue during the last ten years and that valuable teaching time is lost in maintaining order and resolving student disputes (Johnson & Johnson). Conflict mediation training addresses these issues assertively by enabling students to:

- 1) Learn new skills in communication and conflict mediation; actively contribute to the improvement of their school environment;
 - 2) build a stronger sense of peer cooperation and community at school;
 - 3) peacefully and constructively express and resolve their own conflicts without adult intervention; feel a sense of power and accomplishment at being able to peacefully resolve their own conflicts;
 - 4) express anger in constructive ways, so there is less likelihood of tension, hostility, violence, and vandalism at school; and take more responsibility for their actions and how they affect others and their surroundings
- (The Community Board Program, 1995).

Conflict mediation also invites students to be a part of the plan to reduce violence (Johnson & Johnson).

Conflict mediation participants benefit from the program by learning to recognize conflict as a natural part of life. Another important benefit is that the process of mediation requires disputants to take responsibility for their conflict in order for a settlement to be reached (Maxwell, 1989). The process of mediation is self-empowering because it enables students to make decisions about issues and conflicts that affect their own lives. It is the self-empowering aspect of mediation that established conflict mediation as an important tool in the fostering of self-regulation, self-esteem and self-discipline (Maxwell, 1989). Through mediation, students gain clearer perceptions of one another's positions and motivation. With accurate communication they can begin to trust one another and define conflicts as mutual problems to be solved. (Cooper, Marquis & Ayer-Lopez, 1982).

Conflict mediation skills also are carried over into the family and the community. The life long tools learned in mediation include self-control, communication, problem solving, critical thinking, and planning for real-life problem situations (Koch 1988; Crawford, Schrumpf, & Usadel, 1991).

In summary, the potential outcomes and benefits of a peer mediation program include:

Administrators and teachers have additional options when handling behavioral problems. School climate improves. Teachers experience less conflict in the classroom, spend less time and energy handling disputes, and have more time for teaching. Students learn to be responsible and responsive to their peers in a cooperative constructive mode. Students learn to be fair and increase their involvement in citizenship activities (Crawford, Schrumpf, & Usadel, 1991).

In addition teachers and administrators are able to refocus on their primary mission which is to teach academics (Schmitz,1994).

The Research Question

Common reasons for implementing school peer mediation programs include (a) improving school climate by decreasing violence and anti-social behavior among children; (b) increasing the child's ability to deal with conflict in a peaceful manner; and (c) reducing the amount of teachers' and administrators' time spent in disciplinary incidents.

The purpose of this research study is to study the effects of a conflict mediation program on the conflict mediators, as well as the program's effectiveness in decreasing the level of conflict between students. To investigate these questions, a survey questionnaire was created. The questionnaire was self-administered and focused on the conflict mediators' opinions and attitudes about their involvement in conflict mediation, and about their feelings regarding the conflicts that occur at school. In addition to the questionnaire, data from school records of staff-to-student disciplinary incidents from the years 1993-1994, 1994-1995, were examined to look for behavior effects of the conflict mediation program on overall student behavior.

CHAPTER 3

Conflict Mediation Program

The conflict mediation program is based on the Community Board Program of Conflict Resolution which includes definitions of terms (1995). The Community Board Program, since its founding in 1976, has been a forerunner in the development and implementation of conflict resolution methods and models for communities. Students are first trained in communication, conciliation, critical thinking, and leadership skills. They then serve as conflict mediators and help other students resolve disputes peacefully. The Community Board Program offers assistance in development of these programs in public and private schools and in juvenile correctional facilities nationally.

Physical violence is defined as physical force exerted for the purpose of violating, damaging or abusing. The act or an instance of violent action or behavior; abusive or unjust exercise of power (American Heritage Dictionary, 1994).

Effect is defined as something brought about by a cause or an agent; a result. The power to produce an outcome or achieve a result (American Heritage Dictionary, 1994).

Conflict is defined as a disagreement between two people's ideas and/or interests (American Heritage Dictionary, 1994).

Mediation is defined as an intervention between disagreeing parties to promote reconciliation, settlement, or understanding (American Heritage Dictionary, 1994).

At Beaver Lake Elementary, staff-to-student disciplinary contact occurs when school rules are not followed. Expectations for students include respect, responsibility, cooperation, effort, and safety. The rules developed from these expectations are defined as: "All students are to be accountable for your own actions; 1) To be accurate and truthful in your statements; 2) To listen and use acceptable, courteous language; 3) To keep hands, feet and objects to yourself; 4) To be prepared for learning with appropriate materials and attitude; 5) To follow directions of all adults; and 6) To use personal and school property correctly." If the rules are not followed, the child is reminded of the expectation/rule. If problems continue, consequences are invoked and then the teacher may involve the child's parent(s) and the principal or Student Needs Team. Written records are kept on serious disciplinary incidents. (Beaver Lake Elementary Climate for Learning, 1993).

Conflict resolution is defined as education for students to learn to settle differences and deal with interpersonal conflicts using non-violent methods (American Heritage Dictionary, 1994).

Disputant is the person disagreeing or in conflict (American Heritage Dictionary, 1994).

Mediation skills are methods learned in resolving conflicts, such as active listening, restating and reflecting statements, using "I messages", brainstorming, and seeking win-win solutions (American Bar Association, 1992).

A Mediator is the person who acts as a catalyst, facilitator, translator, and communicator. The mediator has

half of the responsibility to resolve the dispute, and the parties share the other half (American Bar Association, 1992).

A Conflict mediator is a trained student who helps other students resolve their conflicts by using mediation skills (American Bar Association, 1992).

Win-win solutions are solutions to which both disputing parties agree. Both are satisfied with the solution and no one is a winner or loser (American Bar Association, 1992).

The Mediation Program; Implementation

Almost all conflict mediation programs follow one or two broad models: (a) cadre programs or (b) general conflict curriculum programs.

In the cadre approach of conflict mediation, the peer mediator or conflict mediation exists independently of any other school activity or instruction. Small groups of students are trained as conflict mediators usually during a one or two day workshop or a four to ten hour class. The cadre approach is based on the assumption that a few specially trained students can constructively defuse and resolve the interpersonal conflicts taking place among members of the student body. It is a relatively easy and inexpensive program for a school to adopt (Community Boards of San Francisco, Conflict Managers Program 1983).

The other type of program includes the total student body. This curriculum-wide approach emphasizes training every student and teacher in the school to manage conflicts constructively (Community Boards of San Francisco Conflict Managers Program 1985; The School Mediators' Alternative

Resolution Team (SMART), 1983). The role of the mediator is rotated so that each student is a mediator for an equal amount of time and the entire school is involved in creating comprehensive conflict awareness throughout the school. Because this approach involves all personnel and students, it is an expensive endeavor for the school to adopt.

In both cadre and peer mediation programs, mediators follow specific procedures when dealing with disputants:

- 1) Introduction -- the mediator explains the purpose of mediation and ascertains the disputants' willingness to participate. The disputants make an initial statement of their intention to resolve the conflict.
- 2) Problem determination -- the disputants each give a statement and summary of their perspectives.
- 3) Problem identification -- the mediator clarifies the problem and restates it so each disputant understands the problem. The mediator also summarizes areas of agreement and disagreement and identifies the feelings that have been stated by the disputants.
- 4) Generation and evaluation of alternatives -- options are explored and the probability of success of each option is examined.
- 5) Selection of a solution -- the mediator encourages disputants to select a solution that are agreeable to both.
- 6) Agreement -- specific terms are agreed upon and

a follow-up time is determined
(The Community Board Program of San Francisco,
1985; American Bar Association, 1992).

Conflict Mediation Program In An Elementary School

Beaver Lake adopted The Community Board Program of Conflict Resolution as its peer mediation curriculum. This cadre approach curriculum is used by all schools in District #622 who have a peer mediation or conflict mediation program.

Beaver Lake's Violence Prevention committee started their conflict mediation program in the spring of 1994 with strong support from the principal and teaching staff. The school social worker was appointed committee chair by the principal and two teachers volunteered to participate in the initial student training. "WANTED POSTERS" in bright fluorescent colors along with fluorescent letter "M's", meaning "mediation" were strategically displayed throughout the school building. A week of daily announcements over the intercom system advertised that the students in grades three, four and five could apply to be conflict mediators. Also during this week all third, fourth, and fifth grade classrooms participated in discussions about the need for this program at school. They also saw a video about conflict mediation.

Conflict mediation was explained to the students as a chance to sit face-to-face and talk, uninterrupted, so that each person's side of a problem can be heard. After the problem is defined, solutions are created and then evaluated. When an agreement is reached, it is written down and signed

by those involved in the problem.

After a week of educating and advertising, students in the third, fourth, and fifth grades were encouraged by the school staff to apply for a conflict mediator position. All of the applicants were required to complete a written application and to get their parents written permission to apply.

Selection of peer mediators was made by the Violence Prevention committee. The main criteria used were: a) the student's past and present classroom behavior as observed by teachers and other support staff; b) the students' ability to show leadership skills; c) his/her willingness to commit to and promote the program, model conflict mediation skills to peers, and attend all of the training meetings; and d) the student's willingness and ability to make up missed school work. Students who were chosen to participate received a hand addressed letter of acceptance and congratulations filled with confetti. Enclosed with the letter was a form giving permission for the student to participate as a mediator which required a parent's signature.

Mediation Training began with twenty-one students from grades three, four and five and was held during school hours for two half-days. The training was facilitated by staff from a local family service agency with expertise in conflict mediation. The topics covered in training included: the philosophy of conflict mediation; team work; guidelines and duties of conflict mediators; styles of conflict; what a conflict mediator is and is not; role playing of the mediation process; good vs. poor listening skills; active

listening rules; I messages; paperwork required by the conflict mediation process; and the qualities of good problem resolution.

During training, conflict mediation teams were established. Each team was made up of three individuals, one each from grades three, four and five. The student teams practiced their new skills and performed role-plays of the conflict mediation process. This practice took place for one hour so that the teams would be well prepared before being faced with a real mediation session.

A monthly schedule calendar was created and set up on a three week rotation which allowed each mediator the opportunity to mediate every two weeks. This schedule calendar, was worked on every month by the children who cut, pasted, and colored it before it was distributed. The conflict mediators schedule was posted in the main office and in the lunchroom and also distributed to the staff and classroom teachers.

In the spring of 1994-1995, conflict mediation sessions were offered three times a week from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. during recess, when the school social worker was in the building to supervise. The conflict mediation program began in March and was received enthusiastically by the student body. The trained students asked that announcements be made every morning to remind the mediators on the schedule for that day were and when to report for conflict mediation duty. There were one hundred twenty-one conflict mediation sessions from March to June.

At the end of the 1994-1995 school year, conflict

mediators and staff were asked whether they wanted to continue in the program the following year. In the fall of 1995, the program began again with nine experienced conflict mediators and two experienced conflict mediation staff. The same advertising techniques from the previous year were used to encourage new children to apply for this year's group of conflict mediators. In response, thirty-two students from grades three, four and five applied. In addition, new staff including two playground supervisors, two teachers, and the school psychologist volunteered to participate in the 1995-1996 training. Ultimately, twenty-five students were selected as mediators (using the same process and requirements from the year before).

In 1995-1996 the conflict mediators' schedule calendar was created and posted in the same manner as the previous year. However, the number of conflict mediation sessions increased and were offered five days a week rather than three, 12:00 to 1:00 during the recess. The supervision of the children during that hour also changed and was no longer left only to the school social worker but now was rotated amongst all the trained mediation staff.

Chapter 4

Methodology

Setting

Beaver Lake Elementary School is located in Maplewood, Minnesota. 500 children, in kindergarten through fifth grade, attend the school. Beaver Lake is located in a mixed income geographical area. The free and reduced breakfast and lunch programs serve approximately 120 children daily (25%). The majority of students at Beaver Lake are Caucasian with a handful of minority students also attending, including African American, Hispanic, Asian-American, American-Indian, Jewish, Indonesian or mixed-race children.

Class sizes at Beaver lake ranges between 20 to 25 students per classroom. Title I and learning disabled classes are offered, along with support services provided by a part-time school social worker, school psychologist, occupational and physical therapist, and a speech/language therapist. Enrichment classes and high potential classes are also offered to the students during the school day.

Sample

Students in grades three, four and five who were trained in 1995-1996 as conflict mediators were invited to participate in this study. The age range in this group was from eight to eleven years of age. All participants were Caucasian. Participation in this study was voluntary. There were sixteen males and twenty females, for a total of thirty-six participates. However, before the study was completed there were two male participates who were suspended from the

team of conflict mediators, due to conflict of interest and one female participate that had moved away.

Data Collection Instrument

This study involved a review of existing records of staff to student disciplinary incident records from the years 1993-1994 and 1994-1995 prior to and during the implementation of the conflict mediation program. The incidents were tallied into the following categories: bullying, violent language, cruel teasing, aggressive play, overt defiance, and physical fighting during recess. Along with this review of existing records, a self-administered survey questionnaire consisting of thirty-four questions was presented to the student conflict mediators. The questionnaire was in the form of a five point Likert scale with "Strongly Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" as endpoints. The questions were based on the mediation program goals and focused on opinions and attitudes toward conflict mediation and conflicts that occur at school. The questionnaire was broken down into the following categories: (a) demographics, (b) conflict mediation, (c) mediation training, and (d) types of conflict at school. The questionnaire was designed by modifying existing evaluation kits. These kits were Lam's School Mediation Program Evaluation Kit (1989); the Evaluation Plan and Instruments of New Mexico Center for Dispute Resolution (1995); the Review of St. Louis Park School District's Questionnaire of Climate in the School Setting (1993), and "The Way I Feel About Myself" the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (Piers, Harris, 1985).

The first draft of the questionnaire was reviewed by the

Beaver Lake Principal, the Assistant Superintendent of the School District, Augsburg Academic Advisor Carol Kuechler, Thesis Advisor Mike Schock, and the mediation team at Beaver Lake school. It was also reviewed by the Augsburg MSW students in a thesis seminar class and then submitted to the Institutional Review Board of Augsburg College.

The survey consisted of thirty-four questions. The first three questions focused on the respondent and asked about gender, age and grade. Questions numbered four to twenty-five required a five point Likert scale response.

(Figure 4.1)

| | | | | |
|----------------|------------|---------|------------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | Somewhat 4 | 3 | Somewhat 2 | 1 |

Questions numbered twenty-six to thirty-four required a four point Likert scale response.

(Figure 4.2)

| | | | |
|--------------|-------|----------|------------|
| All the time | a lot | a little | not at all |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Students were first introduced to the questionnaire at a monthly Conflict Mediation meeting. They received both verbal, visual and written instructions at that time. The conflict mediators were discouraged from discussing the questionnaire with their peers. However, the students were asked to discuss the questionnaire with their parent(s) and/or guardian in order to choice about participating in the study. A consent form and letter was also sent home, along

with the survey, which included an explanation of the study and survey. A parental permission was received, student participants completed the survey and mailed it back to the school. Completed questionnaires were sent attention to the principal, in order to maintain the anonymity of respondents.

Chapter Five

Findings

This chapter focuses on the responses from the study's data collection instrument along with the review of records of staff to student disciplinary incidence from the years 1993-1994 and 1994-1995.

Of the twenty-nine surveys that were mailed to the parents for review with their children, all but one were returned, for a response rate of 97% (The one parent that chose not to participate responded in writing. She stated that she did not want her child participating in the study and stated that she would not have had their child participate in a school function if she had known it would lead to research).

Sixteen participants were girls (57%) and twelve participants were boys (43%). The students' ages ranged from eight to eleven years of age, with an average age of 9.8 years. The students surveyed were in third, fourth and fifth grades. Questions number four to twenty-five required a five point Likert scale response. (See Figure 5.1 and Appendix H) Figure (5.1)

| | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|---------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Questions number twenty-six to thirty-four required a four point Likert scale response.

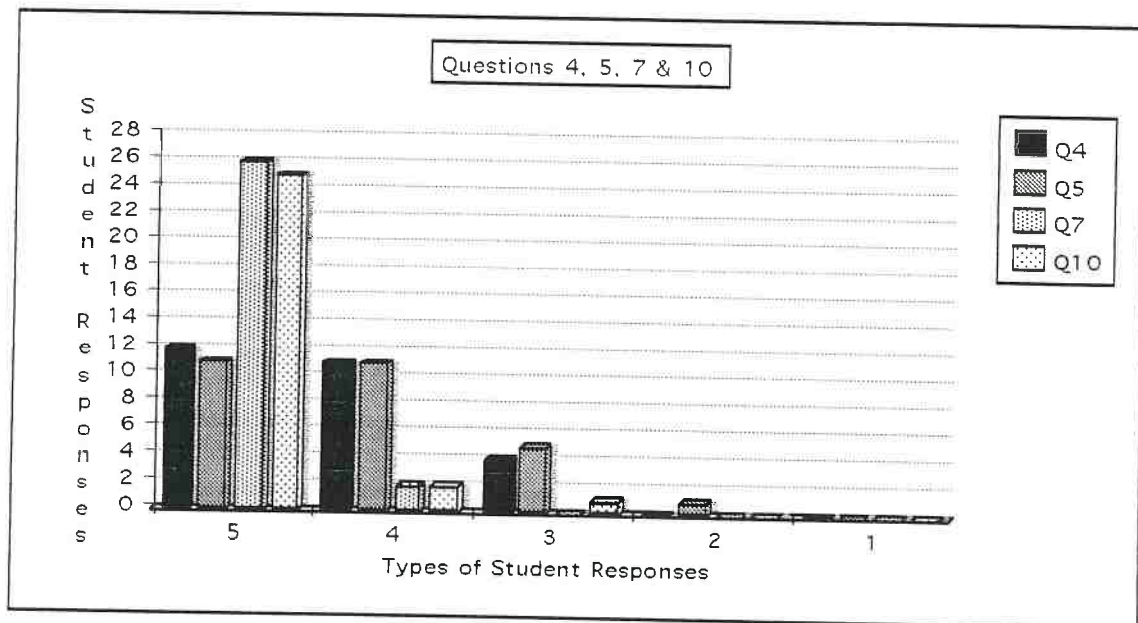
Figure (5.2)

| | | | |
|--------------|-------|----------|------------|
| All the time | a lot | a little | not at all |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Attitudes Toward School

As noted in Table 5.3, the responses to the questions that focused on the conflict mediators' attitudes about school were substantially positive. The conclusion is based on the aggregate of the following questions stated. Twenty-three of the twenty-eight students (45%) responded with agree or strongly agree that they looked forward coming to school most days (question four). Twenty-two of twenty-eight responded strongly agree (78%) that they felt comfortable asking for help from their teacher (question five). Twenty-seven of the twenty-eight (99%) responded that they felt it was very important to try hard in school (question seven). Twenty-seven of the conflict mediators (92%) said that it was very important to complete homework assignments on time (question ten). In general then, most student mediators have a positive attitude about school.

Table 5.3

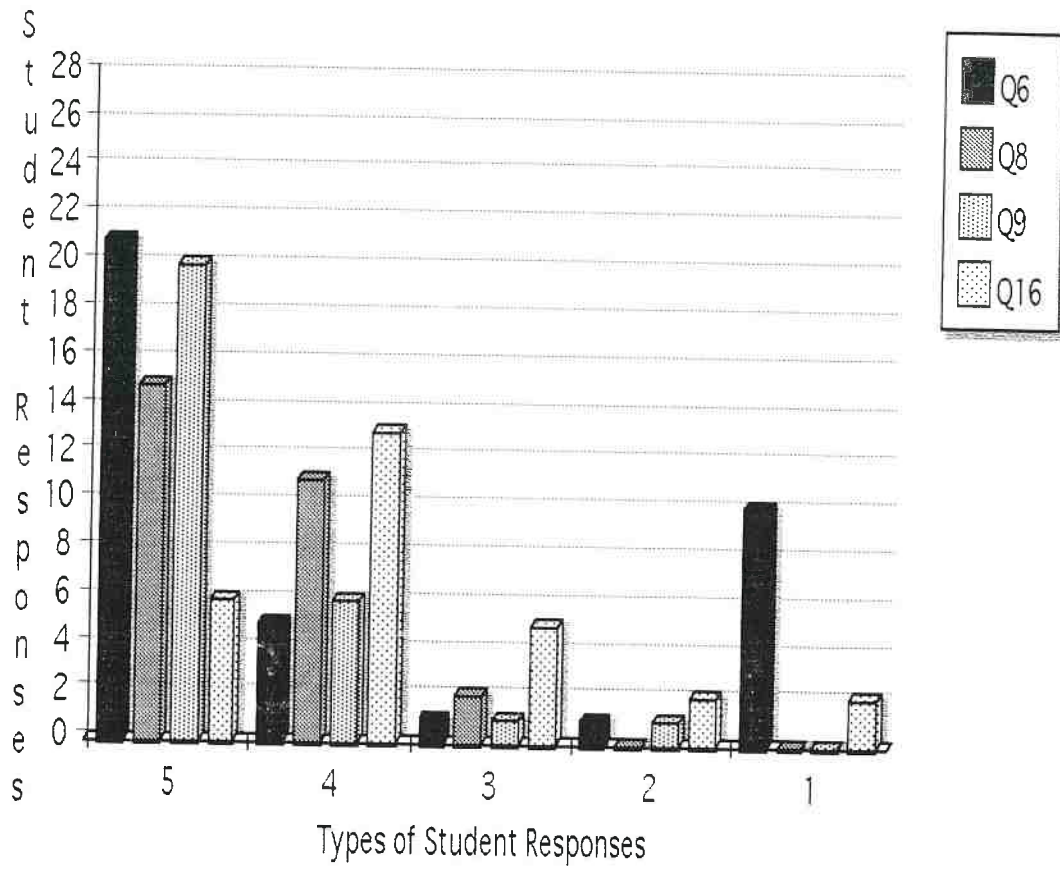


Student Mediators Perceptions Of How
Other View Them.

The focus in this section of questions was on people's view of the conflict mediators and whether they do well in school. Table 5.4 shows that when one combines the questions in this table, the conclusion can be drawn that students felt well respected by others as students and as mediators. Twenty-six of the twenty-eight respondents (92%) thought that their teacher really cared that they do well (question six). Twenty-six of twenty-eight respondents (92%) thought it very important to have friends who thought of them as good students. (question eight). Twenty-six students out of twenty-eight (92%) responded that it was very important to have teachers who thought of them as good students (question nine). Six out of twenty-eight respondents (21%) strongly believed that other kids respected the work they were doing as mediators. Thirteen (46%) somewhat thought that they were respected as mediators (question sixteen). In this section the table indicates that the student mediators, believed that their status as a mediator helped their reputation in school.

See Table 5.4

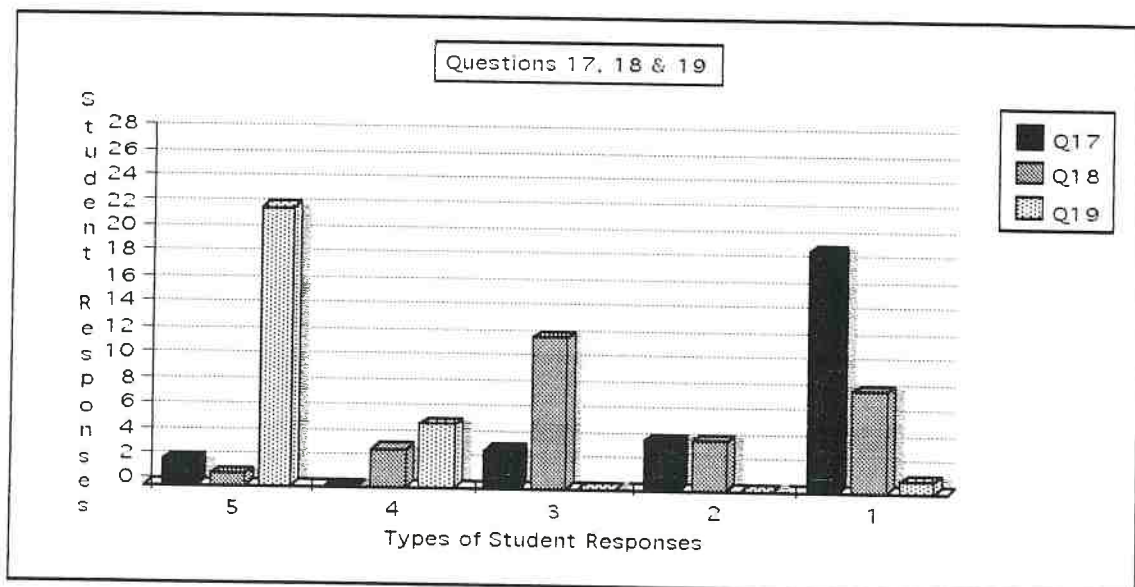
Questions 6, 8, 9 & 16



Conflict Mediators Recommendations for Discipline Procedures

The focus of this section is the conclusion of combined data based from the following questions seventeen, eighteen and nineteen, on whether mediators would recommend going to the principal's office to settle a conflict or to recommend that students attend a mediation session to resolve their conflicts. Twenty-three of the twenty-eight students (81%) felt that they preferred attending a conflict mediation session over going to the principal's office (question seventeen).

Twelve of the twenty eight students (42%) were neutral in their opinion whether other students would prefer a mediation session or be sent to the principal's office (question eighteen). Twenty-seven of the twenty-eight students (95%) agreed that they would recommend the mediation program to others when they were in a fight (question nineteen). In conclusion the table shows that students were more likely to recommend mediation. Table 5.5

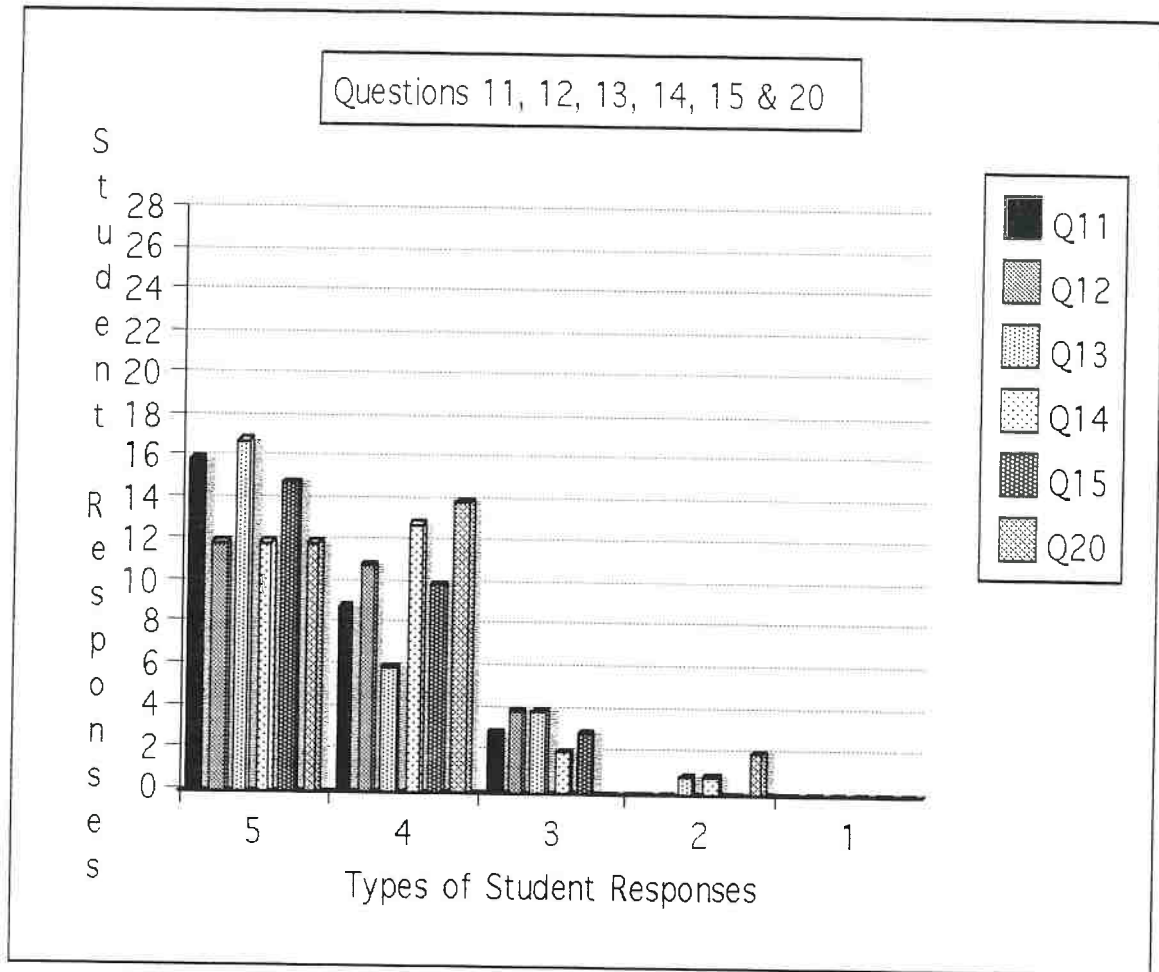


Attitudes About Conflict Mediation Training

This section of questions asked if the training was helpful to the mediators in dealing with conflict situations in school. Data is based on an aggregate of the following questions in table 5.6. Twenty-five of the students (89%) agreed that their training helped them deal with conflicts at school (question eleven). Twenty-eight of the twenty-three students (81%) agreed that their training helped them deal with conflicts with older kids (question twelve). Twenty-three students (81%) agreed that their training helped them deal with conflict with younger kids (question thirteen).

Twenty-five of the twenty-eight students (88%) agreed that their training helped them deal with conflicts with their classmates (question fourteen). Twenty-five of the twenty-eight students (88%) agreed that their training helped provide a choice between talking out a fight and/or fighting with their classmates (question fifteen). Of the twenty-eight students, twenty-six of the students (47%) agreed that the skills they learned in mediation training would be something they felt they would use as a grown up (question twenty). The majority of the students agreed that their training as mediators was helpful to them as they dealt with conflict at school.

See Table 5.6



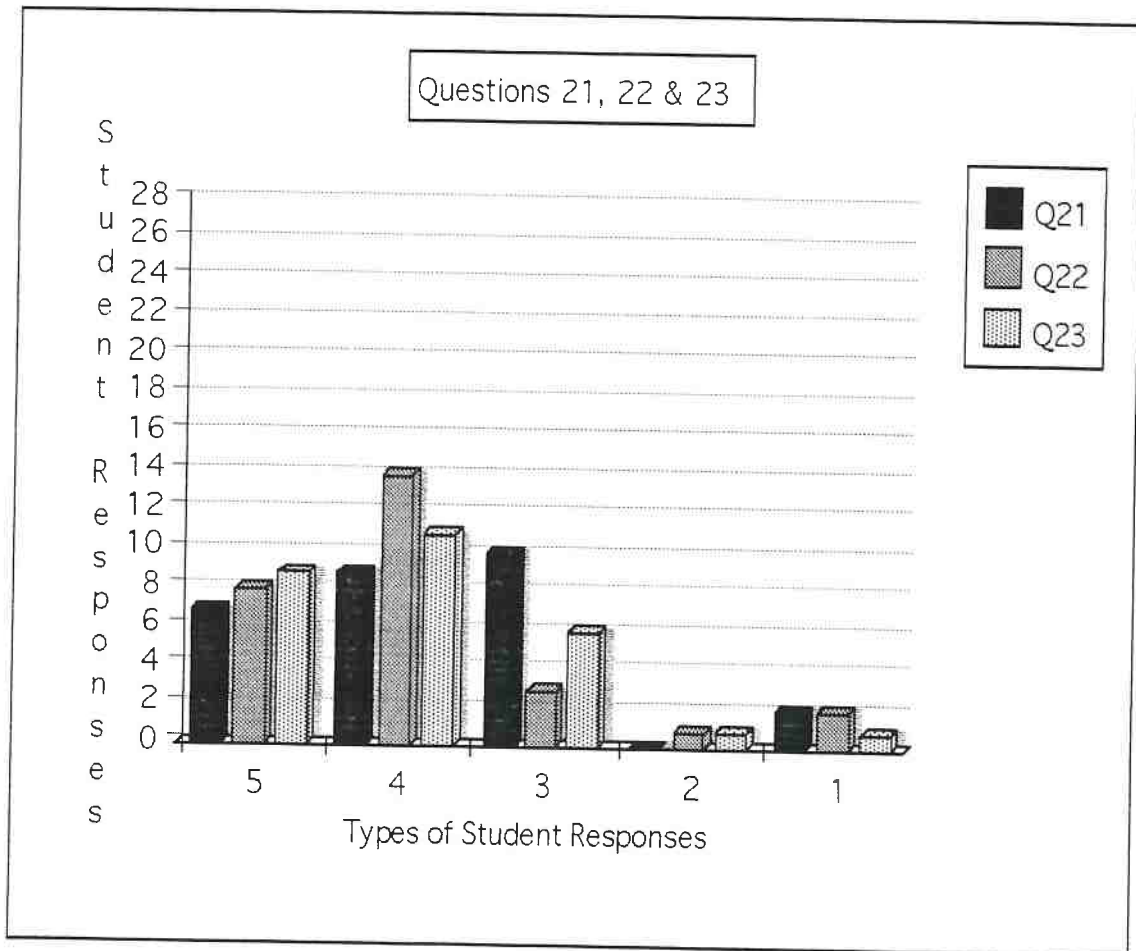
Conflict Mediators' Opinions on Physical Conflict in School

When pulling the data together on these three questions that focused on asking the mediators' opinions if they had noticed less physical conflict in their classroom, with friends, and in school since the conflict mediation program started.

Ten of the students (35%) were neutral in their opinion about whether they had noticed less physical conflict in school (question twenty-one).

Twenty-two of the students (78%) agreed that they had noticed less physical conflict in their classrooms (question twenty-two). Twenty of the students (71%) agreed that they had noticed less physical conflict with their friends since the mediation program began (question twenty-three). In general, most students agree that they have seen less fighting since the inception of the program.

Table 5.7

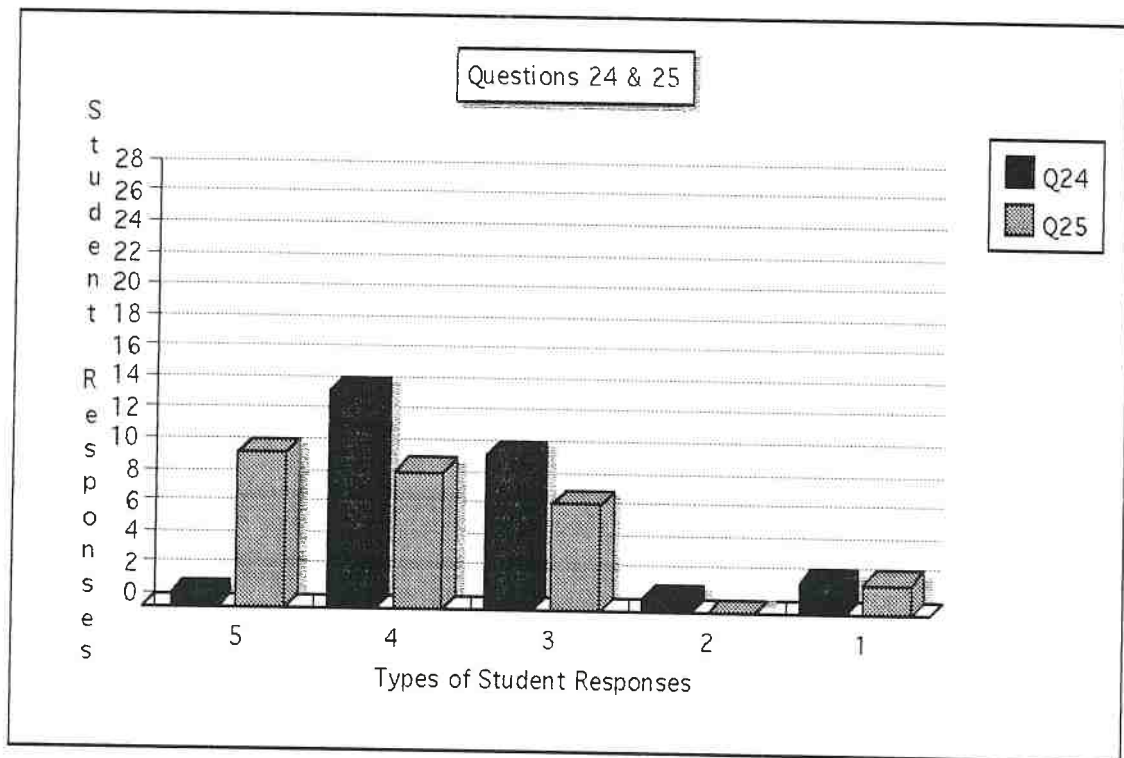


Students Attitudes Towards Teachers

The aggregate data of these two questions focuses on the changes in the interactions between students and teachers since the mediation program began.

Fifteen of the students (53%) noted some positive changes in the way students act toward their teachers (question twenty-four). Nineteen of the students (67%) noted strong positive changes in the way teachers attitudes changed toward their students (question twenty-five). As shown in table 5.8 most of the students noted positive or neutral changes in these interactions between students and teachers since the mediation program began.

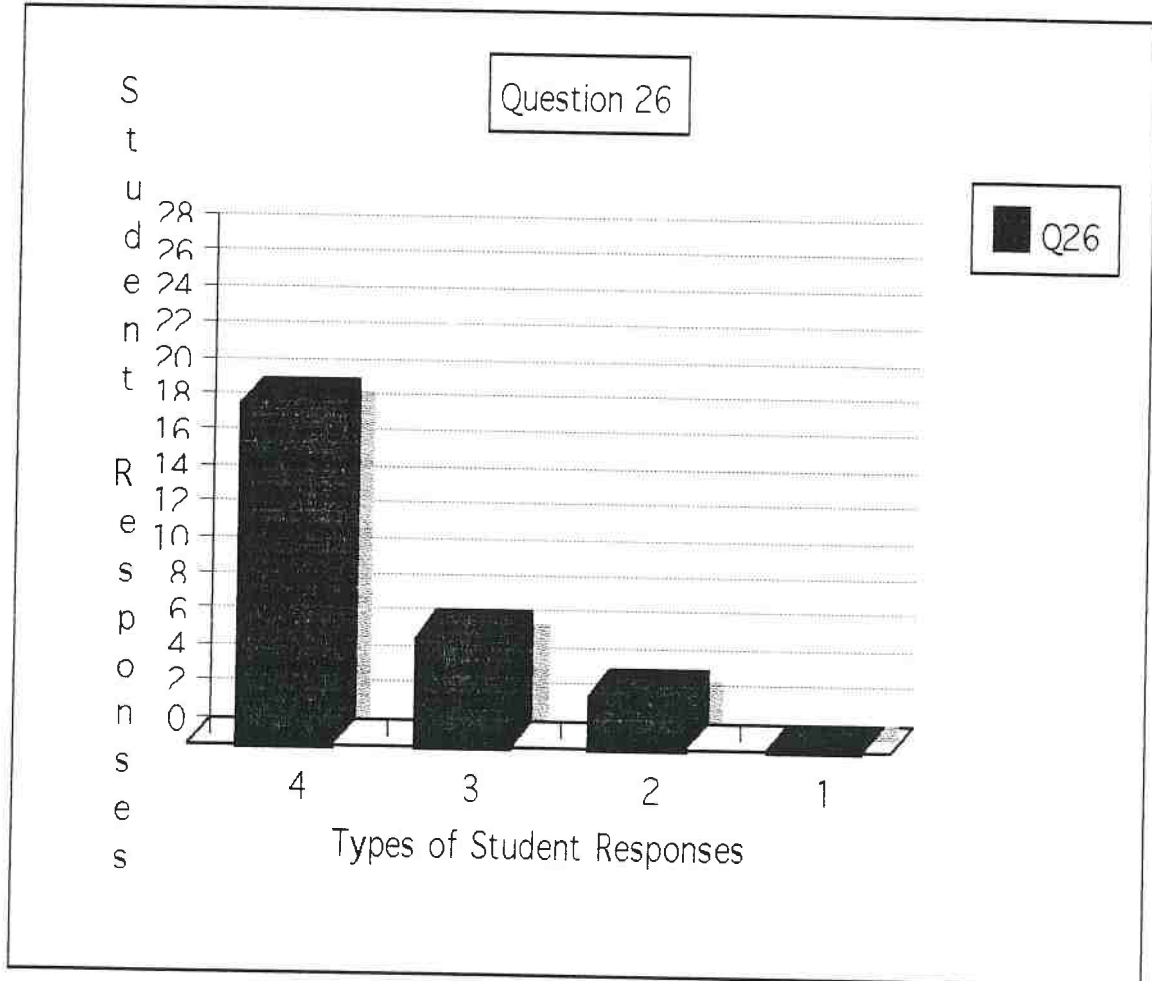
Table 5.8



Perceptions of Safety While Helping Others
During a Mediation Session.

This question focused on the conflict mediators perceptions of feeling safe while helping others in conflict during a mediation session. The non-aggregate data of this question was that nineteen of the students (67%) felt safe at all times during the mediation sessions. In general most of the student mediators felt that they were safe during a mediation session with their peers.

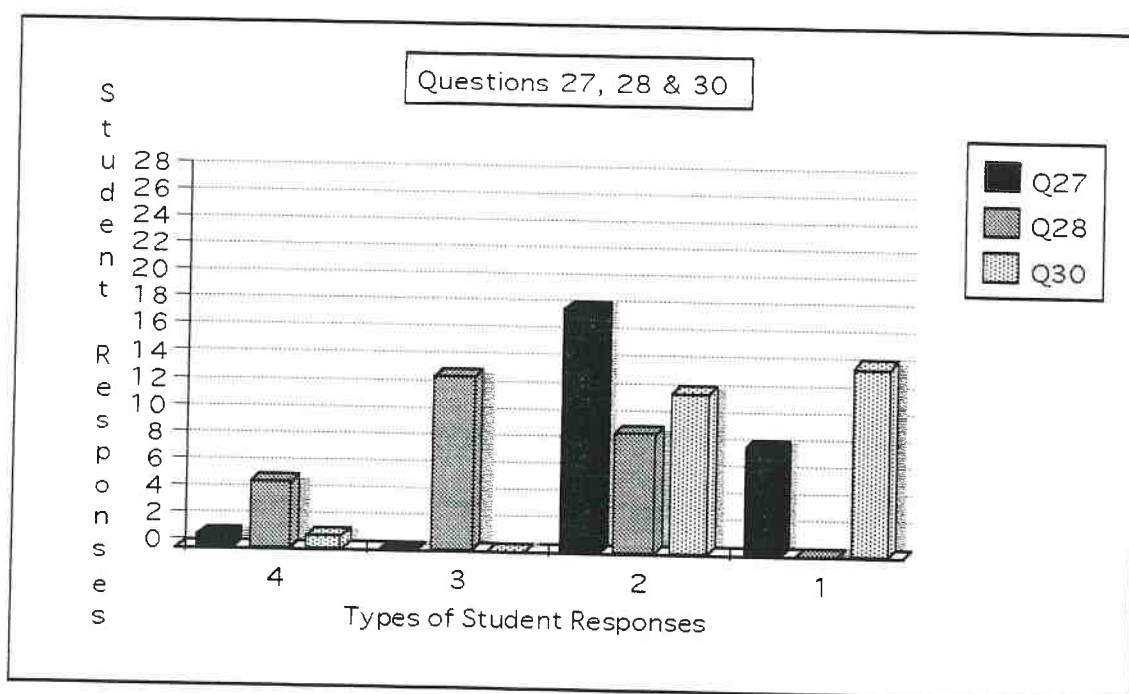
Table 5.9



Conflict Mediators' Attitudes and Observations of Conflicts in School.

The aggregate data from these three questions focused on asking the mediators if they believed or observed other students being picked on at school by their skin color or by being called bad names. Students reported few observations of racial epithets, but agreed that they noticed name calling happening.

Eighteen of the students (64%) stated that they believe that students are picked on at school because of their skin color a little (question twenty-seven). Thirteen of the students (46%) responded that they hear other students being called bad names a lot or all the time (question twenty-eight). Fourteen of the students (50%) reported that they never hear students being called bad names having to do with their skin color. Table 5.10

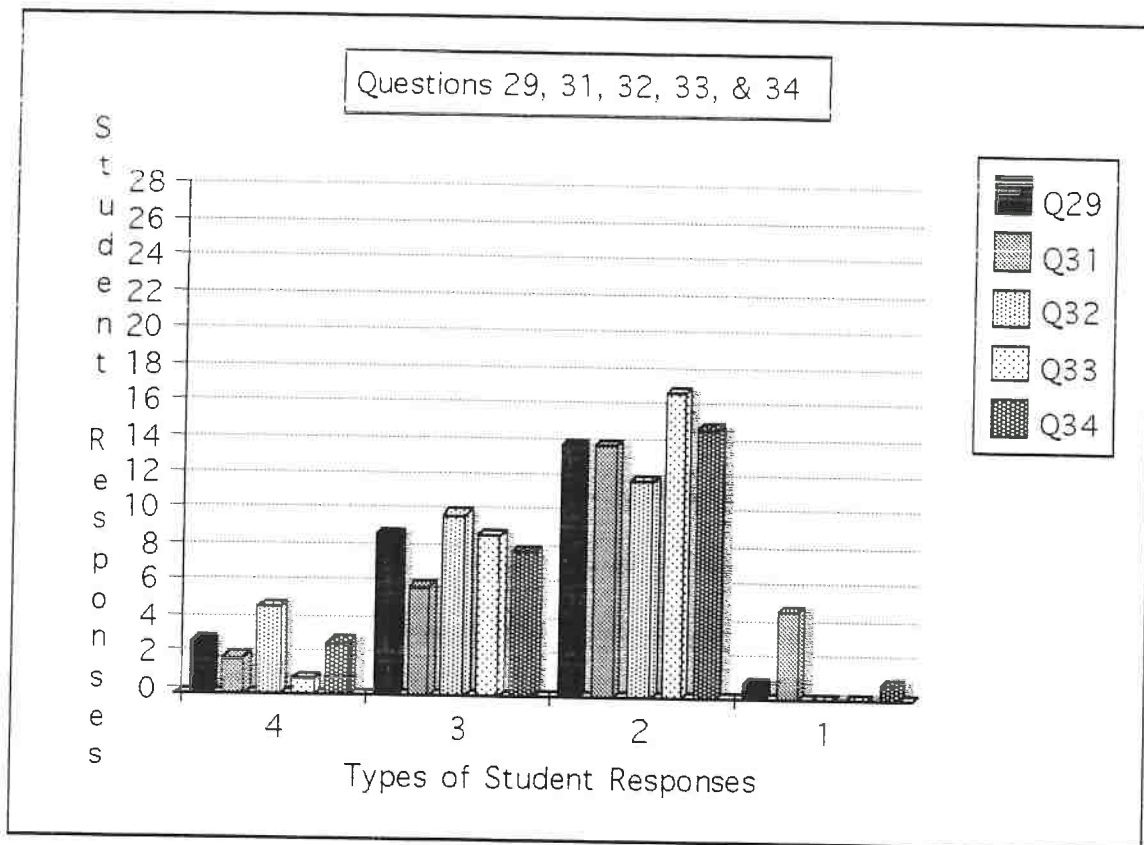


Conflict Mediators' Observations of Conflict at School

The data is based on an aggregate of the following five questions that inquired about students' observation of seeing other students getting teased, hearing other students using bad language or seeing others starting a fight by pushing to create conflict at school.

Fourteen of the twenty-eight students (50%) saw other students being teased a little (question twenty-nine). Fourteen of the twenty-eight students (50%) heard other students using disrespectful names a little (thirty-one). Twelve of the twenty-eight students (44%) heard other students using bad language a little (question thirty-two). Seventeen of the twenty-eight students (62%) saw others starting fights a little (question thirty-three). Fifteen of the twenty-eight students (55%) noticed other students pushing to lead to a fight a little (question thirty-four). The answers show that students see some problem behaviors, but "not all students see these behaviors as universal".

See Table 5.11



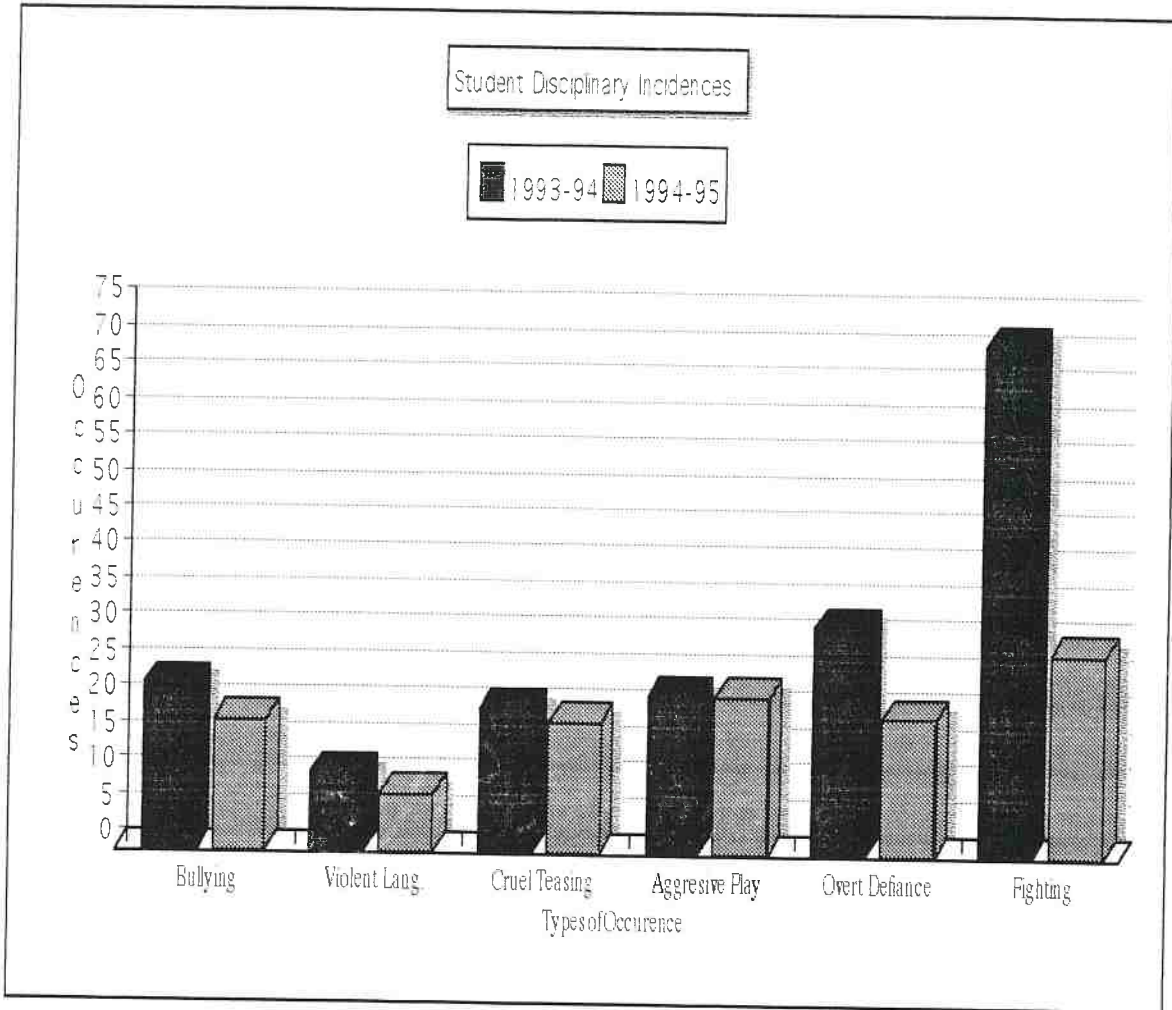
Staff-to-Student
Disciplinary Incidence
1993-1994 / 1994-1995

The final focus of this chapter will focus on past data to see if conflict mediation had an influence on decreasing the staff to student disciplinary incidents based on past records of staff to student disciplinary records. The staff to student disciplinary incidents will be presented in tallied categories of bullying behavior, violent language, cruel teasing, aggressive play, overt defiance and physical fighting.

The total number of incidence for 1993-1994 is one hundred seventy-nine in comparison of the total number of incidence of 1994-1995 to be one hundred thirteen to show a decrease in eight-six incidence in a one year period after the implementation of the conflict mediation program.

The most significant change as shown in the graph is the incidence in the category of fighting in 1993-1994 there were 71 fighting incidence and in the year 1994-1995 there were 28 fighting incidence to show 43 less fighting incidence during this year.

See Table 5.12



Chapter Six

Discussion

Conflict is a natural human state which can often lead to changes in an institution or in personal growth. This author's conclusion, while tentative, is that the conflict mediation program at Beaver Lake has a substantially positive effect on the students' personal growth and their attitude towards resolving conflict in a peaceful way.

A. Impact Of The Program On Conflict Mediators

Based on their responses, most conflict mediators have a positive attitude about school. The data shows that the students trained as conflict mediators value their attendance in school, think completion of homework is important, and believe in showing respect to and receiving respect from teachers. The conflict mediators also believe that other students feel that their academic performance in school was important. Furthermore, conflict mediators believe it is important to be good students and good citizens at school.

The involvement with the program, the reputation and status that comes with the position as a conflict mediator and the high personal expectations of the mediators, all have the strong potential to positively impact the child's continued school success. This impact may carry over to peer relationships, as well. The conflict mediators developed a sense of belonging to a group with status among other students. This sense of status helped the student mediators' reputation in school.

To be successful as a conflict mediator, the students had to show positive ways to resolve conflict and to be a

positive role model for their peers in every aspect of school. The conflict mediation program also encouraged each child to set a high standard of self-expectation, in accordance with the program's philosophy, and to respond to conflict in a peaceful way.

Student mediators clearly believe in the program. Survey results show that they would highly recommend to their peers that they attend a mediation session to resolve their conflicts. Furthermore, the conflict mediators, as well as other students that had a conflict, would invariably choose to attend a mediation session rather than go to the principal's office to settle a dispute.

It is important to note that the conflict mediators indicated that the training and skills to resolve conflict in a peaceful way provided them a way to feel safe during mediation sessions with the disputants. The conflict mediation program provides the child with the ability to show his/her leadership skills, empowers the student to help others, and offers the child opportunities to show his/her responsibility, credibility and commitment as a successful participant in the program. The majority of students agreed that the skills they learned in mediation training were helpful to them as they dealt with conflict not just at school, but also at home. Finally, the students also felt that their conflict mediation skills would be something they felt they would be able to use as a "grown ups". In the children's minds, conflict mediation skills are life-long skills.

In general, the conflict mediation program showed a significant positive change in the number of incidence of fighting since its inception. Data also shows a significant decrease in the student to staff disciplinary incidents that occurred during recess time. In addition, the student mediators noted a positive or neutral change in the interactions between students and teachers. This data suggests that the conflict mediation program has an overall positive impact on violence at Beaver Lake.

B. Potential Implications For Social Workers

This study provides valuable information and recommendation for program development for school social workers who wish to develop or enhance violence prevention and conflict mediation programs in their schools.

First, it provides assistance in determining if the conflict mediation program is viewed by the students as helpful to them when it comes to dealing with conflict. At Beaver Lake, the conflict mediators clearly think that the skills learned are useful to them now in elementary school, as well as in their future as adults.

Second, this study provides empirical data on staff to student disciplinary incidents at Beaver Lake. This data might be helpful to other schools with similar demographics. Since conflict mediation had a positive impact on Beaver Lake's discipline issues, it might also be effective at other schools. Thus allowing more time for the teachers to address academics while providing a procedure for discipline issues that is focused on the child's ability to problem solve.

Third, this study provides information about using the cadre approach to conflict mediation. Other schools might find this information helpful when choosing between the various programmatic approaches.

This study reveals the contributing importance of school social work interventions and the infusion of its values in conflict mediation. The mediation skills taught in the program are not only good for mediation but are also life long skills for students as future citizens and decision makers of the world. Conflict mediation, also fits into the basic methods of school social work interventions that include group work, community organization, the process of teamwork, problem solving, and using alternative discipline policies or an additional referral system for students needing more intensive help with behavior and social concerns. Conflict mediation programs encourage taking different perspectives and learning negotiation skills. These skills can lead to improved anger management and are important alternatives for preventing violence in schools (Alexander, Jr. & Curtis, 1995).

School social workers are responsible for the "climate of the school" (Minnesota School Social Work Act, Minnesota State Law, 1988), and intervene where they can, to address school climate on a macro level rather than just with the individual pupil. Conflict mediation is an excellent example of this kind of macro intervention. On a social work macro level, conflict mediation can also impact the community, the state and the world. When children trained in conflict mediation grow to adulthood and have had the opportunity to

practice conflict mediation skills, they will be able to enhance positive relationships between family, friends, neighbors, state, countries and world leaders. Understanding the constructive side of conflict and viewing the challenge as a healthy opportunity for change, leads to a better understanding of the variety of ways that problems can be solved. The understanding of conflict also can encourage people to celebrate and embrace the differences around them which could enhance peace in communities of the world.

C. Limitations

Clearly, further research is needed regarding peer mediation in the school setting. Due to the limitations inherent in this study, the results only suggests that the program has an effective impact on the impact of school violence.

This study is limited by a number of factors. First, the sample population was not randomized nor was it large (N=28 students). Given the self-selection of subjects, the potential for bias in favor of the mediation program is high. The study also is not generalized to other students at Beaver Lake due to the conflict mediation training process that the subjects had prior to the survey. In addition, the survey was not pretested for validity. Performing such pretesting would have affected the validity as well as the reliability of the final data since the only persons able to evaluate the questions were the specific sample population.

Another problem affecting the validity of the study is the fact that the participants knew they were participating

in a study in which the investigator was also the person who facilitated the peer mediation program and who had personally taught them mediation skills. The participants may thus have given answers that they thought would please the investigator or those that they thought she wanted to hear. Participants may also have been influenced in their answers by their parents as well as other conflict mediators who were also personal friends.

The survey instrument was limited by the structure of the questionnaire. The survey could have been shorter and more focused on questions regarding the students reputation in school, opinions on physical conflicts, attitudes toward teachers, perceptions of safety while helping others in a mediation session, and the impacts of conflict mediation training and whether the training made a difference. The survey instrument also purposed quantitative information without an opportunity to compare it to qualitative information for analyses of the findings. In future studies it is recommended that a variety of different research methods be used in studying this topic in order to provide an opportunity to compare findings across methods. The structure of the questionnaire did not allow for flexibility in respondents answers. Another problem with the survey is that there was only the opportunity to give a liberal or a strict answer to questions and so the data cannot truly represent the whole picture. With this in mind, the survey responses in this questionnaire can be regarded as approximate indicators of the data collected by the survey.

Another limitation of this study is that there is no

direct correlation between the reduction of conflict at Beaver Lake and the mediation program. Other factors could explain these changes. For instance, the personalities of the children could have played into the success of these individuals' ability to use conflict mediation skills. The high level of conflict mediation skills that a child is able to internalize and to implement could be the result of his/her family structure reinforcing the peacemaking skills.

Other extraneous events must be taken into consideration when looking at the decrease in the staff to student disciplinary incidence. For example, the familiarity and history of the playground staff with the students may have made it possible for them to defuse an escalation of conflict into violence, thus impacting disciplinary incidents. On the other hand, after implementation of the conflict mediation program, playground staff were more likely to encourage the children to take a dispute to conflict mediation before it erupted into a staff to student disciplinary incident. Furthermore, there was more consistency in the implementation of the playground rules. Both of these changes are an indication of the success of conflict mediation. Obviously, there is no clear answer about which events and activities had the greatest impact at Beaver Lake. However, this information may be useful to other researchers in further studies of the effects of conflict mediation programs at school.

D. Suggestions For Improvements To The Conflict Mediation Program

This study did point out some improvements that could be made in the Beaver Lake's Conflict Mediation Program. For instance, better staff to student incident record keeping would be helpful to document the necessity and impact of such a program. The documentation would be most effective if it identified the cause of the students' anger, and a student controls or expresses it constructively or destructively. This information would require more complete record keeping and should be documented on every incident.

Another suggestion to improve Beaver Lake's conflict mediation program would be to create a PTO(Parent/Teacher Organization) presentation where students would role play their conflict mediation skills. A PTO presentation would provide an opportunity for students and parents to participate in learning activities and practice the skills involved in conflict mediation. Such a presentation would also provide exposure to the program and its philosophy to the families of the school.

The conflict mediation program could also improve by encouraging parental involvement in learning how to incorporate the skills at home, focusing on family members as a key to teaching and keeping the students motivated. If families learned to use skills such as I messages, listening, showing respect and cooperation, expressing of feelings, problem solving and tolerating the differences of others, they would deepen their understanding of the concepts of conflict mediation and might also improve their family's management of problems.

Another way to reach more families would be to provide

more written information to parents and student participants about the conflict mediation program. The written information received at home could encourage discussion at home, between family members, about current issues in the conflict mediation program. This information could also include lesson-support activities to be done at home.

Furthermore, a monthly group meeting for the conflict mediators helps support them and provides continues training should be an on going bases. The monthly group meetings keeps the conflict mediators skills sharp and gives the students an appropriate time to discuss issues and concerns regarding their participation in the program.

The conflict mediation program continues to need improvement in its attributes and appeal to the elementary students. In order to reduce the reluctance of students to work with trained conflict mediators in resolving their conflicts, it is necessary to increase the students' awareness of their own empowerment to solve their problems. The students need to see that the payoff from using mediation is a worthwhile experience. The program continues to need to motivate the participates and the general student population, so that it becomes a norm with a positive status for participation.

The students also need to be recognized by persons of importance to them. This recognition could include celebrations and public awards given by a parent to a student, principal or staff to a student, as well as a student to a student.

Conclusion

In general, the conflict mediation program had a positive effect on the students at Beaver Lake Elementary. Further research of the conflict mediation program is needed. Some goals for expanding a research study are:

- A). To include a longer period of time in a comparative school study so that the data regarding the implementation and the effects of the conflict mediation program would be more reliable..
- B). To include more measurement tools on a pretest - post test basis such as a survey to mediators, disputants, staff and parents to include observations, and interviews.
- C). To develop a system that categorizes responses on the effects of the conflict mediation program which would be helpful in sorting out a variety of student responses to conflict.
- D). To incorporate conflict mediation skills into the multicultural, multi-age, high risk student, K-5th daily curriculum to increase all school awareness.
- E). To involve parents in the program by offering more workshops, sending more information home to families on conflict mediation, and organizing quarterly support meetings for students and their families.

Providing conflict mediation training for students prepares them for the future (Johnson & Johnson).

The training contributes to possible successful careers, helps build cohesive, caring families and lifelong friendships, provides an understanding that conflict is a part of life, which leads to a higher quality of life.

As a school social worker this is all I could ask for, that the children of our future have a quality life.

PHILOSOPHY

THE CONFLICT MEDIATION PROGRAM
RECOGNIZES THAT CONFLICT
IS A
NATURAL PROCESS
AND SEEK TO FIND PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS TO
PROBLEMS.

THE CONFLICT MEDIATION PROGRAM ALSO
RECOGNIZES THAT
STUDENTS CAN RESOLVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS
AND THAT STUDENTS
ARE
RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE

CONFLICT MEDIATION MISSION STATEMENT

CONFLICT IS NORMAL,
IT IS O.K. TO BE ANGRY.

CONFLICT MEDIATION HELPS STUDENTS FIND
PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS TO CONFLICT OR FEELINGS
OF ANGER.

IN ORDER FOR BEAVER LAKE TO BECOME A
PEACEFUL SCHOOL

AND TO HAVE

A SAFER, MORE PEACEFUL WORLD,
OUR EXPECTATION ARE;

THAT CONFLICT MEDIATORS WILL
MODEL

LEADERSHIP AND PEACEFUL BEHAVIOR
TO THEIR PEERS

AND SEEK TO USE THIS

PROCESS OF CONFLICT MEDIATION TO RESOLVE
THEIR CONFLICTS IN

A

PEACEFUL MANNER

**The over all goals
of the
conflict mediation program are;**

- 1. To decrease violence and anti-social behavior among children at risk of dropping out, becoming involved with substance abuse, gangs or other forms of juvenile delinquency.**
- 2. To further children socialization and maturation by providing education in critical conflict management and social skills**
- 3. To provide a method for reducing teacher and administrator time devoted to disciplinary problems.**

Dear Parents,

As the School Social Worker I am excited to tell you about the Conflict Resolution Program that will be happening this fall!! We will be looking for students who are in the third, fourth and fifth grades to be trained as Conflict Mediators. "Kids helping kids" work to settle disagreements.

WHAT IS CONFLICT RESOLUTION ?

Conflict resolution is a voluntary process used to settle disagreements between two or more people. The people involved in the dispute meet with trained students called Conflict Mediators while a teacher supervises. The program exists because we believe that working out problems face-to-face can lead to better solutions and prevent future problems.

WHAT DOES A CONFLICT MEDIATOR DO?

The conflict mediator's are children who are in the third, fourth and fifth grades who listen to both sides of the situation and help the people work toward a resolution to the conflict. The conflict mediators help the people reach their own agreement. The conflict mediators keep the information secret (confidential) to those not in the program.

TYPES OF CONFLICTS THAT WILL BE HANDLED

RUMORS- GOSSIP

PUT DOWNS - NAME CALLING

VERBAL OR PHYSICAL THREATS

THEFT OF PERSONAL PROPERTY

TYPES OF CONFLICT THAT WILL NOT BE HANDLED

GRADES OR CLASS ASSIGNMENTS- STUDENT OR TEACHER PROBLEMS

PROBLEMS IN WHICH ONE OF THE PARTIES REFUSES TO PARTICIPATE

FAMILY OR NEIGHBORHOOD CONFLICTS

CONFLICTS THAT DEAL WITH USE OF ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES OR ACTIVITY.

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Beaver Lake students, who are from grades three, four and five, will apply for the position and then be selected by the Conflict Committee. These students will be trained as conflict mediators this fall. We are excited about this program because your child's willingness to help resolve conflicts will make Beaver Lake a peaceful and safe place. This program empowers students to resolve their differences without using violence and creates a positive learning environment for our students. The program is already successfully in place at both here as well as John Glenn, and Maplewood Middle School's along with Tartan, and North High School. It is also being used more and more by individuals, the courts, businesses and governments. Who knows ? Maybe some day your child could enjoy mediation as a profession.

If you have any questions about conflict mediation, Please call us at 770-4740.

Sincerely,

R. A. Moreno Belland School Social Worker.

CONFLICT MEDIATORS APPLICATION

NAME _____ TEACHER _____
ADDRESS _____ CLASS _____
PARENT SIGNATURE _____
DATE _____

• WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU HAVE THAT COULD MAKE YOU A GOOD CONFLICT MEDIATOR?

• I BELIEVE THAT I CAN MODEL PEACEFUL BEHAVIOR OR MYSELF TO OTHERS, EVEN WHEN I GET MAD. _____ YES _____ NO

• KEEPING WHAT GOES ON IN MEDIATION PRIVATE IS VERY IMPORTANT. COULD YOU KEEP IDEAS PRIVATE THAT YOU HEAR IN A MEDIATION MEETING?
_____ YES _____ NO

• YOU WILL NEED TO MAKE UP ANY CLASS WORK THAT YOU MISS BECAUSE OF MEDIATION. ARE YOU WILLING TO DO THIS ?
_____ YES _____ NO

• WHAT IS YOUR IDEA OF CONFLICT?

• WHY WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A CONFLICT MEDIATOR?

• WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST SUCCESS? (AT HOME OR IN SCHOOL, ETC...)

STAFF GUIDELINES OF A CONFLICT MEDIATOR

The main criteria and selection of a conflict mediator is based on the following:

- a) the student's past and present classroom behavior as observed by teachers and other support staff;
- b) the students' ability to show leadership skills;
- c) his/her willingness to commit to and promote the program, model conflict mediation skills to peers, and attend all of the training meetings;
- d) the students willingness and ability to make up missed school work.

CONFLICT MEDIATORS DUTIES

- 1. Check EVERYDAY to see if your are on duty.**
- 2. Report for duty on time.**
- 3. Make up all class work missed.**
- 4. Fill our a mediation report form on each conflict your mediate.**
- 5. Attend ALL follow-up meetings.**
- 6. Remain a Conflict Mediator at least until the end of the year. We are hope you will remain a Conflict Mediator the entire time you are at Beaver Lake.**

AGENDA: Conflict Mediation Training

1. Introduction and Overview

- a Get acquainted
- b. Overview of training.
- c. Overview of the first segment of the mediation process.

2. Philosophy of the program

- a. Knot game (working it out)
- b. Overview of how the program will work at Beaver Lake School
- c. vocabulary
- d. video

3. Establishing the rules

- a. Confidentiality, respect for others sharing your responsibilities, team work.
- b. Rules; speak directly to us (your team), listen and do not interrupt, no physical fighting, be honest, no name calling, no loud voices.
Three strikes your out - XXX
- c. Overview of the second segment of the mediation process.

4. Understanding Conflict

- a. ICE (how do you handle it)
- b. Brainstorming :What is conflict?
- d. Styles of conflict.
- e. Needs in conflict.

5. What a Conflict Mediator is / isn't

- a. Good vs. Poor listening skills
- b. Active listening rules/ Techniques /restate /practice.
- c. Overview of the third segment of the mediation process.
- d. Robbery report

6. I messages

- a. Demonstration : YOU- vs -I Messages
- b. I message formula
- c. Handout : I message worksheet
- d. Feelings (how you feel / how I feel)
- e. Review of the third segment of the mediation process.

7. Resolution

- a. What makes a good resolution / what doesn't?
- b. Brainstorm - mapping
- c. Conflict mediation process the form and the importance of paperwork.
- d. Multiple small group practice of the process.
- e. Review of the fourth segment of the mediation process.

8. Evaluation and wrap up

- a. Discussion of student training
- b. Other questions and concerns.

CONFLICT MEDIATORS CONTRACT

As a conflict mediator, I understand my role is to help students resolve conflicts peacefully. As a conflict mediator, I will do my best to respect the participants of mediation, remain neutral, keep the mediation confidential and try to model peaceful behavior of myself to others.

* **As a conflict mediator, I agree to the following terms.**

- * To complete all training sessions.
- * To maintain confidentiality in all mediations.
- * To responsibly conduct general duties of a conflict mediator, including showing up for my team, conducting mediations, completing all necessary forms, and promoting the program.
- * To maintain satisfactory grades in class and make up any class work missed during training or mediation sessions and to attend school on time and regularly, unless excused by school rules.
- * To serve as a conflict mediator until the end of the year or resign with a written letter of explanation.
- * To check in with staff supervisor once a month.

Possible actions if these responsibilities are not met are as follows.

- * First time;
A verbal and written warning.
- ** Second time;
Parent notification and loss of conflict mediation status for 3 weeks.
- *** Third time;
Suspension as a Conflict Mediator.

I accept these responsibilities for the Conflict Mediation Position.

DATE: _____

Student Signature: _____

Staff Signature: _____

DATE: _____

96 MEDIATION FORM: TIME (S) _____ TIME (E) _____ DATE _____

HI, :) MY NAME IS _____, MY NAME IS _____, and MY NAME IS _____.
WE WILL BE YOUR **MEDIATORS** TODAY.

YOUR NAMES ARE? (DISPUTANTS NAMES) _____

•WE UNDERSTAND THAT YOU HAVE A PROBLEM; ARE YOU WILLING TO WORK TO SETTLE YOUR DISAGREEMENT?

•WE ARE NOT JUDGES; WE ARE HERE ONLY TO HELP YOU SETTLE THE PROBLEM.

~~~~~  
•WHAT YOU SAY TO US WILL BE KEPT PRIVATE UNLESS WE HEAR SOMETHING THAT MAKES US BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE BEING ABUSED OR ABUSING SOMEONE. IF THAT HAPPENS WE WILL HAVE TO TELL AN ADULT.

WE HAVE A FEW RULES THAT HELP US ALL WORK THROUGH THE PROBLEM:

- SPEAK DIRECTLY TO US AT FIRST      •BE HONEST
- LISTEN AND DO NOT INTERRUPT      •NO NAME CALLING
- NO PHYSICAL FIGHTING      •NO LOUD VOICES

•IF YOU BREAK THE RULES THREE TIMES, THIS MEDIATION SESSION WILL NEED TO BE RESCHEDULED. **"THREE STRIKES YOUR OUT" 1 - 2 - 3**  
**DO YOU AGREE TO THE RULES AND TO WORK ON THE PROBLEM?**

~~~~~  
EACH OF YOU WILL GET A TURN TO TELL US WHAT HAPPENED.

TELL US WHAT HAPPENED. RESTATE

•HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL? RESTATE

TELL US WHAT HAPPENED. RESTATE

•HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL? RESTATE

WHAT COULD SOLVE THIS PROBLEM? _____

•**RESTATE** THE SOLUTION YOU HEAR THAT CAN SOLVE THE PROBLEM FOR BOTH OF THEM.

CONGRATULATION ON WORKING THIS PROBLEM THROUGH; PLEASE TELL YOUR FRIENDS THAT THE PROBLEM IS SOLVED!!

•WE AGREE THE CONFLICT IS SETTLED: (PLEASE SIGN FIRST AND LAST INITIAL)

•WHERE DID THE CONFLICT OCCUR? (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE)

On THE BUS, In THE CLASSROOM, The HALLWAY, At LUNCHROOM, At RECESS.

OTHER?? _____

•WHAT TYPE OF CONFLICT OCCURRED? (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE) LOSS OF PROPERTY, RUMORS, THREATS, NAME CALLING, FIGHTING-PUSHING, SHOVING, GRABBING, HITTING, CHASING, PUNCHING. OTHER?? _____

WAS THE CONFLICT RESOLVED? _____ YES _____ NO

DO THE DISPUTANTS NEED TO RETURN TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS? _____ YES ~ _____ NO

RETURN DATE WILL BE _____

WHO DID YOU NOTIFY ABOUT THIS CONFLICT? •TEACHER, PRINCIPAL, (THEIR NAME) _____?

USE THE BACK OF THIS FORM IF YOU NEED MORE SPACE .

Student Presentation Script

Welcome to our monthly Conflict Mediator's meeting. Our topic today is a survey I would like you to consider filling out regarding Conflict Mediation. Let me tell you a little bit about this survey. As you know I am taking college classes and I'm now working on a thesis. My college thesis includes finding out from you your opinions and how you feel about Conflict Mediation. I'd like to go over this survey so that you know what it says and what it means.

<<Read through survey starting with page 3
(explaining that the first two pages are a parent letter)>>

This survey is going to be mailed home to you and your parents so that you can discuss whether or not you want to participate in the study. You must have your parents permission in order to participate. I'd like to stress that everything you say will be anonymous - at no time will I know who completed the survey. I'd appreciate your help in completing these surveys, but if you choose not to, don't worry. Filling out the survey or not filling out the survey will not effect your position as Conflict Mediator. I really want to know what **you** think, so I'd appreciate your honesty when you fill out your survey. Fill it out the way **you** really feel, not the way you think I would want you to think. Once you've discussed the survey with your parents, if you do decide to fill it out, take the time to do it at home. When you're done, your parents will mail it back in the envelope that will be included with the survey. You must send back the permission slip too. Thank you for your help.

CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian,

Your child is invited to be in a research study of how conflict mediation at Beaver Lake Elementary affects the conflict mediators and reduces conflict between the students. Your child was selected as a possible participant because he/she has had the training of conflict mediation. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to having your child be in this study.

As you may know, I (Ruth Ann Moreno Belland) am the coordinator for the Conflict Mediation program at Beaver Lake Elementary. I have a strong interest in this topic and I thought it would be helpful to find out the effects of the program from your child's point of view. I am conducting this research as a Master of Social Work (MSW) Candidate, and in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MSW, Department of Social Work, Augsburg College Minneapolis Minnesota. The findings from this research will be used to help in the evaluate the Conflict Mediation Program at Beaver Lake Elementary.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to measure the attitudes and beliefs of conflict mediators. The secondary purpose is to measure the effect Conflict Mediation has on the disciplinary incidents in our school.

Procedures:

The study will request that your child participate in answering a questionnaire about his/her opinions and attitudes towards mediating conflicts. The questionnaire will include questions regarding opinions about school and conflicts that occur at school. The information from the questionnaire will be compiled so each students input will be anonymous.

I have read and explained the questionnaire to your child during our monthly Conflict Mediation meeting. Please discuss the questionnaire and your child decision to participate in the study. Your permission is required for your child to participate in this study. Your child should fill out this questionnaire by themselves after discussing it with you. The questionnaire may take 20 to 25 minutes to finish.

The questionnaire with its consent form, has been mailed to you for your review. Along with the questionnaire you will have received an addressed stamped envelope. When the questionnaire has been completed, please return it, and the signed consent form in the stamped envelope. Your child may choose not to participate in the research study or quit taking the survey at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The questionnaire may help the child identity their own thoughts of being a Conflict Mediator.

(PLEASE TURN OVER)

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential and in a locked file cabinet. Questionnaires will be mailed back to the school. (Attention: Dr. J. Nuckles). I will only see the returned questionnaires. The questionnaires will be destroyed by August 1996. Nothing will be used at any stage of the study which will identify your child by name.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your child is not required to participate in this study. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the Beaver Lake School or Augsburg College. It will not affect your child's conflict mediation position. At any time if your child chooses to quit taking the survey, or to skip the questionnaire, he/she may do so.

Contacts and Questions:

Enclosed you will find the consent/letter for your records. In addition to the consent/letter you will find an addressed stamped envelope in which to return the questionnaire. I am requesting that you read and discuss the information I have given you about the research study with your child. Again, the researcher conducting this study is Ruth AnnMoreno Belland. If you have any further questions, you may contact me at (612) 770-4740 or my Thesis Advisor: Mike Schock, Ph.D. at (612) 330-1725. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Augsburg College #95-35-3. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Consent:

Mailing back the questionnaire with your signature will be understood as your consent for your child to participate in this study.

Sincerely yours,

Ruth AnnMoreno Belland

Conflict Mediation Questionnaire. Consent Form

Dear Conflict Mediators,

I am studying the usefulness of conflict mediation and how it affects violence in our school. As part of this study I have designed a survey which I would like for you to fill out telling about your opinions of the program. The survey will ask you to answer a few questions about yourself, and how you feel about conflict in school. All of your answers are private and confidential(what you say will be kept a secret). *Please do not put your name anywhere on the questionnaire.* No report will show your name or the answers that any one student gave. There are no right or wrong answers, just your opinion. Your answers will not affect your conflict mediation position. Your help is greatly appreciated.

•••After you have discussed this questionnaire with your parents do you choose to participate?

YES_____ or NO_____

•••I have read and discussed this questionnaire with my child, and I give him/her permission to be included in the study.

Parent/Guardian's signature

Date

Thank you for your participation!

Ruth Ann Moreno Belland.

CONFLICT MEDIATION QUESTIONNAIRE

*Marking Instructions

- *Please do not put your name anywhere on the questionnaire.
- *Please circle (or fill in) the answer that best describes you and/or your opinion.
- *Erase cleanly any marks you wish to change.
- * Please do not make any extra marks on this form.
- *Your answers will be kept confidential (what you say will be kept secret).
- *When conflict is mentioned we mean pushing, shoving, hitting, tripping, pinching, name calling, put downs, teasing, stealing, not sharing, rumors, arguments.

SECTION 1

First, I'd like you to answer a few questions about yourself.

*Q1. I am a: *Girl or *Boy

*Q2. *My age is _____

*Q3. I am in grade:

*3 *4 *5

SECTION 2

The next section of statements are about how you feel about school: PLEASE circle the one that best describes what you think.

*Q4. I look forward to coming to school most days.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q5. I feel comfortable about asking for help in school from my teacher.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q6. My teacher really cares that I do well.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

SECTION 3

The next set of statements ask how important certain things are to you. For each one, please circle the number that best describes what you think.

*Q7. It is important to try hard in school.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Very Important | Somewhat Important | Neutral | Not so Important | Not at all Important |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q8. It is important to have friends who think of me as a good student.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Very Important | Somewhat Important | Neutral | Not so Important | Not at all Important |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q9. It is important to have teachers who think of me as a good student.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Very Important | Somewhat Important | Neutral | Not so Important | Not at all Important |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q10. It is important to me that I complete homework assignments on time.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Very Important | Somewhat Important | Neutral | Not so Important | Not at all Important |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

SECTION 4

This next section will ask your opinion about conflict mediation. Again, circle the number that best describes your agreement or disagreement with the question.

In your opinion:

*Q11. Training as a conflict mediator helped me with conflicts in school.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q12. Conflict mediation training has helped me deal with conflicts with older kids.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q13. Conflict mediation training has helped me deal with conflicts with younger kids.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q14. Conflict mediation training has helped me deal with conflict with my classmates.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q15. Conflict mediation has helped me to talk about a problem instead of fighting about it.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q16. As a conflict mediator, other kids respect what I am doing

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

This section CONTINUES to ask your opinion about Conflict Mediation. Again, circle the number that best describes your agreement or disagreement with the question.

***Q17. I would rather go to the principal's office than to conflict mediation.**

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

***Q18. Most other kids would rather be sent to the principal's office than to conflict mediation.**

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

***Q19. I would recommend conflict mediation to other kids when they are in a fight.**

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

***Q20. Conflict mediation skills are something I feel I will use as a grown-up.**

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

***Q21. Since the conflict mediation program started I have seen less physical conflict in school.**

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

***Q22. Since the conflict mediation program started I have seen less physical conflict in my classroom.**

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

This section CONTINUES to ask your opinion about Conflict Mediation. Again, circle the number that best describes your agreement or disagreement with the question.

*Q23. Since the conflict mediation program started I have seen less physical conflict with my friends.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q24. Since the conflict mediation program started, I have seen a positive change in the way students act toward their teachers.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q25. Since the conflict mediation program started, I have seen a positive change in the way teachers act toward their students.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q26. I feel safe helping others in conflict mediation.

| | | | |
|--------------|-------|----------|------------|
| All the time | a lot | a little | not at all |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Section 5

This section continues to ask questions about your opinion on the types of conflict you see or hear. Again circle the answer that best describes your opinion.

*Q27. I believe students are picked on at school because of their skin color.

| | | | |
|--------------|-------|----------|------------|
| All the time | a lot | a little | not at all |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q28. I hear other students getting called bad names.

| | | | |
|--------------|-------|----------|------------|
| All the time | a lot | a little | not at all |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q29. I see other students get teased because they look or act differently.

| | | | |
|--------------|-------|----------|------------|
| All the time | a lot | a little | not at all |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q30. I hear students call other students bad names that have to do with skin color.

| | | | |
|--------------|-------|----------|------------|
| All the time | a lot | a little | not at all |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q31. I hear other students using names of body parts in disrespectful ways.

| | | | |
|--------------|-------|----------|------------|
| All the time | a lot | a little | not at all |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q32. I hear other students using bad language.

| | | | |
|--------------|-------|----------|------------|
| All the time | a lot | a little | not at all |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q33. I see other students starting a fight

| | | | |
|--------------|-------|----------|------------|
| All the time | a lot | a little | not at all |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Q34. I see other students pushing each other and a fight begins.

| | | | |
|--------------|-------|----------|------------|
| All the time | a lot | a little | not at all |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

THE ENDTHANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND HELP. HAVE A GREAT DAY!***THE END***

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