

**THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEER MEDIATION
TRAINING ON A SMALL SCHOOL**

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DEDICATION

To my children, Cielle, Krista and Barrett, who have been neglected for the past year while I completed my Master of Education degree, with thanks for your understanding. To my granddaughter, Janelle: I hope aggression and violence are replaced by conflict resolution during your generation.

ABSTRACT

This study discusses the effect of the implementation of a conflict resolution and peer mediation program in a small school with two classes of Grade Five, Six and Seven students. The purpose of this study was to determine whether students who are so close in age and know each other very well can learn to solve problems amongst themselves in a positive way, if a peer mediation program is put into effect. The effectiveness of this training was measured by using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Surveys were distributed to the students and mediators plus interviews were conducted. Further data was gathered through administrator's incident reports, noon-hour supervisor reports and peer mediator reports. Although this sample group is unique in its size and structure, there was a positive correlation between fewer conflicts and conflict mediation training, similar to existing studies of larger schools with different populations.

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I. INTRODUCTION

There is a growing deep concern surrounding violence in schools. The recent tragedies, at Columbine High in Littleton, Colorado on April 20, 1999 and W. R. Myers High School in Taber, Alberta on April 28, 1999, have heightened the gravity of the issue. As an educator, I feel that there is an immediate need to develop and implement preventative programs which equip students with the necessary skills to resolve disputes in a productive and healthy manner.

Conflicts are a part of life and are evident in all schools. In our relatively isolated locale, disputes amongst students in elementary schools are still minor and violence is rare, but educators have noticed a disturbing increase in name-calling, put-downs, threats, squabbling, and disregard for other's property and feelings. Burnett, Dudley, Johnson, and Johnson (1992) reflect what teachers and administrators in Canada and the United States are reporting:

Discipline problems plague classrooms and schools. Students bicker, threaten, tease, and harass one another. Conflicts involving racial and cultural differences are increasing. Truancy is epidemic. Violence is escalating. Generally, conflicts among students and between students and staff occur with frequency and consume considerable teacher and administrator time. (p.10)

When conflicts arise, some students react with verbal or physical aggression, which often escalates the conflict. Others avoid confrontation and often become the victims of bullying. Either approach is a win/lose arrangement. Teaching conflict resolution skills to students is becoming a popular strategy to reduce aggression and victimization in schools.

Unresolved conflict impacts on the quality of learning and teaching in our schools. Teachers are spending increased time dealing with disruptions caused by disputing students, which, in turn, has taken time from positive learning experiences for all students. There isn't enough time built into the school day to sit down with the students involved and provide them with the opportunity to air their grievances and come to an agreement about how they can resolve the issues. Often, the disputants don't want to discuss the problem with an adult present. The students are disciplined for their actions and the underlying grievances continue to fester. The current discipline practices in most schools, which range from restitution, where the students involved in a conflict perform an act intended to make both people feel better, to consequences such as detentions or time-outs or suspension, are adult directed and teach students to depend on authority figures to help resolve their conflicts (Burnett, Dudley, Johnson & Johnson, 1992). Often, even when an adult mediates, and solutions are generated by the disputants, students don't learn new skills to help them with future conflicts. Peer mediation is recommended by its proponents as a program which decreases both teacher involvement in student disputes and the severity and number of disputes, while teaching the students new patterns for coping with conflict.

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RATIONALE

None of the research articles had a similar grade configuration to the school which I proposed to use as the treatment school, a Grade Five to Seven school of approximately fifty students. The characteristics of this school make it fairly unique. It has students bussed from four different communities. There is very little racial, cultural, or socioeconomic variation. There are only two full time teachers, plus myself, a teaching vice-principal. As an educator who taught in a K to 7 school which implemented a peer mediation program, where the Grade Seven students were the mediators, I was interested in implementing the same program in this school. This also had the full support of the staff. My question was whether children of similar ages, who have been together for five to seven years, can successfully mediate disputes for each other. Their familiarity with each other and habitual responses to each other lend a different dimension to the general hypothesis that is being researched.

Due to the size and configuration of the school, this project will mainly benefit the treatment school by using the results to determine whether a peer mediation program is a worthwhile addition to the school's curriculum as part of an ongoing systems improvement growth plan. However, it is the hope of the researcher that the information from this action research project will benefit similar small schools.

Research Questions

Three related research questions were the focus of my investigation. These were:

What effect will teaching mediation skills have on a school of Grade Five, Six and Seven students?

Can students who are so close in age and who belong to a small school of fifty children solve problems amongst themselves in a positive way, using conflict resolution?

Will the correlation between fewer conflicts and conflict mediation training be the same as in larger schools with a larger age difference between the youngest and oldest students?

Hypothesis

My specific hypothesis for this study was:

Grade Five, Six and Seven students can effectively resolve conflicts, using peer mediators who have been trained in conflict resolution and peer mediation.

Definitions

Mediation "Mediation is the process of resolving disputes and conflicts with the help of a neutral third party, a mediator, who facilitates the process. Mediation allows disputing parties to bring their problem to the mediation table in order to cooperatively work out their differences. Mediation is non-judgemental. The goal is not to determine guilt or innocence, but rather to work out differences." (Friedman, Marvel, & Schmidt, 1992, p. 2)

Peer Mediators The students who are trained to mediate disputes between their peers might be referred to as conflict managers, peacemakers or problem solvers. In this school setting, in order to be mediators, students must take part in six hours of mediation training, after they have taken part in the conflict resolution program which is taught to all Grade Sevens.

Variables

In this study, independent variables are the peer mediation training, which includes the ability of the teacher to teach the skills effectively and the skill level of the student mediators, and the time of implementation. The trust exhibited by the staff towards the mediators and the students' confidence are also independent variables.

The dependent variables are the number of successful conflict mediations, the amount of time spent by staff in mediating conflicts between students, and the number of necessary mediations each month.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review is intended to provide a summary of the research findings and literature on the effect of Peer Mediation Programs (PMP) in schools, to compare reported research projects, and to indicate the rationale behind choosing this topic for study.

The majority of the literature reviewed is from journals and electronic sources. They are generally primary sources, written by the participants or the researchers. "Reducing School Violence", a text authored by Johnson, D., and Johnson, R., (1995), was the only published book that I could locate. The dates of the documents indicate that this topic is relatively new in the field of Education, as the search was extended to the past twenty-five years; yet sources, which included discussion on peer mediation in schools, refer back only to the late 1980s.

The topics considered for this literature review are:

Defining peer mediation in the context of conflict resolution in schools

A historical perspective

Current research and findings

Implications for this project.

Defining Peer Mediation in the Context of Conflict Resolution in Schools

Shulman (1996) defined mediation as "a method of conflict resolution", which "uses the services of another person, a third-person mediator, to help settle a

dispute." She elaborated: " Mediation is a process of communication and problem solving that leads to resolutions acceptable to all parties involved"(p. 171).

In peer mediation, a student is trained to direct a step by step process which facilitates the students in conflict to resolve their dispute. Programs reviewed, which include Bosworth(1996), Curwen & Friefeld (1998) and Friedman, Marvel & Schmidt (1992), follow the same basic procedure, which parallels adult mediation programs. The steps include: agreeing to the ground rules, listening to each side of the dispute, defining the problem, generating solutions, reaching agreement on the best solution for both parties, and signing a contract that secures the agreement. The mediator is trained to remain impartial.

Many of the articles also described peer mediation by defining other forms of conflict resolution, such as arbitration, which also includes a third party, and comparing traditional discipline procedures based on rewards, consequences and punishment. Such programs teach students that authority figures are needed to resolve conflicts.

Shulman (1996) contended that because "peer mediation is a student-owned, student-coordinated program, in which skills learned are practised consistently in real life situations" (p. 171), it is a more successful approach than teaching conflict resolution skills as curriculum, which is the method of many programs, such as "Lion's Quest's Skills for Adolescence" , "Second Step" and the "Resolving Conflict Creatively Program". These programs do have merit in that they can affect the climate of a classroom or school, and introduce a common language to all of the students. They claim to be preventative, because they teach problem solving and negotiation skills. The author states that studies

have shown that these interpersonal skills programs need to be at least one semester long if they are to have any long term effect.

Wheeler (1995) defines mediation in more poetic terms, as " an avenue for healing between two or more disputants." He emphasizes the value of students making a "conscious decision to invest their time, energy and thoughts in resolving a painful condition"(p. 32).

Historical and Associational Perspective

Shulman (1996) takes the reader through a brief history of conflict resolution. She traces its roots back to business management. Slowly its merits have been recognized by the legal field, social agencies, international agencies and education. Only in the past ten years has peer mediation found its place in schools in Canada and the United States, with conflict resolution programs as the initiating influence.

McCarthy (1992,) a self-declared pacifist who supports and teaches courses on nonviolence, made an interesting statement about "getting the bombs out of our hearts" (p. 6). Conflict resolution skills began to be taught in schools when educators realized that our society's acceptance and use of violence to reach one's goals was infiltrating into the schools. Statistics from the United States, such as, "More than 400,000 violent crimes are reported in and around our nation's schools each year, with still more crimes going unreported." and "Each hour, more than 2,000 students are physically attacked on school grounds." (Lantieri, 1995, p. 386) demonstrate why it became important to develop and

implement conflict resolution programs in schools where students were afraid to come to school.

In schools where conflict resolution programs have been put into place, the practice and mastery of underlying communication skills have been the curriculum focus. These include interpersonal skills and intrapersonal skills such as awareness of one's feelings and thoughts, awareness of self and others, active listening skills, critical thinking, effective problem solving and expressing oneself effectively. The implementation has been adult driven and sustained. Gunty and Hart (1997) explain that, "any program seeking to influence interpersonal conflict in schools must acknowledge the full range of social norms and institutional influences on the individual" (p. 77). Although the school is unable to control the student's response to conflict, it can influence it through promoting organizational goals such as cooperative problem solving: "The premises of decision-making are influenced by the vocabulary of the organization; the structure of communication, rules and regulations; the division of labor; the standard programs in place; and the selection and training of personnel or students"(Gunty & Hart, 1997, p. 77).

This statement is illustrated by Linda Lantieri (1995), co-founder of the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP, the largest school-based program in the United States with over 300 participating schools), when she writes:

. . . the RCCP teaches students (as well as teachers, parents and administrators) practical skills that enable them to find creative solutions to conflicts as they happen. The program helps young people realize that they have many choices for dealing with conflict other than passivity or aggression. (p. 387)

Gunty and Hart (1997) elaborate on the importance of teaching all students positive ways to deal with conflict, using attribution theory as applied to the "cognitive and affective processes an individual utilizes in deciding how to respond to a conflict situation" (p. 76). They emphasize that the initial choice of the individual to seek conflict mediation is influenced by the culture of the organization.

Peer mediation is one of the choices for dealing with conflict that students may have if their school is using the RCCP program. Other schools in the United States and Canada have developed and/or implemented peer mediation programs, because they recognized that "A school peer mediation program provides an invaluable role-taking experience for the trained student mediator" (Shulman, 1996, p. 176). As student mediators provide intervention support, they should theoretically become more psychologically mature with greater self-awareness and improved perspective-taking, which is crucial in preventing violence. Peer mediation programs are student owned and operated, with adult sponsorship. Peer mediators volunteer their time and the disputants volunteer to enter mediation. This ownership and dedication should have a positive effect on the success of the program.

Current Findings

Most reports on the success of peer mediation programs have been anecdotal and perceptual in nature. Parents and teachers testify positively on their impact. Staff who have been involved in initiating the program indicate the success in terms of the decreasing

frequency of student-student conflicts teachers had to manage, and the number of conflicts referred to the principal.

Gunty and Hart (1997) conducted a study titled, "The Impact of a Peer Mediation Program on an Elementary School Environment" from September 1992 to May 1994. Their research question was, "What is the relationship between the dispersion of mediation structures and skills among students in an elementary school and the conflict management environment?"(p. 77). The independent variable was "the dispersion of mediation structures and skills". The dependent variable was "the conflict management environment". It was measured using the following indicators: outcomes of student conflicts, the number of conflicts, time taken by teacher to resolve conflicts, and who were the primary interveners; teachers or students. A student behaviour tally sheet was used to measure the indicators. The subjects for the study were students from two urban Midwest elementary schools.

Their results showed that teachers in the treatment school spent less time-off-teaching as the year progressed. The teachers in the control school increased their time-off-teaching. In the treatment school, adult intervention decreased and was replaced by peer mediation. In the control school, there was no significant change. The proportion of win/win outcomes to win/lose outcomes was greater over time at the treatment school.

Limitations of this study include: there were only two schools involved, and there were uncorrectable differences between the two schools in such characteristics as socioeconomic status and school size, teachers recorded differently in method and frequency on their tally sheets, teachers could not be considered neutral observers, and

there was a strike two months prior to the post-testing, which may have had an effect on the school culture when the students returned. This would have similarly affected both schools.

Although conflict resolution programs have gained popularity in North America, with approximately 6,000 schools using school mediation programs in the United States (Smith, 1996), the literature reviewed to date indicates that there is a need for further research on the effectiveness of peer mediation in decreasing the frequency of conflicts which result in win/lose outcomes, lessening the amount of teaching time that is diverted to solving conflicts, and increasing students' competence and confidence in dealing with conflict. There have been no contradictory or opposing views, but there is a lack of studies which have actually measured results.

At the time of writing, Gunty and Hart (1997) report that only one study, from Ohio, had reported its findings in literature. This three-year study used multiple schools with controls and pre and post testing. The data collected was limited to student survey results, which showed improved knowledge, skills and attitudes toward conflict management.

Johnson and Johnson (1995) report in their book, "Reducing School Violence Through Conflict Resolution", that they were involved in research studies on peer mediation, conducted in six schools in two countries, from 1988 to 1995. The participants in a peer mediation program called "Teaching Students to Be Peacemakers Program", were students in first through ninth grades. Some of the studies used control groups. At the time of publication, the findings were in press or being submitted for publication.

However, the authors did report that "When trained, students successfully learn the conflict resolution procedures and maintain their knowledge throughout the school year"(p. 103). Their comment with regard to adult evaluation was, "Adults in the school perceive the peacemaker program as constructive and helpful"(p. 103). They also mention the lack of research demonstrating the effectiveness of conflict resolution and peer mediation.

Another study currently underway is "The Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation Research Project", supported by the U.S. Department of Education/ Office of Special Education Programs with principal investigators, Daunic Miller and Smith (no date). This project is a four year project which aims to, " present empirical evidence of the effectiveness of conflict resolution and peer mediation use in schools to prevent or reduce children with emotional and behavioral problems from developing SED "(p. 1). This project includes developing curriculum, training school professionals and students, accessing, developing and validating data collection instruments and establishing procedures for data collection. Four schools will be involved; two of those schools will be delayed treatment schools, which will have the program implemented in the third year of the project.

The goals of this project are to "provide a model for future research in the area by providing a theoretical base as a model, a validated curriculum and training protocols for teachers and student mediators, implementation protocols, validated data collection methodology, and efficacy and generalization data" (Daunic, Millar & Smith, no date, p. 2). This website will be an interesting location to visit as their project unfolds.

Thus far, I have found no evidence that peer mediation is detrimental to establishing a more positive school climate and to providing the students with skills which help them resolve conflicts in a manner that allows both disputants to feel satisfied about the outcome.

Implications for This Project

Reading the various descriptions of the peer mediation programs had an impact on the implementation of a peer mediation program in the school. The program that we chose, " Mediation for Kids, Kids in Dispute Settlement"(Friedman, Marvel & Schmidt, 1992), follows the basic steps of all of the programs that were reviewed. The main difference in the programs appears to be the selection and training of mediators. Burnett, Dudley, Johnson and Johnson (1992a) are of the opinion that "*all* students must receive the negotiation and mediation training and *all* students must serve as mediators, not just a select few"(p. 13). This article persuaded our staff to train all of the Grade Seven students. However, we discussed whether the students should volunteer to become peer mediators, as opposed to mandating participation and decided that, although we understood that better learning and consolidation of the skills would come with mediating other students' conflicts, the students needed to have control over this decision.

The instruments used for information and data collection in the completed studies and implementation reports were student surveys, reflective logs, observations by participants and a student behavior tally sheet. Similar methods were used for this

project.

Discussions in the articles on the dependent variables verified those that I had chosen. Gunty and Hart (1997) recommended that further research in this area might focus on the "characteristics of successful peer mediators, such as gender, grade, personality, birth order, family background, and socioeconomic status" (p. 83). They also suggested measuring how well the conflict resolution and peer mediation skills are carried into the home and the long term impact on children who have such programs throughout their school years. I felt that this school was too small to conduct a study on the characteristics of successful peer mediators without compromising the identities of the students.

This literature review provided me with a broader understanding of the deep concern surrounding violence in schools and the immediate need to develop and implement preventative programs which provide students with the necessary skills to resolve disputes in a productive and healthy manner.

IV. METHODOLOGY

After reading Neuman's (1997) definitions of the dimensions of social research, I would describe the dominant purpose of this study as exploratory, with descriptive underpinnings. Various methodologies were investigated in order to acquaint myself with their strengths and potential problems. The quantitative and qualitative paradigms were studied as I decided on the best approach for this project, resulting in a decision to use both qualitative and quantitative methods: the survey method and data collection from incident reports and peer mediation reports to provide the basic research evidence in a positivistic approach plus the interview method and portions of the questionnaires to record perceptual evidence and to provide a more qualitative body of knowledge that is unique to this school. This combination of positivistic and naturalistic methodologies was considered worthwhile in some studies where the "quantitative data provided the basic research evidence while the qualitative data were used to round out the picture and provide examples" (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 381).

The literature review has revealed that there is limited research on the success of peer mediation in schools. Since the topic is relatively new, I chose to limit my research to a small scale, in order to familiarize myself with peer mediation and to conduct research which, while providing information for the research questions, may result in more questions and theories which will require more extensive study. Techniques for gathering qualitative data, which are suitable for the age of the participants and the size of the population, were developed, used and evaluated, with the purpose of refining them for future evaluations of peer mediation programs.

Descriptive research provided details about the outcomes of this particular case study and provided information that correlates with other case studies.

Although the project adopted an orientation toward basic research, it has many of the characteristics of applied social research, as defined by Neuman (1997):

1. Research is part of a job and is judged by sponsors who are outside the discipline of sociology.
2. Research problems are "narrowly constrained" to the demands of employers or sponsors.
3. The rigour and standards of scholarship depend on the uses of results. Research can be "quick and dirty" or may match high scientific standards.
4. The primary concern is with the ability to generalize findings to areas of interests to sponsors.
5. The driving goal is to have practical payoffs or uses for results.
6. Success comes when results are used by sponsors in decision making.

(p. 23)

Neuman points out that applied research can be compromised by the constraints imposed and the results oriented goals. However, unlike many applied research situations, this research question was not imposed from any sponsor. In this research project, I am both the sponsor and researcher and chose this problem freely because it was of interest and importance to me. The rigor and standards of scholarship will be monitored by the supervisor and committee.

The type of applied research used for this project is evaluation research, since the effectiveness of a peer mediation program in a particular setting will be measured. The evaluation feedback is both formative and summative, as the peer mediation sessions were monitored and continuous feedback was provided, with the data collected providing information on any changes resulting from the program implementation.

Because I am the school administrator and I implemented the peer mediation program, it could be argued that I have a vested interest in its success and that I could use some results and ignore others in order to report success. However, I chose this research question because this school is unique, and I was interested in whether the correlation between fewer conflicts and conflict mediation training would be the same as in larger schools with a larger age difference between the youngest and oldest students. The staff members had major input in their perception of the success of the program. I am also accountable to the staff and students to provide the most accurate findings possible.

It was important to be as unobtrusive as possible about the research in order to minimize the Hawthorne effect, the change in subjects' behaviours when they know they're being studied. Consequently, the students were not told about this research project until the Peer Mediation Program was in effect, and they were asked to participate in evaluation through a survey at the end of the school year. Because this program was being implemented as a unit in the Career and Personal Planning curriculum, it was compulsory, and all of the students in Grade Seven participated.

The Grade Seven teacher was willing to include this program in his Personal Planning curriculum, and team-taught it with me. This was done so that he would be

better equipped to mediate, understand the degree to which the students have been trained, share a common language, and support the mediators and the Peer Mediation Program. The other teacher was kept informed in order that he would refer disputes to the mediators. Both staff members had previous positive experiences with peer mediation programs in other schools, so there was no resistance. By sponsoring the program and acting as facilitator, I was eliminating the possibility that another staff member would feel that his teaching was being evaluated. As a final consideration, as the administrator of this school, I bear full responsibility for any events that occur in the school, including any research activities. This particular research topic was not controversial, so I foresaw no difficulties in its undertaking.

The Design Strategy

This project is a case study in which the effects of peer mediation on a specific school population were explored and evaluated. The case was the entire school, since its population was only fifty students. Because there are no other schools with a similar population and grade level in the district and because it is in an isolated locale, I studied the one case in detail and compared the results to those of studies at other schools with different populations and configurations. " Case studies help researchers connect the micro level, or the actions of individual people, to the macro level, or large-scale social structures and processes" (Neuman, 1997, p. 30).

Data Collection Techniques

Surveys

Surveys were administered to collect information about the dependent variables being measured:

- the number of necessary mediations
- the number of successful conflict mediations with peer mediators
- the amount of time spent by staff in mediating conflicts between students
- the perceived success or failure of the program

Questionnaires

A questionnaire was administered to all of the students present in the school on June 23, 1999 [see Appendix A]. Because the school is so small, the number of questionnaires was manageable. Confidentiality was ensured as I had the teachers collect the questionnaires and the students were instructed not to identify themselves. The teachers were present to clarify any questions.

The student mediators also filled out another questionnaire [see Appendix B]. Because of my position as an administrator, the anonymity provided with a questionnaire in lieu of interviews may have eliminated some of the pressure students may have felt to provide politically correct answers. Even with this anonymity, some students may have softened their criticism because they didn't want to hurt my feelings or might have been concerned about my authority.

I tried to ask questions which only contained one construct and created primarily

closed questions in order to obtain information that would readily supply data with little interpretation. The Yes/No format recognises that some students are reluctant to write and others have difficulty with rating scales. There was opportunity provided for elaboration if students wished to elaborate or clarify.

The limitations of this type of survey are that students may feel uncomfortable discussing conflicts in which they have been involved, or they may want to deny being involved in mediation because it indicates that they have had difficulty getting along with a fellow student. As with any instrument that has human input, the attitudes, personalities, health and abilities of the students will have an impact on the responses.

Interviews

Prior to implementing the peer mediation project, I piloted the interview process and sought further information by, interviewing a friend, with whom I'd worked for six years. He is an administrator, presently on a leave of absence, who supported the introduction of peer mediation to a school where I was teaching in 1993. I wasn't involved in the program, since I was a primary teacher and the grade seven teachers were the mediators. I benefited from the program, however, because the "Conflict Busters", the name chosen by the student mediators, took care of many disputes on which I would have usually had to spend time. What wasn't mentioned in the interview was that the same administrator took the program to another school in the district and implemented it with another teacher, who is the Grade 5/6 teacher on our staff. Later, in the course of the implementation, I discovered that the Grade Seven teacher had been involved in the second phase of the "Conflict Busters" program at the first school, when his Grade Six

class was trained in the spring. The program lost its impetus once that administrator and the sponsor teacher left, although it was used for another year. So both teachers had previous experiences with a peer mediation program under the direction of the same administrator. This had an effect on the interviews, since they both referred to those experiences. One teacher in particular, Interviewee B, spoke more about his experience at the other school, probably because he was the sponsor teacher for the program there, whereas he wasn't directly involved with the implementation this time since he taught the Grade Five/Six class.

After inquiring around the district, it seemed that this principal had the most experience with peer mediation in an elementary school setting. I had never discussed the program and its results in a formal manner with the interviewee before this interview. Consequently, I interviewed this person, subsequently called Interviewee A. Although that pre-project interview doesn't apply to the results of the research question of this particular study, his recommendations were taken into account. His report on the implementation of a peer mediation program is a typical phenomenon in schools where action research occurs, but the results are never recorded. Butler and Evans (1996) comment on the problem of program longevity, which is illustrated in Interviewee A's case: "Too often, quality programs become lost or discontinued because key faculty or administrators are transferred or are distracted by other responsibilities" (p.10).

At the end of June, I interviewed the only two teachers in the school. I chose the audio tape method of recording the interview because it was the most convenient and unobtrusive method. The interview, in contrast to the questionnaires, was more flexible,

because I could adjust the questions to each subject, while keeping the interview template in mind. I believe that there is a level of trust within my staff which encourages openness and honesty. We all have been involved in the project and whether we continue this program next year depends on whether they consider it valuable, so they knew that their input was important. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured, plus they have been invited to read the final documentation of this project. All interviewees signed consent forms [see Appendix C]. The interview blueprint is included in Appendix D.

Existing Documentation

Documentation exists in the form of incident reports which I fill out whenever a student visits me in the office with a problem. The visits may be student or adult initiated. I was able to read these documents and tabulate the number of incidents that could have been dealt with through peer mediation prior to the implementation of the Peer Mediation Program and the number of similar incidents after the program began. The limitation to this approach is the subjectivity of my decision-making, with regards to what could have been dealt with through peer mediation.

The noon hour supervisor also filled out an incident report at the end of every lunch hour, beginning in mid-October, in order to keep us apprised of student behaviour during this time. I used this information to compare the possible number of incidences that could have been mediated before and after implementation of the PMP.

Every time a mediation which involved peer mediators occurred, a report was submitted to the office by the mediators. These reports were placed in a separate binder, apart from the incident reports and the students knew that they would never be put in

their files. At the end of the school year, these results were tallied to provide some interesting information about the program.

Field Research

I kept field notes, both at the analytical and personal level, as the following independent variables were kept in mind during this study:

- number of conflicts
- time of the school year (activities, holiday breaks, unusual events)
- the effectiveness of the lessons
- skill level of the mediators
- commitment of the student mediators
- trust exhibited by the staff towards mediators

As a participant observer, these notes helped in interpreting the data. I included any informal feedback that I received from students, staff, parents and members of the community.

I attempted to increase reliability by using multiple measures of the same variable. For example, the student questionnaire, peer mediator questionnaire and staff interview all contained questions that relate to the number of conflicts after the Peer Mediation program was put into effect. They all measured the perceived effect of the Peer Mediation Program. I compared that to the actual data gathered from incident reports and peer mediator reports.

Program History and Implementation

Prior to the Peer Mediation program being put into effect, all of the Grade Seven students received, over a two and a half month period, beginning in January, 18 hours of lessons and activities on conflict resolution, based on the "Mediation for Kids: Kids in dispute settlement" program (Friedman et al., 1992). I facilitated the activities, with assistance from the classroom teacher, the noon-hour supervisor and a youth support worker. The noon-hour supervisor volunteered her time because she felt that it would be beneficial for her to know the Grade Seven students' background in conflict resolution, so that she could refer back to the lessons and use common vocabulary and problem solving techniques. I requested that the Grade Seven teacher and the support worker team with me on the presentations for the same reason. Having four adults working with twenty-four students was effective, with regard to opportunities for all students to actively participate, and efficient with regard to time. During the lessons, the students examined at the basic causes of conflict, the ways people deal with anger and conflict, including those which escalate the problem, and the skills needed to resolve conflicts peacefully, such as effective listening, verbal and non-verbal communication, critical thinking, problem solving and decision making.

Of particular importance for this class, was the discussion on the differences between a trial and mediation. Apparently, some of the students had been involved in mediation the year before, as disputants. Some of the past Grade Seven students had been assigned the roles of Peer Mediators with very little training and had seen their role as

dispensers of consequences and solutions. The students also reported that parents had also been called about some of the conflicts. None of this information could be substantiated, because the person responsible was no longer at the school, and the only teacher remaining on staff was only aware that there had been some appointed mediators at one point in the school year. Those students who had experienced this model had little trust in the process. This was a variable that I had not foreseen.

Included in the program, for all of the students, was a simulated mediation session, in which four student volunteers practised a mediation session and presented it to the class. The students then had the opportunity to role-play the same situation and session, as disputants and mediators. During the last whole class session, groups of four role-played different scenarios. By the end of March, all of the Grade Seven students had completed the conflict resolution program.

At this point, it was time to begin intensive training for those students who wanted to become Peer Mediators. We as a staff wanted the opportunity to be provided for all students in Grade Seven. Many of the reports stated that students had been chosen from criteria that included being good role-models, but Shulman (1996) reported that students who had been referred frequently for discipline developed a more collaborative style for resolving conflict when they had been directly involved in the peer mediation program. We decided to try the open-door approach, explaining to the students that if someone wasn't able to model pro social attitudes towards conflict, they would be asked to resign as a Peer Mediator. Initially, sixteen of the twenty-four students indicated an interest. When the actual training session began, fourteen students took part. These

students trained for another six hours, practising dealing with student-student conflicts from the perspectives of a mediator and a disputant. Finally, on April 6, 1999, twelve of the fourteen students officially became student mediators. Their final obligation was to sign a contract which promised that they would: behave in a professional manner, be fair and honest, keep the information confidential, fill out the report form accurately, make up for missed work, and mediate until the end of the year. This contract was signed by a parent.

One student kept forgetting to bring his form back signed, so he was given a deadline, because schedules had to be made, and he didn't return it in time. Another student's step-mother phoned to express her wish not to allow her stepdaughter to participate because she felt that this student's past behaviour didn't warrant her receiving such a responsible leadership role. I tried to explain how the responsibility and practice might have a positive effect on the girl's personal methods for dealing with conflict, but her step-mother felt that the student shouldn't be involved in helping others solve conflicts until she was able to be less aggressive in her own approach.

We had a school assembly, during which time the mediators were introduced. In pairs, they explained the program to the other class, providing a review for their classmates as well. Four of the mediators enacted a conflict scene and peer mediation session, so the students could see what it would be like to go to mediation. It was explained that using the mediators was voluntary and could be student or adult initiated. If an adult felt that two students needed mediation and one or both of the students wasn't willing to participate, then the matter would be turned over to the administrator.

A rotating schedule was set up, with the mediators working in pairs. Two clipboards, with the basic script and valuable hints taped on the front, plus a list of rules for "fighting fair" taped on the back, and approximately six mediation report forms, were left on a table by my office. If mediation was requested, the mediators would pick up the clipboards and find a private spot for the session. After the session, the reports were placed on my desk or put in my mailbox.

The student mediators took their job very seriously. They wanted to remain as unobtrusive as possible, choosing not to wear apparel that singled them out. They did not act as monitors, only making themselves available upon request, rather than looking for possible conflict situations and inviting mediation. A schedule was posted on an easel near the main entry, so if someone wanted a mediator, they independently checked the schedule. If one of the mediators wasn't available, the other mediator would ask another to help. I was impressed with the group's independence. During the three months, I was only called to help twice, when the students couldn't generate any solutions that were satisfactory to both disputants. In both cases, one person was at fault and unwilling to admit it or agree to a change.

Two of the peer mediators were asked to take a leave for a month because they had been to mediation themselves twice and continued to have spats. I explained that their conduct around the school wasn't modelling the use of conflict resolution skills. They seemed to understand and their behaviour improved over that month. These two girls had a history of conflict since the primary grades, usually over friendships. They had taken up more of my time than any other students in the school. I noticed a significant decrease

in the frequency of their office visits at the end of the year.

On Wednesday, June 23, 1999, the Grade Seven students who were at school filled out the student questionnaires. In order to protect anonymity, the students who weren't present didn't fill it out later. The Grade Five/Six teacher chose to give the questionnaire to his students on Friday, June 25. Thirty-nine of forty-nine enrolled students, 79.6%, responded. At that time of the year, absenteeism was high because some families had pulled their children from school in order to begin holidays. In order to protect anonymity, the students who were absent for other reasons and returned the next day didn't fill out a questionnaire. A point of interest is that, according to the student questionnaires and the peer mediator reports, every student who had used the mediation program answered a questionnaire.

V. THE FINDINGS

The full data of results found in the study can be found in the appendices. Included are summaries of the peer mediation forms [see Appendix E], the number of incidences dealt with in the office which may have been eligible for peer mediation [see Appendix F], the noon hour supervisor's incident reports [see Appendix G], the student questionnaires see [see Appendix H], and the peer mediator questionnaires [see Appendix I].

I will attempt to present the pertinent facts to the reader, referring to the questions initially asked before the program was implemented, followed by other information which may be important for this school.

Effect of Teaching Mediation Skills on a School of Grade Five, Six and Seven Students

The Number of Disputes

According to the number of incidences dealt with in the office which may have been eligible for peer mediation, there was a decline in the three months during which the program offered mediation services. The decline was slight because during the months before the implementation, the numbers had also dropped, with a mean of three incidences per month in the three months prior to the three test months (2, 3, 4) as compared to a mean of one per month during the Peer Mediation Program (1, 1, 1). The number of peer mediation reports also declined, from fifteen in April to two in June (15, 7, 2), the mean number of mediations at 6. The noon hour incident reports showed an

insignificant number of incidents which would have been suitable for mediation, before and after implementation. Possibly the noon-hour supervisor was unaware of the disputes and the students had gone into mediation voluntarily, or another adult had recommended mediation.

As is shown on Table 1, there is a discrepancy between the above information, which pointed to a decrease in conflicts and what was perceived by the students. Over half of the student respondents believed that the number of conflicts had remained the same and approximately one fifth felt that the number had increased.

Table 1

Responses to perceived number of conflicts after the implementation of PMP

Number of Conflicts	Student Questionnaires	Mediator Questionnaires	Teacher Interviews
Increased	20.52%	9.09%	0.00%
Decreased	23.07%	45.45%	100.00%
Remained the Same	56.41%	45.45%	0.00%

In their response to the question about the frequency of conflicts, both teachers felt that there was an overall decline, with one teacher noting that initially there was an increase of incidents because students were checking out the process. "I felt that students became selective on, ... is this really an incident, does this need to go to mediation, or is it

something I can resolve on the playground?"(Interviewee B).

Benefits for the School Population

Both teachers perceived maturity as an important outcome of peer mediation and conflict resolution training. Interviewee C stated it in terms of ownership of student behaviour: "... when they realised there is a process, that they don't always have to go to adults, they automatically took ownership...through the process there is a maturation of the kids." Interviewee B mentioned, "students starting to resolve conflicts on their own, through a very mature process versus coming and tattletaling to the teacher."

Both teachers noted a positive effect on the climate of the school, based on the presence of a process in place that the students and adults could rely on.[see Appendix J]. Interviewee C described the Peer Mediation program as "something very valuable to the school climate where it gives the kids the opportunity to settle their disputes, thus saving problems in school."

The response to the question, "Do you think that the Peer Mediation Program has helped students solve conflicts?" is favorable. Table 2 illustrates that the majority of students felt that the program had helped.

Table 2

Opinions on the Helpfulness of the Peer Mediation Program

Response to Program	Student Questionnaires	Mediator Questionnaires	Teacher Interviews
Has Helped	61.58%	81.82%	100.00%
Has Not Helped	38.42%	18.18%	0.00%

In the section for open comments, there were three definitely favorable comments, six unfavorable comments, and two which pointed out that the PMP didn't help everyone. Some of the negative comments indicated that some students misunderstood the purpose of conflict mediation. They viewed the process as too easy on the students, because, "they know they won't get in trouble because its a win, win situation" and, "you don't get punished for doing bad things." This matches a reflection made by Butler and Evans (1996) on some adults' perceptions of conflict resolution:

Further, because the non-adversarial concepts of conflict resolution are new to many adults, there has been considerable skepticism regarding the effectiveness of CR/PM programs. One adult challenged CR/PM's validity on the ground that it might encourage children to think for themselves and to make value judgments on their own! (p. 9)

On the questionnaire, one female student mentions that she and another person, fought 8 times and still fought even after mediation. The mediation reports show that

only eight students returned to mediate with the same disputant (four different pairs) and none of them returned again. If that particular student and the other student involved were fighting that many times, they weren't making use of the Peer Mediation Program, or applying conflict resolution skills. Having accurate records helped put some of the comments into perspective.

A total of twenty-six out of twenty-eight conflicts which were brought to the mediation table were solved, a 92.8% success rate. The two conflicts which were referred to me by the mediators were both disputes over property, which ended up as situations unsuitable for mediation. The mediators had been taught that disputes involving weapons, drugs, or alcohol and physical or sexual abuse should be referred immediately to me. This included any physical violence, for which we had zero tolerance. Sometimes, in the case of physical fighting,, which was very rare, mediation would take place with an adult mediator after the students' anger had subsided. Stealing could sometimes be mediated if the thief admitted to the behaviour, the theft was a low cost item such as a pencil, and the students wanted to mediate. Perhaps other events or behaviours had precipitated the theft.

As in the literature, the teachers stated that a major benefit to them was the increased time for teaching when the peer mediators dealt with disputes, instead of the teachers. Interviewee B stated, "... there was obviously more teaching time, especially after recess...where a teacher was able to go to their class and start teaching the academics versus going out and dealing with an issue in the hallway...."[see Appendix J, p. 74]

Students Solving Problems Using Conflict Resolution

Out of the thirty-nine students who responded, twenty-two (56%) stated that they have used conflict resolution skills on their own (Student Questionnaire, questions 4. d and 4. f). Twenty-one students (53.8%) were helped by peer mediators (Student Questionnaire, question 4). From the peer mediation report forms, we know that sixteen boys and five girls entered mediation, which equals 43% of the school population. It should be noted, however, that some of these students may have been trying out the process, as eleven of them never used the services again.

Table 3

Profile of students using mediation:

Grade	Female	Male
Grade 5	0	4
Grade 6	1	8
Grade 7	4	4
Total	5	16

The peer mediators were asked if they had mediated disputes for classmates. Ten of the eleven respondents replied in the affirmative. All eleven had been mediators for students younger than them (Peer Mediator Questionnaire, questions 6 and 7, p. 59). Age did not seem to be a factor in the success of the mediations. As reported earlier, ten of the eleven mediators who filled out the questionnaires had mediated disputes which involved their classmates. It appears that intermediate students can successfully mediate conflicts

with same-age peers.

The two most common indicators of conflict were arguing and name-calling, both escalating behaviours. Students would report that they needed mediation because of these behaviours, often not realising that the solution lay in discussing the cause of the conflict and remedying that situation. The classroom and playground both were the scenes of twelve conflicts apiece, with only four conflicts occurring elsewhere (Summary of Peer Mediation Report Forms).

The Peer Mediation Reports provided information that identified the students who were having disputes with a number of students in the school. One boy had entered mediation eight times with eight different people! It would have been interesting to interview him to determine if he was initiating the mediations because he found them valuable, if mediation was being initiated by the other disputant, or if an adult was recommending mediation.

One of the teachers recommended a higher profile for the mediators next year, yet he acknowledged that at the school where this occurred, the student mediators who walked about with their clipboards and uniforms were ridiculed by students who hadn't bought into the program.

There were two ten year old girls who commented in the student questionnaire that they thought the Grade Five and Grade Six students should be allowed to be peer mediators too.

VI. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings indicate that a peer mediation program can work in this particular school setting. Results of the surveys and reports show there were enough successful mediations to warrant continuing the program. Personal observations and field notes suggest that the Peer Mediation Program had a positive impact on the school climate. The decline of the number of conflicts correlates directly with the implementation of the program.

As in the literature (Burnett, et al., 1992; Gunty & Hart, 1997; Shulman, 1996; Wheeler, 1995), there appears to be a correlation between a lessened number of conflicts and the duration of the implementation of a peer mediation program. However, it is noteworthy that the implementation took place at the end of the school year, when the students may have come to understand and follow the student code of conduct, "Together, we are respectful, responsible and supportive", which had been developed by them in the fall. The teachers had also implemented positive behaviour programs in their classrooms, which rewarded students who followed the code by allowing them more choices of where they worked and gave them time to pursue other interests. The Grade Five and Six students had also had a unit on bullying as part of the Career and Personal Planning curriculum. However, the effects of those variables were apparent earlier in the year.

Near the end of the year, when I asked some students who seemed to be having a quiet disagreement, if they would like to have mediation, they declined, saying that they could "mediate it" themselves. When I checked later, they said that everything had been

cleared up. The students who had been looking upset appeared relaxed and demonstrated affection for each other. My vision is for all of the students to be able to resolve conflict without the need of mediators. Mediation is a service for those who sincerely wish to resolve a conflict but are having difficulty communicating with each other..

I believe that exposure to the mediation process taught some of the students valuable negotiating skills, which helped them meet their goals without losing friendships. At this early adolescent stage, being able to communicate well enough to find mutually agreeable solutions to problems is a tremendous advantage. Having the knowledge to inform someone if their behavior is escalating a conflict (a "foul") and knowing how to deescalate conflict are powerful tools. Peer mediation provides the opportunity to practice effective communication and problem solving in a safely structured setting.

I was pleased with the number of students who were willing to spend the extra time and effort on training and mediating disputes, with very little extrinsic motivation. (At the end of the year, I took them out for lunch.) The student volunteers were a varied lot, some who were considered "cool", some who had behavioural problems, some who were outgoing and confident, some who were shy. Their academic abilities ranged from gifted to well below average. Possibly because of the practices, the scripted nature of the process and the fact that two mediators were always present, all of the mediators became confident in their abilities. The "marginal students", who had academic difficulties, appeared to benefit from this leadership role, perhaps because mediation presented an opportunity for them to employ their interpersonal skills which were stronger than their intellectual skills.

It is my opinion that most of the students who disliked the PMP probably believe that conflicts should have winners and losers. They may believe that adults, not themselves, should be solving disputes, and they possibly view punishment as the just result of disputes. Students who aren't willing to solve their problems through the process of mediation have the alternative of continuing with the problem, or having a solution imposed on them by school authorities if the conflict is interfering with learning or the rights and safety of other students. Two students in particular seemed to need the adult attention by bringing conflicts to staff members and attempting to draw them into the fray. These two students were also receiving counseling once a week. It is important that the PMP is implemented in conjunction with lessons on conflict resolution, which includes discussion on taking responsibility for one's own actions.

The staff indicated in their closing comments at their interviews that they wished to see the PMP continue. Interviewee C's last statement was, "It is something that is full of value, especially when all the students are trained and it's carried through from year to year, it's really good" (Interview C, p. 80) The other teacher advised, "If you can sort of keep the conflict resolution program, the bullying program and the peer mediation intact and consistent for the year, where all students have run through the three programs, ... I see it being a very effective tool to reduce the aggressiveness that can happen on unstructured times within a school..." (Interview B, p. 75).

Considerations for the Future

This study has provided some valuable information for our school and added to

the growing number of reports which indicate the value of including conflict resolution in the curriculum and implementing peer mediation as a student service. As in any action research, the next step is to act on the information which has been gathered, putting into effect a plan for the future.

The first recommendation which I would make is to implement the program very early in the school year. Since we were a new staff, the implementation year began late because there were other major adjustments being made to policies and programs. Initially, we had intended to carry on with teaching the conflict resolution program to the younger students, training them for the fall, as recommended by Interviewee A. However, the end of the year was filled with other activities that crowded the timetable too much for eighteen hours to be set aside on my calendar and the classroom teacher's schedule. The students who received the formal conflict resolution and peer mediation training have now left the school, creating a need for immediate action.

A discussion on the method used will need to take place, as there are various options depending on the amount of teacher involvement. For instance, each teacher could implement the conflict mediation program, with a target completion date, at which time either I or another staff member could train the students who wish to become mediators, or I could facilitate the program one class at a time and then train the mediators. Another possibility, as recommended by Interviewee A, is to train the younger students in the spring. We need to decide whether to open the position of mediators to all of the students or keep it as a leadership role for the Grade Seven students.

Late implementation facilitated gathering data to compare before and after

implementation over a short time span of a year, since there were no incident records from the year before. I would consider the continuation and refinement of the program as a major objective for our school's growth plan. In an attempt to gather more information, I would request that the teachers keep records on all classroom incidents of conflict which require their attention, in order to determine if the peer mediator program is being used to its potential. I recognise that teachers are very busy and resent spending time on needless paperwork, so the information gathered will have to be perceived as valuable to them. Sharing this report with them, in particular the mediator report summary, will hopefully demonstrate the usefulness of recording incidents.

Another area for improvement would be communication with the student body about the successes and problems of the program. Open dialogue about what is and is not working should help the process improve. Continued conversation about taking ownership for solving disputes and about practising effective communication and negotiation skills is important.

If I am the sponsor of the Peer Mediation Program, I would set, as a personal goal, more frequent debriefing meetings with the mediators, in order to give them encouragement and acknowledge their contribution to the school. Tokens of our appreciation, such as free time, food, special activities, or public recognition, are tangible ways of showing that we value their efforts.

The interview with Interviewee B suggests a need for further discussion with the mediators and the staff about their views of the responsibilities of the mediators aside from providing mediation upon request. The issue of visible identification in the form of

badges, hats or shirts will need to be discussed with the students again.

The information gathered has raised some questions which I am interested in pursuing. Is it common for more females than males to become mediators, as in our case, where there were ten females and two males? What effect does attitude towards competition and collaboration have on a student's attitude towards conflict resolution and peer mediation? Who uses the program voluntarily and who uses it at the suggestion of an adult? Should the mediator's role include monitoring behavior in the school and on the playground, intercepting possible conflict situations before they escalate, as one interviewee suggested? Are the conflict resolution and mediation skills being transferred to situations outside of the school? If there is a positive correlation between peer mediation training and reduced levels of conflict, then will increasing the number of trainees in the school further reduce the number and severity of the conflicts which occur? Can the students become effective conflict resolution trainers as well as mediators?

With the increasing violence exhibited by juveniles, even in small town schools where staff, students and parents complacently thought that it could never happen to them, the government and school boards are encouraging schools to implement violence prevention programs. Many of these programs teach students problem solving techniques and communication skills, but don't provide the opportunities for students to practice solving problems in a structured, safe environment. Units and one-shot sessions do not appear to have a lasting effect on the climate of a school.

This study indicates that peer mediation promises to be one of several major strategies in providing a healthy school climate. A long-term commitment to teaching

children how to solve problems peacefully and productively is required if our mission is to develop responsible citizens.

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Appendix A

Sample of the Student Questionnaire

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this survey is to gather information about the Peer Mediation and Conflict Resolution Program in this school. Please answer all of the questions honestly and completely. Take the time necessary to think back over the past four months. Please do not write your name on this survey. All answers will remain confidential.

Please put an x on the line beside the most appropriate answer.

1. What is your gender? female ____ male ____
2. How old are you? 10 ____ 11 ____ 12 ____ 13 ____
3. Have you received conflict mediation training? Yes ____ No ____
4. Has a peer mediator helped you resolve a conflict this school year? Yes ____
No ____

If Yes was your answer, please answer the following questions:

- a. Have you ever asked for mediation? Yes ____ No ____
- b. Was peer mediation suggested to you by an adult? Yes ____ No ____
- c. Has another person asked you to enter mediation? Yes ____ No ____
- d. Have you used the conflict resolution skills on your own, without a peer mediator?
Yes ____ No ____
- e. Have you been in a dispute that could have been solved through mediation, but was handled in a different way? Yes ____ No ____

If Yes was your answer, please briefly describe the situation, **using no names**, and tell how it was handled.

If No was your answer, please answer the following questions:

f. Have you used conflict resolution skills to resolve conflicts on your own, without a peer mediator? Yes ____ No ____

g. Have you been in a dispute that could have been solved through mediation, but was handled in a different way? Yes ____ No ____

If Yes was your answer, please briefly describe the situation, **using no names**, and tell how it was handled.

5. Do you think that the Peer Mediation Program has helped students solve conflicts?

Yes ____ No ____

6. Have there been fewer, more, or the same number of conflicts since we have had Peer Mediators? Fewer ____ More ____ Same ____

If there anything else that you would like to say about the Peer Mediation Program in our school, please comment below. Your opinions and ideas are valued. Thank you for your time.

Ms. Barb Morris

Appendix B

Sample of the Peer Mediation Questionnaire

PEER MEDIATOR QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this survey is to gather information about the Peer Mediation and Conflict Resolution Program in this school. Please answer all of the questions honestly and completely. Take the time necessary to think back over the past four months. Please do not write your name on this survey. All answers will remain confidential.

Please put an x on the line beside the most appropriate answer.

1. What is your gender? female _ male _
2. How old are you? 10 _ 11 _ 12 _ 13 _
3. Was the peer mediation training that you received helpful? Yes _ No _
5. Have you successfully mediated conflicts in this school? Yes _ No _
6. Have you been the mediator for students in your class? Yes _ No _
7. Have you been the mediator for students in the other class? Yes _ No _
8. Over the past four months, have the number of conflicts increased, decreased, or remained the same? Increased _ Decreased _ Remained the same _
9. From your experience, do you think that Peer Mediation has been a good program for the school? Yes _ No _
10. If there is anything else that you would like to say about the Peer Mediation Program in our school, please comment below. Your opinions and ideas are valued. Thank you for your time.

Appendix C

Sample of the Statement of Consent

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I am conducting a study on the implementation of a peer mediation program in an elementary school . The purpose of this study is to answer the question, " What effect will teaching mediation skills have on a school of grade Five, Six and Seven students? Any information that you provide in the interview will be kept confidential, to be used only for the study. Anonymity is guaranteed. You have the right to terminate the interview at any time.

If you choose to take part, please sign this consent form below. I appreciate your assistance in this study. A copy of the completed document will be made available to you at your request.

Yours sincerely,
Barb Morris
250-347-9809

I, _____ consent to be interviewed for
this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D: Interview Blueprint

TOPICS	ISSUES	RELEVANCE	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
INTRODUCTION TO MAIN TOPIC		to put person at ease focus the interview	1. Tell me about the amount of experience you've had with implementing a peer mediation program.
DECISION TO IMPLEMENT	Rational for implementing PMP	to determine why a PMP is warranted	1. What were the reasons behind teaching students peer mediation? 2. What outcomes did you expect from the peer mediation program?
IMPLEMENTATION	independent variables that could have bearing on the outcome of a peer mediation program.	to determine what constitutes effective implementation. to determine what effective way to chose student mediators.	1. Please tell me about the process involved in teaching the students peer mediation skills. 2. In each instance, how were the student mediators chosen?
INDICATORS OF SUCCESS/EFFECTIVENESS	effectiveness of peer mediation in reducing conflict	to determine effectiveness of the program in reducing conflict.	1. What effect did the peer mediation program have on the climate of the school? 2. Approximately what percentage of conflict mediations were successful? How would you measure that they were successful? 3. Did the amount of time spent by staff in mediating conflicts between students increase, decrease or remain the same? 4. Did the number of conflicts increase , decrease, or remain the same?
AGE OF PEERS INVOLVED IN MEDIATION		to determine initial reaction to hypothesis	1. From your experience, do you think that, if Grade 5, 6, and 7 students were taught conflict resolution and peer mediation skills, they could effectively mediate disputes? 2. If no, why not?

Appendix E

Summary of Peer Mediation Report Forms

Summary of mediation cases from: April 7, 1999 to June 29, 1999Conflicts resolved 26 Conflicts not resolved 2Profile of students using mediation:Total Female 5Total Male 16Grade 5: 0Grade 5: 4Grade 6: 1Grade 6: 8Grade 7: 4Grade 7: 4Total Students: 21Number of students who returned to mediate again with the same disputant: 8 (4 pairs)

Number of disputes in which each student was involved:

Student A: 1, Student B: 2, Student C: 1, Student D: 3, Student E: 4, Student F: 8,

Student G: 6, Student H: 1, Student I: 1, Student J: 1, Student K: 4, Student L: 1, Student

M: 3, Student N: 2, Student O: 1, Student P: 1, Student Q: 1, Student R: 7, Student S: 2,

Student T: 1, Student U: 1

Type of conflict mediated:arguing 11teasing 6threatening 4name - calling 12rumour 3pushing 4friendship 4property 2Place of conflict:classroom 12.hall 1bathroom 0playground 12computer lab 1other 2Number of incidences per month: April: 15May: 7June: 2undated forms: 2

Appendix F

Summary of Office Incidents

Number of incidences dealt with in the office which may have been eligible for peer mediation:

Month:	Number
September	3
October	12
November	1
December	3
January	2
February	3
March	4
April	1
May	1
June	1

Appendix G

Summary of Noon Hour Incident Report Forms

SUMMARY OF NOON-HOUR INCIDENT REPORTS

Months/ Incidents	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
name calling						1	
quarreling	1						
rough play	8	2	2		2	5	1
pushing							
spreading rumours							
threatening							
uncooperative behaviour			1				

Appendix H

Student Questionnaire Results

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this survey is to gather information about the Peer Mediation and Conflict Resolution Program in this school. Please answer all of the questions honestly and completely. Take the time necessary to think back over the past four months. Please do not write your name on this survey. All answers will remain confidential.

Please put an x on the line beside the most appropriate answer.

Total number of returned responses: 39

1. What is your gender? female (18) male (21)
2. How old are you? 10 (4) 11 (5) 12 (18) 13 (11) [14 - 1] (1 female had just turned 14)
3. Have you received conflict mediation training? Yes (14) No. (25)
4. Has a peer mediator helped you resolve a conflict this school year? Yes (21)
No (18)

If Yes was your answer, please answer the following questions:

- a. Have you ever asked for mediation? Yes (7) No (14)
- b. Was peer mediation suggested to you by an adult? Yes (11) No (10)
- c. Has another person asked you to enter mediation? Yes (18) No (3)
- d. Have you used the conflict resolution skills on your own, without a peer mediator?
Yes (12) No (9)
- e. Have you been in a dispute that could have been solved through mediation, but was

handled in a different way? Yes **(10)** No **(11)** **(2 students said yes, but described peer mediation, with mediators, in the description below; see last two comments)**

If Yes was your answer, please briefly describe the situation, **using no names**, and tell how it was handled.

Responses: (9/10)

- _____ called _____ fat and I laughed and had to talk to a teacher instead of mediation
- with a guy in our class
- we both said we will stay away from each other
- a friend and I talked it out
- said sorry
- 1 person wanted the swing and the other person had it so the other person gave her the`swing
- a boy was playing basketball and I said he travelled and he started being rude and wanted to fight but I just walked away
- We did lots of learning how to be a mediator. And got to do mediation.
- The mediators asked us questions and we answered them. We came up with ways to solve the problem. We used those ideas.

If No was your answer, please answer the following questions:

f. Have you used conflict resolution skills to resolve conflicts on your own, without a peer mediator? Yes **(10)** No **(8)**

g. Have you been in a dispute that could have been solved through mediation, but was handled in a different way? Yes (7) No (11)

If Yes was your answer, please briefly describe the situation, **using no names**, and tell how it was handled.

Responses: (5/7)

- a person calling another person a name
- My friend supported me
- My friends helped me!
- My friends and I were in an argument that we solved ourselves
- I was in an argue (sic) with a kid I went to the office

5. Do you think that the Peer Mediation Program has helped students solve conflicts?

Yes (24) No (15)

(1 student covered his answers for question 5 with white-out, as he was covering answers to f. and g. because he'd answered the yes side already. He had not chosen any other response, so I used his covered response.)

6. Have there been fewer, more, or the same number of conflicts since we have had Peer Mediators? Fewer (9) More (8) Same (22)

(see above comment about the 1 student)

If there anything else that you would like to say about the Peer Mediation Program in our school, please comment below. Your opinions and ideas are valued. Thank you for your

time..

Ms. Barb Morris

Responses:

- It was a very good program (female, age 13)
- I think the peer mediation program has helped because we havn't [sic]. had much disbutes [sic] since we have had the Peer Mediation Program. (female, age 14)
- More people get in fights because they know they won't get in trouble because it's a win, win situation (female, age 12)
- The Peer Mediation Program is really good!(female, age 11)
- Mediators are so useless you don't learn your lesson cause its JUST [sic] 2 kids talking to you. you don't get punished for doing bad things Peer mediators are useless point proven (male,age 13)
- I think mediation is not a good thing at all and is a waste of time. Some kids go to mediation so they can't get in trouble because of a win/win situation. We should not mediate. (female, age 12)
- I think that Peer Mediation is a bite [sic] easy on the students and they don't get in trouble so they are more likely to do it again. (male, age 12)
- I don't think medation [sic] works because I fought 8 times and we still fought even after medation [sic] . (female, age 12)
- To me medeation [sic] dosn't [sic] help slove [sic] conflicts! (female, age 12)
- I think that mediation didn't help some people solve conflicts (female, age 12)
- The grade 5/6 should be adle [sic] to able to teach it too (female, age 10)

- I think that Grade 5/6 can be allowed to do mediation! (female, age 10)

- Peer mediation has helped a lot of people solve their conflicts, but it is often a waste of time for some people. (female, age 13)

Appendix I

Peer Mediator Questionnaire Results

PEER MEDIATOR QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this survey is to gather information about the Peer Mediation and Conflict Resolution Program in this school. Please answer all of the questions honestly and completely. Take the time necessary to think back over the past four months. Please do not write your name on this survey. All answers will remain confidential.

Please put an x on the line beside the most appropriate answer:

1. What is your gender? female 9 male 2
2. How old are you? 10 0 11 0 12 5 13 5(14 1)
3. Was the peer mediation training that you received helpful? Yes 9 No 2
5. Have you successfully mediated conflicts in this school? Yes 11 No 0
6. Have you been the mediator for students in your class? Yes 10 No 1
7. Have you been the mediator for students in the other class? Yes 11 No 0
8. Over the past four months, have the number of conflicts increased, decreased, or remained the same? Increased 1 Decreased 5 Remained the same 5
9. From your experience, do you think that Peer Mediation has been a good program for the school? Yes 9 No 2
10. If there is anything else that you would like to say about the Peer Mediation Program in our school, please comment below. Your opinions and ideas are valued. Thank you for your time.

Only two written responses:

- Peer mediation dosn't [sic] solve conflicts

- I thought that the mediation was helpful for some people, but mostly just a waste of time. People would come to mediation so that they wouldn't get in trouble.

Appendix J

Transcripts of Interviews

Transcript Format and CodingConventionMeaning

I:

Interviewer

R.

Respondent

Indicates the name of a person

=====

Indicates the name of a school

A1.,B2 etc.

Refers to the questions on the
interview blueprint

INTERVIEW A

A 1. I: Tell me about the amount of experience you've had with implementing a peer mediation program.

R: I have not so much experience with implementing, but more experience with teaching. The first time I worked with peer mediation program was with a staff member at =====, with a grade 7 teacher and we team taught the program and we implemented it for about the last three months of the school year. And my second brush with peer mediation program was to team teach it with a grade 6 teacher in the spring time to some grade 6s in order for them to administer the program in the fall. However as it turned out I wasn't there in the fall.

B 1. I: What were the reasons behind, in both schools, behind teaching students peer mediation?

R: Basically there were a number of reasons; the basic reason that I wanted to see a peer mediation program was to teach kids skills in dealing with conflict cause conflict is an every day occurrence and people need to learn how to deal with it. The other reason was for school climate and atmosphere and to have the kids have a stake in dealing with some of the problems that happen at the school.

B 2. I: Uhhh hmm and did you uh What kind of outcomes did you expect from the program?

R: Well the outcomes would be kids that were more knowledgeable about how to resolve problems without using violence or resolving problems in a peaceful way and basically that's it.

C 1. I: O.K. Can you tell me about the process involved in teaching the students the mediation program?

R: There was a full program put out by Peace Works that we used that encompassed a series of lessons which involved the kids in actual problem solving and working through disputes that would commonly arise and repeat the question please.

I: I just wondered about the process involved in teaching.

R: so we used a basic program to go through the whole thing and at the end of that we worked with the kids in peer mediation problem solving to coach them.

C 2. I: And did you have the whole class population take part?

R.: In both cases we had the whole class take part. It's very important they want to take part. The first class that I talked to were very enthusiastic about doing it, save a couple of individuals. None of the kids were ever forced, once they were through the program, to be involved in it. All of the kids took the program and because the majority of them wanted to take the program, but at the end of it, the kids knew that if they didn't want to be involved as mediators, they wouldn't have to be. The response rate from the kids was quite high for the kids that wanted to be involved, over half the kids.

C 3. I: OK and that leads to the next question: In each instance, how were the student mediators chosen?

R: The student mediators were chosen basically by; first of all they had to take the course in order to qualify, and then they had to want to do it after they were finished. And in so doing, they could drop out at any time, because it is not something you want to force on a child but you want them to know that they have a commitment, that they've made a commitment to go through the program. So they applied afterwards to become peer mediators after they'd taken the course.

I: And anyone who applied became a peer mediator?

R: Anyone who applied had a chance to become a peer mediator, and some kids, after they had done it a couple of times, said they didn't want to do it anymore. Most of the kids wanted to continue, and I'd say still over half of the kids that worked with it wanted to continue.

D 1. I: What effect did the peer mediation program have on the climate of the school?

R: Initially, and that's all I can comment on, and I wish I'd been there the year after to find out. Initially I think it had a very positive effect with the kids, especially some of the younger kids who could see some of the older kids in a bit of a different light, and some of the older kids looked at their own behaviour a little bit. And I think that for the staff, there were a number of comments that said that it was really nice that they didn't have to deal with a particular problem as they were coming in from lunch and, "I need to be addressing my class and I could have an issue assigned to some peer mediators who could

very frequently deal with it successfully". I want to point out though that no child was ever forced into peer mediation; they were always asked, " Do you want peer mediation or would you like me to handle the problem because there is a problem here? The kids quite often, not always, chose the peer mediation route.

D 2. I: What would you say as far as the success rate was concerned; about how many of the conflict mediations were successful?

R: That's really hard to say because there's a whole bunch of degrees of success. Some of the problems were minute and were going to be solved very quickly anyway. And I would say that the peer mediators needed a lot of coaching in order to be really good assistants to kids working out problems. It's not something that really comes easy to a lot of kids and that was something that I found out quite quickly that you just couldn't turn kids loose and say " O.K. you've had this course go solve the problem." because it just didn't work that way. They didn't have all the answers, just like we don't as adults have all the answers, sometimes, to solve some of the kids problems. We just do the best we can and, keeping in mind that these were twelve year olds, they need a lot of coaching in order to be effective. So that the amount of successes, lots of time a new program will experience real success the first time, the first little while because it is new and having to follow through with it, I don't know what the success rate is over time. I would expect that the success rate would hopefully be good if the kids were committed to the program.

I: O.K.

R:- and sorry, I just have to add one thing, it also takes commitment on the staff's part

because you don't implement this in the school unless you have a hundred percent of the staff.

I: What difference would you think that would make?

From this point on, I have provided a summary of his answers to the questions.

He felt that if all teachers didn't show support, the program would be suspect.

D 3. I: When you were talking about the success of the program, what, to you, would measure a successful conflict program, in peer mediation?

R: The interviewee defined peer mediation as being successful when both parties feel that the problem has been solved. He mentioned the reality that not all children should be allowed to use mediation to solve problems if they're always having problems. At this point he lost his train of thought and asked for clarification. I felt that the interview shouldn't go on much longer.

I: I just was wondering about the measurement of success as far as whether you would decide a particular conflict or mediation was successful or not.

R: He added some new insight about observing younger children resolving their own conflicts using strategies modeled by the mediators.

D 4. I: You answered this question a little already, but did the amount of time spent by staff in mediating conflicts between students increase, decrease or remain the same?

R: The interviewee thought time spent by staff decreased, but that time spent by him

increased. He was more busy coaching the student mediators.

D 5. I: Did the number of conflicts increase, decrease or remain the same?

R.: The interviewee had no statistics. He wouldn't commit to any measurement, but did say that conflicts definitely were more easily resolved.

E 1. I: From your experience, do you think that, if Grade 5, 6 and 7 students were taught conflict mediation and conflict resolution, they could effectively mediate disputes among themselves?

R: The interviewee said that he was sure it could be done, but he cautioned that it won't always work and that the students need to know that the strategies won't always work.

I: Thanks ----, I think it's valuable listening to someone who's had some experience, because there really is not a lot out there as far as print resources to do with peer mediation.

INTERVIEW B

A 1. I: So,-----, thank-you for taking your time to begin with, especially today, with a so busy day. Could you start by telling me about the amount of experience you've had with implementing a peer mediation program?

R: I've been involved with peer mediation for two full school years, uh one year was at ===== School , under the guidance of -----, and the second year was at ===== under the guidance of -----.

B 1. I: O.K., and uh so you've had two years. What were the reasons behind teaching students peer mediation?

R: I feel peer mediation provides an accountability of student actions. It's a form of reflection where when students make decisions, and in some cases, unwise decisions, peer mediation guides them through the process of a form of reflection, understanding what they could have done differently in response to a certain incident.

B 2. I: What outcomes did you expect from the peer mediation program, as a teacher?

R: I expected the atmosphere of the school to raise in a sense that over the progression of a ten month school year you would see less playground incidents, hallway incidents and students starting to resolve conflicts on their own, through a very mature process versus coming and tattletaling to the teacher.

C 1. I: Hmm hmm, O.K. And we'll get back to that later when we'll talk more about what you actually did see happening. So those were your expectations. Now, um , were you involved in the process of teaching the students peer mediation skills in either of those schools?

R: Yes I was. At, =====, uh with the assistance of ----- , we had a little brochure booklet, that we had designed and we would spend time with the children going through the guided questioning and preparing students with certain kinds of responses. Sometimes it specifically prepared students for volatile type responses. As teachers or staff members of this school, we can become a little numb when a student is very aggressive, but when a student is aggressive to another student in response to a question, there needs to be the preparation. So, we really worked hard on building a peer mediator's self-esteem up, so that they could cope and understand where the fellow student was coming from in a ... in a severe incident.

I: So did you have a specific teaching time in which you did this?

R: Umm, there was a pull - out time from the classroom where we would meet with the group. I was the reporting person, uh, with the peer mediation, because ----- was not there full time and being Principal Designate, and also being part of the Grade 7 group of peer mediation, I sort of oversaw the reports that were coming in, the structuredness of peer mediation which we... meant the delegation of students; who was going to be responsible for being peer mediators, any sort of problems, any sort of concerns that would have,...that had arisen during that day also came back to me that I could help to smooth out, this whole concept of mediation.

C 3. I: O.K. You were talking about the student mediators. In the situation at =====, then how were the students chosen?

R: Um, first of all, they were the senior students, the Grade 7 students. Secondly, then, we looked at a volunteer type basis umm, except in closed door quarters ----- and I looked at certain students that would just thrive at this; the very mature, self-directed type student , uh, the citizenship type student, uh, that would really provide a positive flavouring to this, so even though it was volunteer, we had students in mind that we sure would like to see be part of this. And we, we had eight students , most of them senior Grade 7 girls, that were part of the program and it was slightly different than ===== because they had their own little clipboards with their own little brochure booklets as I already referred to, they had peer mediation shirts which they wore on their days and they were - just that alone a lot of the students wanted to be peer mediators because of these lovely T-shirts, high quality...uhh..and then there was really no formal application form. There was a letter of request that they could make to ----- or to myself if they would like to be a mediator. That's something I would like to see is a formal application form, with a little more guided questions than just a student writing a reflective type letter that they would like to and why they would do it.

D 1. I: O.K. In this case then, if you had 8 peer mediators, were those the 8 peer mediators who took the peer mediation program? Or did other students take the conflict resolution, peer mediation program?

R: No, it was just strictly that small core group. [interrupting, my voice overlaying]

I: That group. Umm, O.K. So, what effect did the peer mediation program have on the climate of the school? Now we'll talk about ===== School first,

R: First, umm, O.K. I found there to be a real division because it was such a small group versus a class type of peer mediation where all the Grade Sevens were involved , there - the people who were not involved at the senior level did not take it serious. They saw their fellow student with their fancy shirts, their uniforms and their clipboards and going out during recess, going out during lunch and there was some ridicule which hurt me as a teacher seeing that, you know, here you have positive leaders going out and helping and they're being ridiculed for it...Uh, in comparison to ===== where there was a much larger student body of peer mediators. I didn't see a peer mediator being ridiculed at =====. Uhh, and do you know what I mean about being ridiculed?

I: Yes, the talk....(at the same time)

R: ... the teasing, yes, the talk and the subtle little comments that can bring down this whole program. So personally, number one is that you need to involve large numbers at the senior level for an effective peer mediation program. Uh, a select group, even though they're wonderful students, there's the surrounding student body that really can slow the whole process down. Both groups that were involved, at ===== and =====, I found that those students took it very serious, they were responsive in the sense that when there is a request for mediation to occur, both ===== and ===== students were there. There wasn't... the bribing didn't have to happen, "Well, come on you two, we need peer mediators today," and they're showing resistance. I did not see that in either school. Uh, one other component is the circulation. It's almost a form of supervision and actually I

found ===== slightly better than ===== were even though they were the smaller group, they were out circulating around the school, um they were another form of supervision where ===== I did not get a sense of that, uh, they were students first, on their ..., even on their days when they were supposed to be mediators and I think if they would've raised their level where they were sort of assistant type of supervisor, pro - active, on the playground, seeing an incident that maybe was going to start to arise, that they felt, through their training, that they could've intervened and suddenly cured that incident quickly, uh, that wasn't evident in ===== where it was in =====, and that would be a goal definitely for ===== next year, is try to get the peer mediators pro - active, outside the enclosed door setting. When they're inside with their peer mediation process going on, they were excellent, but it's the whole school setting.

D 2. I: O.K. Thanks for that insight. Let's talk a little bit about the conflict. Now, it's probably hard for you to say what percent of conflict mediations were successful but, um, how did you feel about the success of the conflict mediations that did occur?

R: Well uh, I think that every mediation that took place at both schools, there was success. You tend to think that, well, gee, the peer mediators went nowhere with this problem and the problem went on to the administration of both schools, but there's, the peer mediators allowed an opportunity for students to talk to students. And a lot of the times, especially in the Grade Six, Grade Seven, the elementary levels and here this year when we had Grade Fives, when students can talk to other students there's a sense of opening up a little bit more and sometimes, yes, it's an aggressive nature, and sometimes

it's in a volatile way, but there's still the opening up. A lot of the times if there's been an incident and they go right to the principal's office or they go to the teacher's classroom, there may, there may be some reluctance to talk, so peer mediation, whenever a student is able to talk to another student there's success there, because I really feel there's an opportunity to open up, to another person at their same age level or similar age level. And, I really feel there's the other success that incidents happen for a reason and we within the education system as adults, know that when there's a student upset on the playground, in the hallway or in the classroom, there's a reason for it, whether through the whole conglomerate of ideas, from attention seeking to something that's gone on at home and for that reason I think the peer mediation was also a success because a number of times something from the hidden agenda, uh, something else that has continued on, where this wasn't just a small isolated problem, uh, peer mediators were just, had the opportunity in a lot of cases they saw, O.K., there's more to this whole picture and I saw that occurring at both schools, this year too, and then it went on to the administration and at that point different avenues were taken at that point, so I will never say peer mediation is not a success.

D 3. I: Great, and I think while speaking you defined how you would measure success and it sounded to me...like, in your terms, measurement of success is...?

R: Through a student being able to become reflective through their own actions, for students to be able to talk to other students, that's a success right on its own and for there to be the opportunity for students to vent out, to reveal other issues, other

problems, other concerns that are happening in their lives.

I: O.K. Thanks.

D 4. I: Did the amount of time spent by staff in _____ School and staff in _____ School mediating conflicts between students increase, decrease or remain the same do you think?

R: Umm, definitely there was a decrease in both schools. Uh, _____ School, with there being a lot more students and teachers there, just because of the sheer numbers of peer mediators, we could've had more peer mediators, because of the percentage of students, uh with the two per day at _____, yes, it was a considerable difference where there was obviously more teaching time, especially after recess where there were peer mediation interviews happening right after recess where a teacher was able to go to their class and start teaching the academics versus going out and dealing with an issue in the hallway and a lot of the times, let's face it, with this age group it's not significant enough to be costing twenty-seven other students to be sitting in the class not being taught so I felt very comfortable both to say, well please go seek mediation. Then I as a teacher could get on with my lessons and I think that's important. That's one reason why we have peer mediations.

D 5 .I: Did the number of conflicts themselves increase, decrease or remain the same, do you think it had any bearing?

R: Mmm, I really felt there was an increase to start, O.K. and it's a student wanting to

test the process and so there was actually an influx of students and incidents because incidents that were not incidents were now being defined as incidents so that they could go through the mediation process. Quite quickly, students realised that, O.K. , this is a formal process, there's some structure, there's an interview , there is information being written down and this information is then going on to the administration of the school. I felt students really became selective on, well is this really an incident, does this really need to go to mediation, or is it something I can resolve on the playground? So over a long term, and especially seeing that at the latter part of the year, I thought there was a decline of the incidents that peer mediators could be involved with.

E 1. I: O.K. Thanks. So, now, from your experience, do you think that, if Grade 5, 6 and 7 students were taught conflict resolution and peer mediation skills, that they can effectively mediate disputes within their own age group?

R: Yes. I agree totally with the peer mediation, with the bully program also that the Grade Sixes are taught. If you can sort of keep the conflict resolution program, the bullying program and the peer mediation intact, and consistent for the year, where all students have run through the three programs, whether they are the mediators or they are explained what the mediation process is about, I see it being a very effective tool to reduce the aggressiveness that can happen on unstructured times within a school, but there has to be the consistency and that's very important for the adults of the school to keep that consistency, you know what I mean, adults, representing all staff, not just the teachers, but support staff, Learning Assistance.

I: Do you feel that we've covered everything, or is there something that you want to talk about with the peer mediation that I haven't asked?

R: Uh, one important point that I have not raised is regarding subtly, was peer mediation providing a setting of quiet time, that pull-out time from the playground, the hallway, the classroom, where a student is able to sit down in a structured, quiet setting and just that alone, I found that to be an excellent tool for easing potential conflicts and frustration levels, umm, you know so often, we'll think, well, when we isolate someone, I don't feel it was isolation, but it was an opportunity for quiet time and peer mediation provides the quiet time for a student and the moment they can step back from an incident and think about it , even for thirty seconds, a lot of times, it's no longer an incident and I saw that quite evident this year where students would come out from their mediation interview and both people who were involved within the incident were happy , they were friends and you could tell it wasn't a major problem. Now I'm thinking if that was to escalate on the playground, to continue on the playground, then you could see friendships breaking and that type of thing so I think that that was important for me to highlight, that peer mediation provides quiet time too for people to think about what's happening too.

INTERVIEW C

A 1. I: Tell me about the amount of experience you've had with implementing a peer mediation program.

R: I did have one experience about four years ago and that was with ----- and I was involved with the training of some kids at ===== .

B 1. I: What were the reasons behind teaching students peer mediation?

R.: The reasons for me was ownership; ownership of behaviour and realising that there was some way of resolving things on their own, without constant intervention with adults and what I found was when they realised there is a process, that they don't always have to go to adults, they automatically took ownership and that was ... and that was it.

B 2. I: What outcomes did you expect from the program?

R: Number one outcome to me would be maturity, like they seemed to realise that there were no consequences and there was more maturity on their behalf. If they get into a conflict, there was a format in place where they, they'd go through and if they cannot take ownership, it goes to the adult where sometimes that is needed but in most cases it isn't and I just feel that through the process there is a maturation of the kids. They just mature a lot from that cause they need to.

C 1. I: O.K. Thanks. Can you tell me about the process involved in teaching the students

peer mediation skills?

R: Well, um, the process, the role play is the biggest process that I'd reflect upon is that they see various scenarios involving an adult and they recognise that through the role plays and through the uh, um what would you call it?...the questions that you must ask them, used to figure out what the problem or conflict might be that there is a set-up that they can use to uh come up with the outcomes

C 3. I: O.K. now in the instance at===== and the instance at =====, how were the peer mediators chosen, do you remember?

R: I believe in both cases it was, more volunteer, yah, volunteer, for all of the kids who had been through the training in both cases and then knew exactly what was involved and then they were both given the decision whether to take part or not, and in both cases students chose to take part.

D 1. I: O.K. Thanks. What effect did the peer mediation program have on the climate of the school ?

R: I would say it settled the school as far as if an issue was to be dealt with, there was something in place that automatically could be chosen to do where a conflict's settled. And students on their own behalf would choose to go into mediation and that conflict would be dealt with. So, as a whole, I think it is something very valuable to the school climate where it gives kids the opportunity to settle their disputes thus saving problems in school um you can't do it thinking other than that will happen.

D 2. I: Approximately, about what percentage of the conflict mediations were successful would you say...that's a hard question because of percentages, but...

R: Well umm, well, what I found is that they were,...I would guess, a very high percentage because I was not asked to mediate or go into things after the mediation had been done. I can't recall very many at all um where I was asked to do that.

D 3. I: So you would measure success by whether you needed to do a follow up?

R: Right.

I: O.K. Thanks

D 4. I: Did the amount of time spent by staff in mediating conflicts between students increase, decrease or remain the same?

R: Umm, decreased. Because I have, uhh, after I was used to , uh, recognised that there was something in place,

I: Mm hmm. You know the teacher is usually responsible for it and then I felt that, oh, well, that could've gone to the mediators, and at the beginning I would forget about that and deal with things that I ... I didn't really need to get involved with and that they could handle a ... by themselves, so it went down as actually I was used to having mediators.

D 5. I: O.K. So what about the number of conflicts? Did they increase, decrease or remain the same do you think?

R: Mmm, my...I would think that they would decrease because the kids would realise

that, was this argument worth pursuing or did they want to go through the process and once given that decision I believe that they would just settle more arguments that way and actually not need it so I would say that it went down.

E 1. I: So from your experience, now, do you think that, if Grade 5, 6 and 7 students were taught conflict resolution and peer mediation skills, they can effectively mediate disputes?

R: Yes.

I: Umm, is there anything else that you want to add about the peer mediation program with regards to your experience with it?

R: I think once you have it in place in school, you don't, you do not want to not have it. It is something that is full of value, especially when all the students are trained and it's carried through from year to year, it's really good.

I: O.K. Thank you.