Teaching Conflict Resolution:
A Comparative Study of the United States and New Zealand

by
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Introduction

Two roommates screaming back and forth, a parent and argumentative child, the landlord and tenant haggling over damage in an apartment, two strangers sorting out an automotive accident-- conflict is a part of everyday life. It affects everyone, for no two people will ever see eye to eye in all regards. Conflict is a fact of life that must be accepted.

A conflict cannot be resolved well if one person wins and the other loses. In many disputes there is not a right or wrong answer. ‘Solving’ disagreements in this way does not meet the needs of both individuals involved. “The equitable resolution of any conflict requires balancing the needs and perceptions of all the parties to it” (Donn and Schick 251).

Finding the ‘equitable resolution’ to everyday conflicts is not just a problem adults, or even Americans face. Children and teens must also find ways to overcome conflict. This research looks at different methods used in schools to teach students how to peacefully resolve disagreements. The examination of programs found in some sample United States and New Zealand schools shows that they all teach a form of peer mediation. While the mediation process itself is similar across the programs studied, the
methods of implementation vary. To best understand how these programs work, a basic understanding of mediation is needed.

What Is Mediation?

Mediation is a voluntary confidential process involving two or more disputants and a neutral third party facilitating discussion. Both the mediator and parties must agree to keep the proceedings in the mediation room. The mediator does not make decisions or give advice, but can be an information resource to the parties. By listening and questioning, the mediator guides the process giving each individual a chance to be heard.

After the mediator explains the process, each party gives their uninterrupted story with a possible way to settle. Then the disputants can discuss, offer solutions and brainstorm possible outcomes. The mediator may choose to meet privately with each party during this time if necessary. When a mutually agreeable solution is found, the mediator writes a contract including every responsibility. Each party must sign the agreement for it to be a valid and binding (NAME).

Mediation allows everyone to ‘win.’ This facilitated process removes the competitive nature of disagreements while still providing an outlet for frustration. It is the mediator’s job to keep the parties on an equal playing field so that discussion is helpful rather than destructive. Mediation is not a magic trick or instant solution. It provides a process for individuals to talk through conflict.

Mediation In Schools
Mediation is used as an alternative to courtroom litigation and arbitration in the legal realm. Another area of growing interest is in schools. "Because it offers communication as an alternative to violent or repressive solutions to conflict, mediation provides a model for communication which is consistent with basic democratic principles. training students in mediation skills provides them with strategies for resolving conflicts, both at school and in their lives beyond school" (Donn and Schick 252). This kind of mediation in schools gives students the opportunity to solve their own difficulties without having an adult act and decide the outcome. Students take responsibility for their own actions as well as for the community in which they live and learn.

From a school's perspective, peer mediation teaches skills that might not be learned in a regular classroom and makes the school environment more conducive to learning. Discipline problems can be eliminated before they escalate or even start. "In one Hawaii school, the number of on-campus fights dropped from 83 to 19 over a two-year period. At a New York school, these events declined by 50%...an Arizona school reported a 47% decrease in the average number of aggressive incidents per month (Lane and McWhirter 3-4). If conflicts are resolved quickly and effectively, distracted students in the classroom can be avoided. On the other hand, communication skills are developed by both the mediators and disputants. "McCormick (1988) reported that at-risk disputants (students who had been referred frequently for discipline problems) were observed by teachers to exhibit shifts to cooperation after experiencing peer mediation, a
change supported by a 47% decrease in self-reported aggressive conflicts, which occurred as a result of peer mediation program implementation (Lane and McWhirter 3).

When peer mediation helps students resolve their problems in a positive, meaningful way, school communities benefit, too. Instead of venting anger and frustration toward another person, students have a medium for constructive release of feelings. Violence does not have to be the result or ‘solution.’ If students know they can resolve difficulties by mediating, they will be less likely to resort to kicking, bullying or threatening. Since mediation also deals with the feelings involved in a dispute, teasing and tears can often be reduced. Less violence and abusive behavior throughout the school make for a much more effective learning environment.

With so much potential, peer mediation programs have developed across the United States and in other nations. Many different programs and methods strive toward an identical goal: teaching students effective conflict resolving skills. This study attempts to compare the training methods of conflict resolution and peer mediation in New Zealand and North Central College’s Dispute Resolution Center. Based on the evaluation of these programs, an ideal method will be determined to best create, instruct and maintain an effective peer mediation program.

Why New Zealand?

New Zealand’s activism toward peace began in 1959 when it accepted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child which states “The child shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal
brotherhood” (Principle 10). New Zealand also joined in support of the United Nations Disarmament in 1978 (Department of Education, Draft 3).

Being a non-violent nation, New Zealand took great action after the United Nations held a special session in 1978 where the final Document resolved that Governments and non-governmental organizations are urged to take steps to develop programs of education for disarmament and peace studies at all levels. From this directive and involvement in the United Nations International Year of Peace in 1986, the peace movement began to take shape in New Zealand (“Extending” preface).

The United Nations placed this focus on the broad terms of nuclear war and/or war in general. From this, a strong anti-nuclear phase was planted for which New Zealand is known globally. The true nature of peace, however, goes much further than armed conflict. A process of progress, mutual respect and justice are also prerequisites for peace that encourage and recognize the values of cooperation and accepting cultural differences (“Extending” introduction).

With a broad goal of world of peace, New Zealand created a plan for action ranging from the world peace level to that of grassroots change through education curricula in all areas of the public schools. The New Zealand Foundation for Peace Studies, a result of the 1978 United Nations special session, published a classroom workbook titled “Learning Peaceful Relationships.” This book was used in primary and intermediate classrooms across New Zealand sparking discussion covering topics such as violence, aggression, welfare and justice, cooperative skills and resolving conflicts.
The popularity of this book brought a new edition in 1986, the Year of International Peace. At the time of release, a poll was completed with results that 80 percent of primary and secondary New Zealand schools looked at causes and preventative methods of war. This concept easily branches into conflicts between individuals, groups and nations (“Extending” introduction).

Peace Studies Proposal

In an effort to create nation-wide educational curriculum guidelines meeting goals for peace development, meetings were held throughout 1985 and 1986 across New Zealand. Teachers, parents and administrators met to design a plan. The basic goals of the peace studies program were

- to provide people with insights into how to live at peace with themselves and with others
- to develop skills in solving problems and resolving conflicts with others
- to enable students to address conflict in their society and in the world at large in constructive ways  

(Department of Education, Draft 6)

Under these guidelines, the schools, teachers, parents and community would all be working together as role models and mentors. The curriculum itself included

- interpersonal relations and conflict resolution
- issues of peace and conflict in society and the community
- global and international issues  

(Department of Education, Draft 11)
These objectives were to be implemented across disciplines from day one of preschool through completion of senior secondary school. A revision was conducted in March of 1987 and then the proposal was submitted to the New Zealand Ministry of Education.

Ian Bassett, an education officer for the curriculum development division of the Ministry of Education in 1987, expressed his concern for the Ministry’s handling of the proposal. Due to political changes being made in the Ministry at that time, the peace studies curriculum was denied. Bassett, who left the Ministry soon after, had a large hand in the proposal’s development and was greatly discouraged by the Ministry’s action. He, along with thousands of New Zealanders who reviewed the plan, suffered defeat due to a new prime minister of a party less interested in this issue (Bassett).

Mediation Pilot Program In Christchurch, New Zealand

The Community Mediation Service began in Christchurch on New Zealand’s south island in 1984. In addition to offering mediation services to the public, workshops were given for local schools and organizations. The Community Mediation Service was forced to close in 1987 when funding disappeared. (Cameron and Dupuis, Assessment 5).

Some volunteers from the Service asked to start a new mediation program within Hagley High School, an inner-city coeducational school in Christchurch. They recruited, selected and trained groups of students and teachers to mediate. After two years of volunteer leadership, Hagley was able to gradually assume complete responsibility for their peer mediation program. Teachers then did the training, while the volunteers were available on a consultant basis (Cameron and Dupuis, Assessment 5).
Julie Blanks, an original volunteer mediator for the Community Mediation Service, still sees the benefits in the initial mediation project. She continued to use her services when the community project lost funding. Ms. Blanks trained new mediators in the Hagley High School pilot when it first began. As the outside volunteers were phased out of Hagley, she was proud of the progress, but also excited to be able to start her own programs elsewhere. (Cameron and Dupuis, Assessment 7).

A study of this project, conducted by University of Canterbury sociology lecturers Jan Cameron and Ann Dupuis, evaluated the methods used in the Hagley project and the potential for peer mediation to work in the rest of New Zealand. The main roadblocks for Hagley were as follows:

- allowing students and staff to miss class for training or mediations
- freeing a teacher to act as co-ordinator [sic] or finding funds to employ a co-ordinator [sic]
- making space available for a mediation room
- finding funds for material and administrative need and possibly trainers
- educating members of the school staff, students, board and community
- establishing the limits of mediation- for example, should it be used for serious violations of school rules like drugs and violence, should student mediations be supervised, should records be kept, should parents be notified, what happens if an agreement breaks down? (Cameron and Dupuis, Assessment 6 and 19).

According to Cameron and Dupuis, it is of grave importance to have the support of the school’s principal. Without this key administrator’s backing, the program will most
likely fail. The coordinator’s responsibilities have almost as much impact as the principal. A successful coordinator needs to have “high visibility in the school, good credibility with administrators and staff...be enthusiastic, energetic and committed to peace” (Cameron and Dupuis, Assessment 3).

Cameron and Dupuis determined that for peer mediation to succeed in New Zealand, it must be flexible enough to meet the needs of students, staff and the school. Organization and administration will make or break a mediation program no matter how skilled the mediators are. Since the New Zealand Ministry of Education places emphasis on low budgets for schools to be compensated by volunteerism, funding will often be a struggle in starting a new program.

The school’s culture must be considered along with ethnicity and class. The Mauri, Asian and Polynesian populations can present challenges in mediation from cultural communication and problem solving differences. The nature of discipline and rules in the school itself will affect the success of a peer mediation program (Cameron and Dupuis, Assessment 12). If a school environment is so strictly run that students do not get to make any decisions for themselves, mediation may not work for two reasons. The teachers, staff and administrators may have a difficult time letting students resolve their own disputes and the students may need to learn how to begin making decisions. Students and adults must know how to give and use freedoms.

The need for and goals of conflict resolution and mediation have been established. New Zealand’s conflict resolution history also has been discussed. While it is agreed that
mediation has positive effects in schools and improves the communication skills of students, there are different methods and philosophies of teaching peer mediation.

One major distinguishing quality is the whole-school versus select group training. The whole-school approach to peer mediation training involves every student and teacher learning some conflict awareness or resolving skills. Whether the actual training source or a teacher at the school having received training from the source instructs, all students will be involved in some sort of program. Often students are then selected from each classroom to actually mediate cases.

The other philosophy is to train only the group of students who will be mediating. This approach allows for direct focus of the trainer on the students who will be handling cases. They are trained by the source or a teacher instructed by the source. This type of program generally creates effective mediators, but does not give many students the opportunity to be involved and grow.

Other variables to be considered are the length and site of the training. Direct as opposed to indirect training from the source represents yet another way to train peer mediators. Methods of evaluating also play a role in the effectiveness of a program.

The following three case studies, two from New Zealand and one from North Central College, reveal three varying ways of instruction. The advantages and disadvantages of these methods will be discussed as well as a theoretical fourth case for comparison.

Case Study #1 - Cool Schools Peer Mediation Programme
Centered in Auckland, New Zealand, the Foundation for Peace Studies has its own established peer mediation training program. This program, known as Cool Schools, began in 1991 under the guidance of Yvonne Duncan.

Ms. Duncan, the National Coordinator & Trainer for Cool Schools, was formerly a primary and secondary teacher in New Zealand. It was in this teaching capacity that she found the need for peer mediators on school playgrounds. During the mid-eighties, marbles were the rage on playgrounds, but they often caused many arguments. Duncan found a way to use conflict resolution at recess to solve the many marble disputes.

Six years later, the Cool Schools program involves over 500 schools throughout New Zealand. The program offers several different avenues for conflict management. Duncan and other Foundation staff members and volunteers instruct adult classes, teacher training sessions and in-school training sessions.

When a school wishes to take part in Cool Schools, there are several steps. First a group of 10-28 teachers is required for the Cool Schools instructor to present the training. This session costs the equivalent of $305-$350 US dollars depending on the number of teachers involved. There is an additional cost for instruction manuals, videos and T-shirts ("Brochure").

The Cool Schools trainer will spend a day with the teachers covering the benefits of mediation, communication skills, the mediation process and how to implement Cool Schools. Self-esteem, learning skills, school climate, communication at home and relating with different cultures are all benefits of the program. Communicating with "I statements" is stressed rather than labeling or accusing. A simple version of the
mediation process serves as the method of resolving disputes. Detailed suggestions are also given for putting Cool Schools into action. The manual offers ideas for publicity, board approval, staff support, recruitment and evaluation.

After the initial training with a Cool School representative, it is the responsibility of the teachers to implement the program. The skills taught by the Cool Schools trainer could be taught within a single primary classroom alone, but it is most common that a school-based program is used. In school-based mediation, “all pupils in the school will need to be aware of the mediation programme [sic], and preferably be informed about how mediation works. Only a selection of school pupils will become official mediators” (“Manual” 16).

The ‘official mediators’ of the school are selected by the teachers to be trained based on “leadership potential, respect of peers or ability to gain this respect, good verbal skills, initiative, willingness to try new things and ability to sustain a commitment to the programme [sic]. Students selected should reflect the school’s population as closely as possible with regard to race/ethnicity, gender and social grouping” (“Manual” 23). Different ages should also be well represented. Those students who are not chosen or do not choose to accept a position will be informed about what mediation does, how it works and what to do to request a mediation.

The teachers use a training manual in their classrooms or playground mediator trainings. This manual explains the many benefits of the program, how to select students for training and how to teach mediation in small lessons. It also offers sample publicity
pieces, letters to parents and ideas for implementation. Each teacher trained by Cool Schools should have a manual for the classroom.

The students choosing to be trained will learn from a teacher at their school who has completed the initial Cool Schools training. After these selected mediators undergo seven one-hour sessions of instruction plus extra practice, they will be placed on a roster. The school’s coordinator will be in charge of designing schedules so two mediators will be on duty during recesses as well as before and after school each day.

When mediators are on duty, they wear a selected mediator hat, T-shirt, button or other identifying symbol. Students having a dispute can easily detect the mediators, request mediation and find a more private place to begin. This form of mediation, ‘playground mediation,’ is visible outside many schools in New Zealand.

The ideal school-based program would allow the seven hour-long session to be taught in every classroom so all students can use and practice the skills. The teacher plays an important role in this case by modeling the communication skills and encouraging students to practice. Allowing all students to train, though not officially mediate, lets everyone in the school take ownership rather than an exclusive group (‘Manual’ 25).

Both types of school-based mediation require support from the whole school, especially the staff and principal. If teachers feel their school is not ready for commitment to this entire program, a classroom mediation approach is a first step toward school involvement (‘Manual’ 16-7).
Cool Schools encourages on-going meetings with mediators and their supervisors for discussion, evaluation and possibly additional training. Mediators do fill out an evaluation after each mediated case. Cool Schools feels it is important to keep enthusiasm among the mediators with some kind of recognition in the school, too.

Ms. Duncan’s program covers over 500 school on the north and south islands of New Zealand and a few school in Australia. Many of New Zealand’s primary schools have a student population between 60 and 100 students, ranging in age from six to 11 years.

Cool Schools’ type of one-time consultant training leaves follow-up work highly unlikely. While a large number of people in each school come into contact with the information, the material filters through several layers of lightly-trained teachers with little or no prior mediation training. As a result, the actual trainer to student ratio is extremely high.

Cool Schools’ renown in New Zealand is nationwide. Students and teachers alike either use the program or have heard positive comment about it.

Data has not been collected to describe the results of Cool Schools on disciplinary proceedings in schools. One Cool Schools participating school in West Auckland gave the following results to the Foundation from their own school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teasing</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crying</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatening</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punching</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kicking</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>-24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cool Schools has created and upheld a national image of a positive learning environment in the schools.

Case Study #2 - Conflict Resolution Programme

This method of teaching peer mediation began on the southern tip of New Zealand’s north island in 1992. Elizabeth Putnam, an California elementary teacher trained in mediation, initially received a grant to teach conflict resolution in New Zealand. She began the Conflict Resolution Programme in and around New Zealand’s capital city, Wellington. In addition to working as a peer mediation trainer, Ms. Putnam is the advisor for dispute resolution at Victoria University in Wellington.

Since the Programme’s start five years ago, Ms. Putnam has trained over 30 primary schools in the Wellington area. The students range in age from five to 11 years. Many of these primary schools have between 60 and 100 students. Ms. Putnam is beginning to train in intermediate school this year.

No longer supported by the grant, the cost for a school training ranges from $200-300 NZ. So that cost will not be an inhibitor, rates are negotiable based on ability to pay because of the schools’ limited budgets. A few schools have trained for no charge.

The first step of the Conflict Resolution Programme comes before a school agrees to a training. When a school expresses interest, Ms. Putnam evaluates the school’s readiness and commitment to the program, supplies reading material about peer mediation and gives an informational presentation to interested faculty, administrators,
parents and students. “The decision to implement training in a school should be collaborative and based on informed consensus....When 80 percent of staff declare a willingness to commit to training, there is an adequate for beginning...beginning with a well planned informative stage that educates and allows discussion so that the staff will be actively involved in the decision” makes all the difference in the program’s outcome.

When the school’s environment is ready for the program, a whole-staff training is administered. At the school, principal, staff, interested parents and Board members may take part. Teachers must be in attendance. Five hours of training covers “understanding conflict, rationale and benefits of peer mediation, principles and values, steps of mediation process, skills and roles of mediation, communication, practice with feedback, creating a safe and co-operative [sic] environment and how to implement and sustain the programme [sic] in classrooms and on the playground” (Putnam, Education 17).

All the participants get to practice and work interactively since they must model these skills for the students. “Teacher mastery of the subject is identified as essential to proper implementation in the classroom and just as students need practice, teachers too will need to practice many times before they are proficient and can incorporate new behaviours [sic] spontaneously and naturally” (Putnam, Education 7).

Once the ‘adult’ group has been trained, it is time for the students to learn the process. Ms. Putnam visits every classroom in the school to introduce conflict resolution, why it is important and how to use it. The trainer explains the simplified steps to the mediation process and how role plays are an effective way to practice. “Students need to practice the steps regularly in their own real life situations in and outside the classroom”
Activities reinforcing conflict resolution and communication skills are also used during this time. The idea of playground mediators is introduced.

Ms. Putnam spends from 20-45 minutes in each room depending on the age of the students. Younger students generally have less time due to shorter attention spans.

The Conflict Resolution Programme has a manual for instructors’ use. It covers conflict, communication skills and mediation steps. A second booklet outlines the way the Conflict Resolution Programme should work within a school, school readiness, roles of faculty, staff, administrators, parents and students, how the training will proceed and tips on implementation.

After each classroom is trained, playground peer mediators are selected for training. Ms. Putnam suggests peer and teacher selection. Class discussion of good mediator qualities followed by nominations is often successful. A mix of gender and culture is important. “Awareness of developmental stages, various levels of cultural environment and gender awareness should be taken into account. Officially designated mediators should reflect the different ‘cultures’” represented in the classroom (Putnam, Education 9).

A coordinator must be designated in each school to do administrative work, organize the scheduling, set up debriefings or follow-ups and trouble shoot when needed. Since “students need ongoing mediation training and debriefing sessions and yearlong skillbuilding lessons,” this is a crucial role.

Playground mediators practice the skills taught in each classroom. Additional role play along with feedback from the coordinator gives an opportunity for the mediators
to improve their skills. The students have a chance to learn about their role on the playground and what procedures will be involved. The trainer and coordinator help the mediators plan a school presentation to introduce the program. Identifying clothing or accessories are designated for the mediators to wear and scheduling for mediation duty occurs. The peer mediators plan a time when follow-up meetings can take place.

Follow-up involves playground mediators, the coordinator and possibly staff or the principal. Ms. Putnam could be involved in this on occasion, too. This is a time to discuss problems or get questions answered and hear about recent successes. Students can role play and get feedback during this time. “Debriefings include talking about how it is going, brainstorming common problems and role playing different solutions. Debriefing also gives the coordinator ideas on what else is needed in terms of ongoing support in the school” (Putnam, Education 15).

Ms. Putnam places great importance on the whole-school program. From her emphasis on a school’s readiness, it is evident that this program is most beneficial when it is needed and wanted by a majority of the staff. The trainer feels the whole-school approach is important because “mediation becomes part of the learning environment. It’s part of the school climate...all staff and students are trained and practice mediation skills in appropriate situations” (Putnam, Education 8). This interdisciplinary method shows mediation working in different parts of life, not just at recess.

The Conflict Resolution Programme has been successful in Wellington and its surrounding areas. Most school personnel in this radius are familiar with the program even if they have not been trained as a school. Ms. Putnam has several schools on the list
to be trained or assessed for readiness. She chooses to only train within this area so that she can stay in touch with the schools and be available for follow-up training if needed.

Case Study #3 - North Central College's Dispute Resolution Center

North Central College's Dispute Resolution Center, located in Naperville, Illinois, was established in 1993. Under the direction of Thomas Cavenagh, a business/law professor who is also an experienced mediator, the Center puts the skills of trained student mediators to use on the campus and within the community.

The students working in the Center have completed the course Conflict Resolution, which teaches the mediation process, and they are also enrolled in or have completed the Conflict Resolution Clinic course.

The Center has trained three schools: a high school, Waubonsie Valley High School in Naperville, and two middle schools in Aurora, Cowherd Middle School and the Communities In Schools Academy. The students being trained range in age from 12 to 17. Waubonsie Valley has 3,400 students enrolled, Cowherd has over 500, and the Academy has close to 40 ninth grade students. Each of these schools approached the Center asking for assistance in starting a program. The Center currently does not charge schools for this service. Schools must only supply funds for the students' manuals. For each of these schools a program was created to train a group of students to be mediators. The mediations are conducted during, before, or after school. Cases can be referred by faculty, staff, administrators, disputing students or third-party students. Once referred, the disputants may choose whether to proceed with the mediation.
In each case, a coordinator was selected by the principal from the staff. The coordinator is responsible for communication with representatives from the Center, working with the mediators to schedule cases and meetings, promoting the program and trouble shooting.

When the coordinator has been established, students are given the opportunity to apply for a mediator position. The applications ask qualitative questions that are followed up in an interview. Selections are made based on the application, interview and commitment in such a way that all students in the school are represented by gender, race and scholastic reputation.

Following the selection of mediators, an all-day training session is held to introduce and familiarize the students with conflict resolution and mediation. Student coordinators and student volunteers from the Center create and conduct the training. The Center volunteers form pairs to work with a group of four to eight students for the day's activities.

Coordinators and trainers from the Center develop a training manual for each school that is designed with the students' academic ability, age and past experience in peer mediating in mind. Each student and teacher receives a manual which highlights the training day's activities and includes worksheets, information pages and diagrams of the process. The students have this book as a reference at follow-up sessions and during a mediation.

The morning session covers basic skills that are needed to be an effective mediator. The nature of conflict, effective communication skills, and problem solving
start students thinking about conflict. The trainees have a chance to discuss and complete worksheets with their groups.

After lunch and a simulated mediation by the trainers, the students are ready to learn the steps of the mediation process. A simplified version is taught based on the levels of the students. Each student has a workbook that covers concepts given by the presenter. The groups then work together to practice mediator introductions, information sharing, discussion and agreements. The day ends with a review and practice case.

While the day ends here, the training does not. A minimum of three follow-up sessions is suggested by the Center. Follow-ups give the new mediators a chance to ask questions and clarify steps in the process. As the students begin to mediate real cases in the school, more questions may arise. This also allows for more simulated mediations followed by discussion.

Topics such as racial and ethical issues are also discussed with a brief lesson. Follow-ups help the new mediators gain confidence in their skills, allowing for a continued relationship between the students, trainers and schools. If the new mediators have a question outside of school hours, they receive home phone numbers of all the trainers to call for answers.

After the first or second follow-up, the new mediators are generally ready to start mediating in the school. As each 'real' mediation case is settled, an evaluation is completed by the mediators as well as each party. The fairness, success and satisfaction of each person involved is assessed. These results are discussed when the peer mediators meet with their coordinator.
Aside from the follow-up sessions, the coordinator may hold meetings for the student mediators. During this time, scheduling, publicity and new ideas can be discussed by the group.

Knowledge of the Center’s peer mediation training program has grown within the local school districts since the start of these programs. The Center receives calls from other area schools, but must be selective because of volunteer staff and scheduling. Since the product is personally designed for each school, the fit is tailored and the responses have all been positive.

Case Study Comparison

After viewing each case study, it is evident that the objectives of these three programs are alike though the methods differ. Since a numeric evaluation of these programs’ effectiveness is impossible due to the confidential nature of the data and the newness of programs, a qualitative comparison is in order.

The National Association for Mediation in Education (NAME) has established basic criteria for peer mediation programs in its Beginning Guidelines for the Development of the Field of Conflict Resolution in Education: School-Based Mediation Programs. The guidelines state that “it is necessary that the whole school community understand the principles being taught and commit to supporting the program. This commitment will help ensure the continuity of the program and will provide an atmosphere for creative uses of the skills and concepts involved with the program,” supporting the whole-school approach.
The guidelines set minimum time standards for training both students and adults.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Students</td>
<td>15-20 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School Students</td>
<td>12-15 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Students</td>
<td>12-16 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up Training</td>
<td>2-4 hours/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Staff (overall orientation)</td>
<td>2-4 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Coordinator-train with students</td>
<td>15-20 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-implementation training</td>
<td>5-10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>up to 30 hours</td>
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</table>

In addition to these hours, coordinators wishing to train students should have two to five days of mediation training or else have experience mediating. Potential coordinators should also spend days in training for coordinator responsibilities (NAME).

Another area NAME stresses is program evaluation. Mediators should complete a self evaluation as well as a report form for the coordinator after each mediated case. Testing before and after training plus using questionnaires for the school community and parents helps keep the program aware of its abilities and market needs (NAME).

Based on the NAME criteria and other positive characteristics of a comprehensive program, several criteria have been selected to determine which qualities of these programs best meet the needs of the school community, students and staff. The first area to consider is the number of students, schools and student ages. With the two New Zealand programs focusing mainly on younger students and the Dispute Resolution Center handling mostly older students, all three overlap in the middle age group.

There is a large variance in the number of students per school. The New Zealand schools, especially primary ones, have less than 100 students. In the Naperville area, schools having significantly over 100 are the norm. The population of 40 students at the
Academy results from the community-center nature of the institution. Waubonsie Valley’s population of 3,400 is not unusual for the area.

These physical differences show why a whole-school approach is not likely in Naperville area schools. The training resources as well as the general school atmosphere is not comparable to the schools studied in New Zealand.

Area covered plays an important role in how training is conducted. Yvonne Duncan, covering both New Zealand islands and a part of Australia, has trained over 500 schools. Elizabeth Putnam’s limit to the Wellington area and North Central’s work in the Naperville area are concentrated in one geographic location with a small volume of schools.

A second area examines the qualifications of the programs and their trainers and the time trainers spend working with the students. Credentials for the trainers in these programs are divided. The two New Zealand trainers come from an education background whereas North Central’s trainers have their studies in mediation and conflict resolution initially. Similarly, the programs from New Zealand have been in place for six and five years respectively with North Central’s outside training program not quite spanning two years.

The amount of time each trainer, the source of information, spends with students and the number of trainers instructing influences how well the students are trained. Cool Schools spends one day with staff, but students rarely have direct contact with the source. Only one trainer visits a school, so the ratio of trainers to students is extremely high.
The Conflict Resolution Programme trainer spends five hours with staff and then an average of 30 minutes per classroom for training. Again, one person is the source for the whole school, but the source does directly interact with the students, giving a lower trainer to student ratio.

The Center spends one day with the students who will be mediating plus minimally three hours of follow-up work. Since more staff is available through the Center’s volunteers, the number of trainers complies with the need. Day trainings have as many as twelve trainers and follow-ups have four to six. The ratio is lowest here in terms of trainer to student. These new mediators have as many as 25 trainers available for addressing concerns.

The third area of consideration covers mediator selection of school mediators. Each program agreed that the school mediators should represent the school’s demographics. Race, gender, culture and academic performance should be factors in selection. The ‘best students’ are not always the best mediators.

The variations occurred in the selection process itself. Cool Schools advises teachers to select the mediators, the Conflict Resolution Programme suggests teachers and students nominate candidates based on classroom-determined qualities for mediators. North Central’s programs call for student applications and interviews. All three methods do agree that mediators should voluntarily choose to participate.

The fourth criteria involves follow-up training and meetings after the initial selection and training of the mediators. Cool Schools does not have follow-up training with the source. All training comes from the staff. This program does encourage regular
meetings with the mediators and coordinators to answer questions, trouble shoot and evaluate progress.

The Conflict Resolution Programme might have a follow-up session with Ms. Putnam, but it is not guaranteed. She suggests regular meetings with the mediators and coordinator to keep up to date on scheduling, do role plays and trouble shoot.

The Center strongly recommends at least three follow-up training sessions in addition to meeting time to discuss progress, scheduling, publicity matters and evaluations of cases. The Center’s program has by far the most substantial continued relationship and training after the program’s initiation.

A fifth area looks at the mediations themselves and established means of assessment. Both New Zealand schools are at the primary level where playground mediators are heavily used. Mediators are available to students before and after school and during ‘free time.’ North Central’s program involves removing students from class or setting up a before or after school time for the mediation. These differences are age related and have proven their effectiveness at their respective levels.

Evaluations are completed following cases with Cool Schools and the Center’s programs. They allow the mediators to assess their actions and the outcomes. The Center’s evaluations are completed by each party, too. This gives an opportunity to monitor the mediators’ perceived fairness, impartiality and facilitation skills. At this point, the Conflict Resolution Programme does not have a documented cases by case evaluation system.
The final area to consider is that of money required and renown of the program. These two pieces go together in that marketing and name recognition are greatly aided by promotional funding. Cool Schools is most expensive and requires compensation before services are given. Since the program is primarily national, the costs for publicity and communication are higher. Cool Schools is nationally known beyond the education community. If you ask someone about peer mediation, they respond with ‘Cool Schools.’

The Conflict Resolution Programme has a lower pricetag, yet even that rate is negotiable. Price is not as much of an issue as schools will rarely be turned away for lack of funds. In covering a smaller area, this program needs less publicity and can rely heavily on word of mouth in the education community. It is well known and respected in Wellington among educators.

The North Central program only requests that schools cover the costs if possible for printing the training manuals. Money is not needed for publicity and the Center does not depend on training a certain number of schools per year. The program is known in the education community as several calls reach the Center requesting training based on a referral from another school.

With the goals of conflict resolution in mind, a whole-school approach to implementing these skills is ideal. All students and staff have the opportunity to learn and practice the skills. Some students can undergo further training to be school mediators.

The whole-school approach, though ideal, is not a realistic option for schools with a population over 200. As the population of the school increases, the school’s
environment as well as enthusiastic cooperation from teachers diminishes quickly. Since teachers are an integral part of the whole-school method, their interest, support and commitment are vital.

When a whole-school method cannot be implemented, other options such as only training school mediators or only teaching skill in one classroom are way to begin. These methods could be implemented in any school regardless of size as long as interest was present.

Another key factor is the trainers’ contact with the students. The ability to ask questions and know mentors are available far outweighs a program taught second-hand, inexperienced trainers try to teach skills in which even they are not confident. A continued relationship gives the same personal community-building environment that conflict resolution is trying to create.

In regard to these criteria, an ideal, yet feasible alternative method to meet the needs of an intra-school conflict resolution program follows. It combines the positive, desirable qualities of the three case studies in an attempt to offer a better option for Naperville area schools.

**Proposed Case Study #4 - District Conflict Resolution Director**

Instead of using a consultant-based training program, this method places a full-time conflict resolution director in a school district to design, implement and maintain a comprehensive conflict resolution program at the high school level. This director will be
in charge of faculty, staff, student and administrator conflict awareness in the school community. Keeping parents informed will also be a part of this position.

Training at the start of the year for faculty, staff and administrators will be the foundation for the school’s program. They will learn about the mediation program at the school, how to refer students and have the opportunity to review effective communication skills to lessen confrontation in the classroom. Since the attitude of adults in the school is influential, the acceptance and support of these role models is imperative. The faculty, staff and administrators’ demonstration of conflict resolving skills also sets a strong positive impression in the eyes of students.

After the ‘adults’ are knowledgeable about the program, it is time for students to be involved. It is the director’s responsibility to train students mediators, maintain the program and keep a record of its results.

At the start of the school year, the director will provide applications, run interviews and select candidates. Then training will follow for the selected mediators. The director will be responsible for continued training, scheduling of cases, maintaining records of cases and keeping the skills of the mediators sharp.

The director will keep close communication with the deans of the school. Reducing violence and disciplinary action is proving ground for the program and position. The dean should also be of assistance in referring students to mediation and providing disciplinary data for comparisons.

In addition to the peer mediation upkeep and staff training, the director will also be responsible for informing the student population about alternative way of resolving
conflict. Through workshops or information session during class and promotional activities, students need to be aware of the services provided and know how to take advantage of them.

A qualified candidate for the district conflict resolution director position will have secondary education state certification and a graduate degree in alternative dispute resolution/conflict resolution. Experience in mediation instruction and training would be preferred. Though this is a new combination within the education community, this position will quickly be known for its effectiveness in schools.

How do the benefits of this program outweigh the cost of an additional salary for the district? First, the area of coverage is greatly reduced. Though there might be 6,500 high school students per district, there is one area of focus located in one to three schools. Within one district, the need to determine readiness, philosophy and commitment is narrowed to each high school rather than the complicated politics of many small schools.

The age range of students is also closer. Rather than working with both middle and high school students, this program of solely high schoolers lessens the gap to 14-18 year olds.

The quality of the program is worth the extra budgetary allowance because the information and training comes directly from an educated, informed source. No one, student or staff, will be taught second-hand. Though the director to student ratio high, the director is available daily as a resource to all staff and students. The source's job is to be visible and interact within the school community as opposed to leaving when the training
is finished. This provides a better resource, more often available to more people for a longer, more consistent amount of time.

With a district conflict resolution director, schools have the opportunity to implement and benefit from an active peer mediation service. This position presents the ability to have all conflict resolution efforts under one director who is committed to the outcome. Having a director train, organize, schedule, encourage and promote a peer mediation program keeps all the elements of success headed in the same direction. An experienced, qualified mediator and teacher will set an example for everyone in the school. A constant resource who believes in the capabilities of a comprehensive mediation program within school districts is the key to a successful conflict resolving school community.

While there are many different levels of effectiveness in training students to peer mediate, the important factor is interest. Any conflict resolution program, whether it is a whole-school effort or involves only a few mediators, has potential for making significant changes for the students, school and community. Once the interest is sparked, members of the school community can commit to making their program a success by acknowledging conflict and finding positive ways to resolve it.


