The Fourth R: An Analysis of the Practices and Effects of Teaching Conflict Resolution in the Classroom

by

Ryan T. Wolland

SENIOR HONORS THESIS

Submitted In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the
College Scholars Program
North Central College

June 5, 1998

Approved: ___________________________  Date:  8 June 1998

Thesis Director Signature

Thomas Cavenagh

Approved: ___________________________  Date:  June 7, 1998

Second Reader Signature

Judith Brodhead
The Fourth R: An Analysis of the Practices and Effects of Teaching Conflict Resolution in the Classroom

Abstract

This thesis presents the results of a survey of Illinois schools regarding their use, or lack thereof, of instruction in conflict resolution techniques. The survey focuses on Illinois State Compiled Statute 5/27-23.4, which mandates that all Illinois schools provide conflict resolution and violence reduction instruction to all students in grades four through twelve. More specifically, the survey inquired about the schools' demographics (location, size, and ethnicity), awareness of the Illinois statute, current program characteristics, results of their program, and future plans regarding the statute and their program.

The data gathered suggest several items of interest. First, the findings show that there is a high percentage of schools who are currently teaching conflict resolution and violence prevention education throughout the state, regardless of school demographics. However, despite the large percentage of schools that are currently implementing these types of programs, the data also shows that there have been difficulties for some schools to obtain the funds and personnel needed to conduct the type of program that many administrators desire despite the fact that this type of education is state mandated. In addition to these findings, the data suggest that getting school-wide teacher participation and support for a conflict resolution and violence reduction program is often a difficult task for school administrators. Finally, the responses indicate that education in this area is becoming as important as “Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic” in providing young people with the skills they need to be successful after they receive their classroom education, and this is exemplified in the survey results by the majority of schools who currently do not offer this education but plan to implement a program in the near future.
Overview of Conflict Resolution and Violence Prevention Education

Violence prevention, conflict resolution, peer mediation, peaceable classrooms: These are the terms that frame a growing movement in education. In discussing these terms one must begin with a broad overview of the ideas behind each. Violence prevention connotes both a need and a program, a part of which may address conflict resolution skills. Conflict resolution refers generally to strategies that enable students to handle conflicts peacefully and cooperatively outside the traditional disciplinary procedures. Peer mediation is a specific form of conflict resolution using trained students as neutral parties in resolving disputes in voluntary private settings. A peaceable classroom or school results when the values and skills of cooperation, communication, tolerance, positive emotional expression, and conflict resolution are taught and supported throughout the culture of the school.

Across the country, conflict resolution has grown rapidly. The National Association for Mediation in Education (NAME) estimates that in 1984, the year of its founding, there were approximately 50 school-based conflict resolution programs. Eleven years later NAME estimates the number of programs at well over 5,000.¹

However, it seems as though violence and conflict in schools is rising as quickly as the programs being implemented to combat it. More often than ever it seems the nightly news contains stories of out of control youths killing their peers on the playground. Violence is now considered a serious public health problem. It accounts for about 38% of all fatal injuries, and the peak age of arrests for serious violent crimes in the United States in 18.²

---

¹ Girard, Kathryn L. “Preparing Teachers for Conflict Resolution in the Schools.” ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education, Washington D.C. Sep 95.
During the spring and summer of 1997, the National Center for Education Statistics conducted one of the largest surveys ever to examine the current situation in schools concerning incidents of violence and the steps being taken to reduce it. The survey discovered that more than half of U.S. public schools reported experiencing at least one crime incident during the 1996-97 school year, and 10% of the schools reported at least one serious violent crime during that same time period. Specifically, 37% of the schools surveyed reported from one to five crimes and about 20% reported six crimes or more while only 43% of public schools reported no incidents of crime in 1996-97.

The survey also discovered that crime and violence were more of a problem in middle and high schools than in elementary schools. The data gathered showed that just 45% of elementary schools reported one or more violent incidents compared with 74% of middle and 77% of high schools. The survey also reveled that in both 1990-91 and 1996-97, the three discipline issues most frequently rated as serious or moderate problems by principals were student tardiness, student absenteeism, and physical conflicts among students. Finally, data were also collected regarding the methods in which schools respond to this violence. These data reveal that 78% of schools have some type of formal “violence-prevention or violence reduction” program. Also, 50% of public schools with violence-prevention programs indicated that all or almost all of their students participated in these programs.³

**Overview of Conflict Resolution and Violence Prevention Education in Illinois**

The state of Illinois currently sees 1.9 million students walk through the doors of its 3,700 schools on a daily basis. While many of these students are concentrated in the Chicagoland area,

there remains a large number of these students who come from the cornfields of central and southern Illinois and face the same problems that the "big city" children face. Whereas youth violence had once been thought to be an urban public school problem and a consequence of poverty or dysfunctional families, stable suburban and rural communities are now also experiencing it as well as private schools. Every day they enter an environment which has the possibility of becoming a war zone for the playing out of their conflicts. It is with this in mind that school administrators and state governments across the country have tried to take a proactive approach in attempting to combat violence and conflict. By implementing educational programs involving the concepts explained above, superintendents, principals, teachers, counselors, and parents hope to instill in their children a sense of responsibility and maturity in handling their conflicts and disputes.

The state of Illinois has specifically attempted to implement this proactive approach through the Illinois State Compiled Statute 5/27-23.4 (see appendix III). The statute reads in part: "School districts shall provide instruction in violence reduction and conflict resolution education for grades 4 through 12 and may include such instruction in the courses of study regularly taught therein." It is this statute which is the focus of the attached survey and the data it requested. Because the statute does not require schools to adhere to this statute unless "grants of funds are made available...from private sources or from the federal government in amounts sufficient," it may be that many schools fail to implement a program and instead turn their energies elsewhere. By surveying the opinions of a random sampling of school administrators throughout the state, I hoped to discover the truth of this matter.

---

Some schools, meanwhile, have had a conflict resolution or violence prevention program long before this statute arrived. In an article appearing in the Spring 1990 issue of *School Social Work Journal*, Rich East High School in Park Forest, Illinois was featured for their "Mediation Project." This program was created to "enhance the sense of empowerment and student democracy." Another purpose was to drastically reduce the number of suspensions in the school. Although success was eventually obtained, the program was faced with the difficulties many of today's schools face when implementing a program such as this - a lack of funds and qualified personnel. By mandating that all schools implement a program, the state of Illinois is attempting to provide their students with the best tools necessary to face a world of violence and conflict.

**Objectives of Study**

The survey, although broad in its issues, focused primarily on three areas of inquiry. First, the survey requested whether or not the respondent was aware of the Illinois State Compiled Statute. Since the survey focused on this statute, it was essential to determine the awareness of this statute by school administrators (see question II-1 of appendix II). In turn, those who were aware of the statute prior to completing the survey were asked their original opinion of the survey as well as if that opinion had since changed (see questions III-3 and III-4). Based on this data, conclusions were made about the general awareness of and opinions about the Illinois statute.

Second, the survey inquired about the current implementation of conflict resolution and violence reduction programs in the school regardless of an awareness of the statute. More specifically, data was collected on the nature of their program (if any), and the results of implementing this program. The questions regarding the nature of the program focused on how the

---

program was implemented (as co-curricular or extra-curricular) and the individuals most responsible for giving the instruction. The respondents were given a choice of five candidates for leading this type of program: teachers, counselors, outside volunteers, paid consultants or trainers, and student helpers. The respondents reported program results through a percentage of change in the most likely conflict-related situations found in schools. These ranged from the number of fights and other violent incidents to the number of detentions and suspensions. These numbers allowed for an accurate analysis of each program's effect on its students.

Third, the survey investigated the difficulties surrounding the implementation of a conflict resolution and violence prevention program throughout the state. By having those respondents with current programs document their difficulties in conducting their programs and those without programs to note their troubles in attempting to create a program, data was collected on what could be done to increase the use and subsequent effectiveness of a conflict resolution and violence reduction program. Because the Illinois statute is not state funded, it would seem clear that cost issues would be at the core of implementation problems. Therefore, this was one of five possible choices given to the respondent. Also, data was gathered on the changes the school felt it needed to make to better their program. Data collected here would help indicate if the school felt comfortable with the results of their program, or if they were looking for improvement in their program.

Sample Group Description

The individuals who implement and maintain conflict resolution and violence prevention programs have varying titles and duties in their respective schools. In fact, one of the more enlightening questions on the survey was question II-4 which asked for the type of personnel each school used to implement their program (see appendix II). Because of this, the school was left with
the responsibility of having an individual aware of their own program (or lack thereof) fill out the survey. Assuming that the individual selected by each school has the most professional experience in this arena as well as the knowledge of the Illinois statute it was deemed proper that they be selected to complete the survey although it would have been possible to survey the students in each school or those parents which have children in the schools.

An attempt was made to find a demographically diverse sample on which to base generalizations about most schools that would match the demographics on which data was collected by the survey. The key demographic statistics of interest in this study were threefold. The first of these characteristics was location: rural, suburban, or urban. Although not requested in the survey, geographic location in terms of North, South, East, West, etc., was also considered when mailing out the surveys. The schools that received the survey were selected because as a whole they represented the varying demographics (school size, race, etc.) that can be found throughout the regions of the state of Illinois. This strategy was designed to provide a more complete view of the effect of conflict resolution and violence reduction training throughout the state's schools.

The second demographic category the study collected data on was the student population of each school. Because it appears that violent conflict increases with the size of the student body, data were collected to determine what effect, if any, the number of students had on the type of training offered. The third demographic category in which the study requested information was the different races of the students at the school. Since this is one of the largest differences between rural and urban schools in this state, the study gathered these data for a better analysis of the effect race has on the type and amount of training offered.

---

In total, 126 surveys were sent to schools across the state. Forty schools returned completed surveys for a response rate of 32%. Despite surveying just slightly more than 1% of the total schools in the state, some of which would not qualify because they fail to teach grades four through twelve, the author feels that the data collected came from schools, based on their reported demographics, that are demographically representative of the state as a whole and thus allow for a valid statistical analysis of the data and the conclusions which have been drawn from it.

Three of the returned surveys contained minor irregularities. Two of the respondents failed to complete section IV of the survey, but the data collected from sections I and II was included in the final results. Also, one participant marked both Rural and Urban to describe their community and wrote next to it "Consortium." The rest of their input was included, but they were not placed under a specific community description (rural, suburban, urban). Also, in some questions where only one answer was appropriate some respondents marked several answers. Because using this data would skew the final results, their data was disregarded for those questions which were improperly answered. This strategy was implemented throughout the data analysis. If a question was completed correctly, the data was used regardless of other errors the respondent may have made elsewhere.

**Survey Instrument Description**

The complete questionnaire consisted of a cover letter addressed to a "School Administrator" with the assumption that the survey could be filled out by persons with different roles, depending on the school; a two-page survey; a copy of the Illinois State Compiled Statute 5/27-23.4, and an addressed return envelope. The cover letter requested that the survey be completed honestly and anonymously and that survey results could be acquired through a request under separate cover.
The survey itself (see Appendix I) consisted of four sections covering the major areas of study for which the survey was designed: "Demographics," "Program," "Results," and "Future Plans." The questionnaire covered two one-sided pages, and asked that each respondent fill out the entire survey (sections I through IV) unless their answer to question II-2 was "No," in which case they were instructed to continue to section IV. The time estimated to complete the survey, barring extraneous comments, was under ten minutes.

Section I of the survey requested data on the demographics of the responding school, specifically, the community in which the school is located (rural, suburban, or urban), the size of the school's student population, and the racial diversity of the student population. These questions were designed to establish educational patterns based on the broad characteristics of the school.

Section II dealt with the current program, or lack thereof, implemented by the responding school. Questions 1 and 2 were to be answered by each respondent, and they were simply designed to determine whether or not a program currently exists at the school. Questions 3 through 5 were answered by only those schools that answered "yes" to question 2, indicating that they currently offered instruction in violence prevention and conflict resolution. These three questions (3-5) focused on the general characteristics of the program offered, specifically, when it is offered (co-curricular or extra-curricular), who the primary instructors are, and for whom the program is mandatory. While the choices listed for each question are not exhaustive, the most obvious responses are provided. In order to allow for other possibilities, however, each respondent was given the opportunity to mark "Other" and provide specifics for their program.

The third section dealt with the results that each program had provided and was to be completed by those respondents who had indicated current use of a violence reduction and conflict resolution program. The first question requested data on the percentage of change in five of the
most common activities related to violence and conflict in schools: the number of fights and other violent incidents, the number of disciplinary infractions, the number of detentions, the number of suspensions, and truancy. Each respondent was asked to indicate by each activity whether there had been an increase, a decrease, or no change at their school since a violence prevention or conflict resolution program had been implemented. For many schools, statistical data was unavailable, usually due to the infancy of their program. In those schools that had accumulated data, however, there was a trend towards a decrease in these activities. Question two surveyed the difficulties which each school had faced in starting and running their respective programs. Once again, a list of five choices was given for the respondents to choose from, but a choice of "Other" was also provided to allow for specific difficulties to be conveyed. Questions three and four dealt specifically with the Illinois State Compiled Statute 5/27-23.4. The questions asked for the original opinion that each respondent had formed after having first been presented with the statute, either favorable or unfavorable, along with the reasons why the respondent felt this way. Once again, a list of the most plausible reasons was presented although respondents were again given space to write in their own reasons as well. Finally, the fourth question requested data on whether or not the respondent's original opinion of the statute had since changed in order to see if the opinion of conflict resolution and violence prevention in education has changed in the recent past.

Section IV surveyed the future plans of every respondent, regardless of their having a current program or not. Question one provided five choices for their current plans regarding the statute, specifically: continue current program, implement a new program, investigate further into a program, discontinue program pending changes, or discontinue permanently. If the respondent marked either choice one or four, indicating the use of a current program, they were then directed to answer question two, which asked what they would like to change about their program. Once again
a list of choices was provided for the respondent, this time to indicate aspects of their program they would be interested in changing. The third question requested information on those things which would best assist the school in achieving the goals set by the Illinois State Compiled Statute 5/27-23.4. Three choices were provided here, including personnel, funds, and training for current personnel. If personnel was selected, each respondent was also asked to specify which type of personnel would be most helpful, that is, coordinators, instructors, or assistants. The fourth, and final, question of the section asked each respondent about their willingness to accept help from an institution of higher learning (college or university) regarding their resources, including money, program design, trainers, and internet facilities. This information was requested in order to help define the role of the college or university in ensuring that children get this type of training.

The majority of the respondents relied on the choices provided when answering the questions, although those that did take the time to specify an answer more specific to their program provided very informative alternatives to what was provided. For example, it became clear that many schools rely on the assistance of a social worker to implement their violence reduction or conflict resolution program. This alternative allowed their current staff to continue focusing on their areas of expertise, but it also appears as though these same schools also found less support from their teachers and administration.

**Findings**

Section one of the survey seeking demographic data concerning each responding school revealed the following information. Of the forty schools to respond to the questionnaire, 35% described their community as Rural, 43% as Suburban, and 20% as Urban. One respondent marked both Rural and Urban and described themselves as a “Consortium.” The data gathered about current
student populations revealed the following: 7% had fewer than 250 students, 48% had between 250 and 750 students, 28% had between 750 and 1500 students, and 17% had more than 1500 students (see following graph). Finally, the following reveal the average percentage of students of each race in the 38 responding schools (two schools did not provide racial data): Caucasian 80.4%, African-American 8.6%, Hispanic 8.5%, and Other 2.5%. When specified, “Other” most often referred to Asian and Indian students although the respondents did not differentiate between American Indian and Native Indian or American Asian and Eastern Asian. As can be seen from the percentages of respondents in the various demographic categories it can be deduced that a diverse sampling of schools was achieved.

The results of section two dealing with the individual programs at each school are as follows. With 40 responses to question one regarding an awareness of the Illinois State Compiled Statute 5/27-23.4 prior to this survey, 57% of the respondents indicated that they were aware of the statute while 43% indicated no familiarity with the statute. Regarding their own use of conflict resolution and violence prevention education, 82% indicated that they currently offered instruction in violence reduction and conflict resolution while 18% indicated otherwise. For the 33 who marked “Yes” for question two, the following are their responses on the nature of their instruction. Those respondents who have integrated a program into their current curriculum (co-curricular) account for 38% of the total. The number of schools who offer a program outside of the current
curriculum (extra-curricular) is also 38%. Also, 12% of the respondents indicated that they had had discussions on the possibilities of a set program, but had yet to develop one, and the remaining 12% indicated that their program was of another type (see following graph). For those that indicated using another program, all four of the respondents described their program as "peer mediation" only. There was one anomaly among the responses for question three where one respondent marked all four choices on the survey. In this instance, their data was disregarded, and only the 32 respondents who marked a single descriptive choice were included in the results.

Types of Conflict Resolution and Violence Prevention Programs

![Pie chart showing types of programs](image)

Question four in section two gathered the following data. Only ten of the 33 respondents marked the use of one single group for their instruction. Of these ten respondents, 6 indicated the use of teachers, 3 indicated the use of counselors, and 1 respondent marked "other" and indicated the use of a social worker and an administrator. The other 23 respondents indicated the use of multiple types of personnel in implementing their program. The results are as follows: 12 respondents indicated the use of teachers, 20 indicated the use of counselors, 3 indicated the use of
outside volunteers, 4 showed use of paid consultants or trainers, 10 implemented the help of students, and 4 respondents marked “other” with all 4 specifying social workers as their personnel.

The last question in section two requested data for which students the program was mandatory. With 33 responses, 40% indicated that their program was mandatory for all students, 27% marked that the program was not mandatory for anyone, and another 33% answered that some students were required to participate in the program while others were not. When asked to specify the criteria for determining who was required to attend, answers varied from “all freshmen enrolled in health” to situations where the parties involved in a conflict may choose peer mediation rather than an administrative solution.

Section three of the survey requested information regarding the results associated with each school’s program in the form of an increase or decrease in five major areas of behavior and discipline. All percentages in this section are based on 26 respondents. Seven of the 33 who had indicated the implementation of a program left the survey blank indicating a lack of data to provide a reliable response. Beginning with the number of fights and other violent incidents 38% indicated a decrease, 12% indicated an increase, and 50% indicated no change. For the number of disciplinary infractions 47% marked a decrease, 15% marked an increase, and 38% marked no change. Number three dealt with the amount of detentions to which 27% reported a decrease, 19% indicated an increase, and 54% said there had been no change. The fourth item for which data was requested was the number of suspensions. Here 35% reported a decrease, 23% indicated an increase, and 42% indicated no change. Finally, respondents were asked to describe the change in frequency of truancy in their school to which 8% indicated a decrease, 8% indicated an increase, and 84% reported no change in this figure (see chart on next page).
Question 2 requested data on the difficulties each school had in starting and running their program. With 33 respondents, it appeared that many of the schools have indeed faced some difficulties with 70% marking at least one of the six possible choices. Of the six choices, the problem most often faced was “Lack of teacher participation” with 13 respondents indicating as such. Also, “Lack of qualified violence reduction and conflict resolution instructors” and “Lack of funding” were well represented with 7 respondents indicating each of these difficulties. Among the difficulties specified by the 4 respondents that marked “Other” were “Lack of parental support” and “Lack of time.”

The response to question 3 which requested data on the opinion of the Illinois State Compiled Statute 5/27-23.4 reveals that there is overwhelming support for the goals it sets forth. With 35 respondents to the question, 80% indicated that they have a favorable opinion of the statute mainly because of how the statute increases student’s awareness of conflict. One respondent
expounded on this thought by writing that it “teaches life skills of conflict/dispute resolution that will be applicable to non-educational settings.” Of the remaining 20% who had an unfavorable opinion of the statute, the majority felt that the goals set by the statute were “too expensive” to accomplish and that the statute itself was “too vague.” This seems to imply a disagreement with the methods of the statute not the idea it presents because these two reasons have nothing to do with the actual purpose of the statute, namely to stop conflict and violence. If it were the case that the respondents disagreed with the principles of the statute then the data would have shown more responses indicating that the statute is unnecessary and inappropriate. However, these responses only appeared twice in the data collected. Finally, the opinions of the respondents seem to have remained constant throughout the experiences at the school. Not a single response indicated a change in opinion towards the statute.

The fourth and final section of the survey requested information on the future plans of each school regarding Illinois State Compiled Statute 5/27-23.4. From the data gathered, it appears as though most schools are content with the currently implemented program. With 35 responses to question 1, 71% indicated a plan to continue the current program while only 6% responded with a plan to implement a new program. One respondent marked “Other” and then specified by simply writing “enhance.”

Question 2, although designed for those respondents who indicated a plan to continue their current program, received 33 responses (see following graph). This question asked what aspects of their program they would like to change, if any. The responses to this question indicated that most schools are looking to improve their current program as only 43% of the respondents indicated that they would change nothing about their program. The largest area in which respondents felt a change would be helpful was “Program style and methods” as 27% of those surveyed marked this
choice. Although this choice was not explicitly defined, it is assumed that the respondents were implying that they are unhappy with the implementation of their program, whether it be the actual instruction material or the ways in which that material is presented to the students. Interestingly enough, only 6% indicated a change in personnel would be helpful despite the results of question III-2 which indicated a lack of qualified violence reduction and conflict resolution instructors existed. Also the respondents to question III-2 indicated a lack of teacher support which could be directly related to the personnel behind the conflict resolution and violence prevention programs. By changing the personnel, one might think a change in attitude towards the program may occur, but there is no data to directly support this. Finally, 18% of the respondents specified other elements of their program which they would like changed. Of those specified, answers varied from “more involvement and funds for teachers and counselors” to “include race/cultural awareness in student mediator training.”

![Desired Changes in Schools' Programs](attachment:image)

Question 3 in this section surveyed the respondents about those elements which would provide the most help in allowing the school to achieve the goals set by the statute. From the data gathered, it appears that most schools are lacking in all three of the program elements listed. With 38 responses 42% indicated a need for “personnel” including instructors, coordinators, and assistants, 50% indicated a need for “funds,” and 66% revealed that “training for current personnel” would be very helpful as well. Respondents were allowed to mark as many of the choices as they
felt answered the question. Also, 13% responded by marking “Other” with “time to fit it all into the curriculum” and “getting teachers to ‘buy’ into the concept and importance of violence reduction” as the primary needs. Finally, the last question of the survey requested data on the role of an institution of higher learning in helping schools achieve the goals established by the statute. By providing a choice of four elements which North Central College’s Dispute Resolution Center has provided for grade schools in the past, the respondents had the opportunity to mark any or all of the choices to indicate their needs. With 40 responses it appears obvious that there is definitely a role for colleges and universities in helping grade schools achieve these goals. The choices “Money” and “Trainers” were selected by 63% of the respondents, while “Program design” was chosen by 65% of the respondents. Meanwhile, 28% of the respondents indicated a desire for “Internet facilities” such as listservers and world wide web resources and one respondent marked “Other” and specified a desire for these institutions to provide “released time for those already trained.” Unfortunately, the respondent did not elaborate on this request. Only 10% of the respondents indicated no interest whatsoever.

Conclusions and Recommendations

From the results of the survey, there are a few obvious conclusions that may be made about the views schools have regarding conflict resolution and violence prevention education in the state of Illinois. The first of these observations, and a somewhat startling one at that, is the number of schools in the state that, regardless of their awareness of the Illinois State Compiled statute 5/27-23.4, have implemented a program dealing with conflict resolution and violence reduction. While it may be difficult to conclude that the results of this survey are an exact representation of the schools in the rest of the state, it seems unlikely that the data gathered from the 40 respondents to this
survey would be misleading considering the demographically representative group which responded. The reason this observation becomes somewhat startling is the stereotypical view that violence and conflict are topics that only urban and inner-city schools must deal with. However, the data show school administrators in small rural towns are no longer ignoring these issues to focus on items which they feel are of greater concern. Obviously, the reality of the situation is that no school or community is exempt from the problems which conflict resolution and violence prevention education attempt to lessen. In fact, only 2 of the 7 respondents who indicated a lack of a program at their school were from rural communities. This shows that schools are attempting to be proactive in their program rather than reactive.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from the data is the apparent lack of teacher support and participation. This result is also surprising because teachers, more than anybody else, should be the most aware of conflict and violence in the school and classroom. Although some may argue that administrators have a “bird’s-eye view” of conflict and violence, it would seem more plausible that teachers not only hear about incidents from other teachers, but they witness these acts more often as well. By not participating in a school’s attempt to educate its students about peaceful ways to handle this, they are almost ignoring its presence. Of all the difficulties in implementing a program, it is this one which is potentially the most threatening to the very existence of the program. After all, if a teacher does not support this type of education, how can students be expected to learn the ideas it presents?

Also, because this statute is not funded by the state, it would seem that many schools would be unable to implement a program due to financial constraints. And although this was the second largest cause of difficulty for schools in implementing their program (along with a lack of qualified personnel), the results do not support the belief that a lack of funding is the primary difficulty in
implementing a program. In general, the data points to a general agreement that violence reduction and conflict resolution strategies are beneficial to a student’s learning experience. However, a lack of support, both financial and moral, for the implementation of these programs seems to underlie the frustrations that were expressed in the survey.

Reviewing the data regarding future plans results in one interesting observation regarding the current program of each school. Since an overwhelming majority indicated an intent to continue their current plan, it makes sense that a large number also claimed that there is nothing about the school’s current program that needs changed. However, an overwhelming amount of these respondents (all but two) indicated that they could use assistance in the form of personnel, funds, and/or training to help their school achieve the goals set by the statute. These same individuals also indicated a definite desire for assistance from an institution of higher learning. The responses discussed here seem to contradict one another, or perhaps by “continuing their current program,” these schools appear to be saying they will use what they have until something better comes along, whatever that may be. Also, the previously mentioned topic of funding seems to become more prevalent in discussing future plans as the data indicates that it not only would be the second largest element to help schools implement a program (behind training for current personnel), but it is also the second largest item which the respondents felt would be a benefit from a college or university (behind program design). This lends credence to the earlier belief that money is a large factor, but again it fails to be the leading cause of failure.

Additionally, for any college or university that would like to assist these schools in achieving their goals, the data suggests that program design, money, and trainers are all elements for which the responding schools have a need. By providing these elements to grade schools it will not only allow colleges and universities the opportunity to enhance the education of its students (in the
way of peer mediators, etc.), but it will also provide a way in which to recruit children interested in pursuing this topic further (mediation, juvenile officers, etc.).

Finally, although a correlation between race and conflict resolution and violence prevention education was expected to be found through the results of this survey, the data indicate that there is a lack of evidence to make such a correlation. Of the four schools who had a significant number of minority students (less than 50% Caucasian), all indicated the current use of a conflict resolution and violence prevention program. However, the data regarding the respondents’ opinions of the statute were inconclusive as two had opinions which were unfavorable, one was neutral in their opinion, and just one had a favorable opinion of the statute. Their responses were indicative of the overall responses. Therefore, a more large scale survey regarding race and conflict resolution and violence prevention education would be needed to provide the data necessary for a correlation to be made.

**Implications/Significance of Findings**

The implications of this survey are at least threefold. The first implication of this research is for school administrators across the state. Because there is legislation mandating the teaching of conflict resolution and violence prevention practices, administrators will eventually find themselves in a position where providing this type of program is a necessity. Administrators now have data by which they can see the successes and failures of previous programs and use this information in implementing their own educational program. Although a study designed to gather more detailed information specific to program styles and methods would be needed for proper analysis as to the success and failures of individual programs, it seems clear from this study that programs are
susceptible teacher and student hesitancy. By attempting to avoid the problems previous programs have faced, each school can provide a smoother transition for its students.

The second implication of this survey is for the State Board of Education and the Illinois Legislature. Since each of these bodies contribute to the rules and laws under which each school operates, it is imperative that they know and understand how the goals they set for each school are or are not being met. This survey, by gathering data regarding specific results and opinions about the current goals, can provide information which the state can use in order to ensure the best education for its students. Since several schools have noted their displeasure with the cost of implementing a conflict resolution and violence reduction program, school officials can now take this into account when developing future goals for the state. In addition, the displeasure in the statute because of its burden on teachers to find time for one more thing leads credence to the belief that a program which can be seamlessly implemented into the already existing curriculum also seems to be a must for future requirements. Perhaps by seeing the need for this to occur, research can be focused in this area and more fully tested programs can be implemented. By using the data gathered here, state officials will now have a better sense of the difficulties facing school administrators in achieving the goals of the state and can take these factors into account when developing future plans.

A third implication of this survey is for conflict resolution educators at the post-secondary level. By gathering data regarding the role of an institution of higher learning in a grade school’s attempt to implement a conflict resolution and violence prevention program, these post-secondary instructors can now develop methods to assist grade schools in implementing a program suitable for their needs. In addition, this assistance can become a powerful recruiting tool for colleges and universities to attract new students. It also allows college students who are interested in furthering
their conflict resolution skills a chance to test their ideas and skills in real world situations. Although research focusing specifically on the exact needs of grade schools would be helpful to provide colleges and universities with the data necessary to implement programs suited for each school, the data collected here do, at least, indicate a desire for the post-secondary community to be involved in instructing grade school students in dealing with violence and conflict.

Questions for Further Study

As is the case in most studies, the results always lead to new questions which remain unanswered. In the case of this study, three areas of further study stand out. The first of these would be to issue the survey to individuals other than school administrators, specifically, the students in the classrooms where this education is being taught and the parents of those children who may face conflict and violence on a daily basis. By getting the views of these individuals it would provide insights that an administrator could not possibly provide. By surveying these individuals, especially students, data could be collected on the real-life implementation of what is taught in the classroom. The responses from these individuals may carry far more weight than what an administrator may see from statistics or word of mouth.

Secondly, a study designed to gather more detailed information specific to program styles and methods would be needed for proper analysis as to the success and failures of individual programs. By gathering data concerning the specifics of various programs, one may be able to deduce the reasons behind a successful program and an unsuccessful program. Additionally, programs may be more successful by tailoring them to not only the race of the students but by their age as well. The intent of this survey was to distinguish between some possible differences in schools with different racial demographics, however the data collected did not lead to any strong
beliefs in this area. Therefore, a study devoted strictly to the role of race and program methods may be quite revealing.

Finally, a study regarding the opinions of both administrators and teachers toward conflict resolution and violence prevention education as a whole would be very enlightening. The data gathered here focused strictly on Illinois State Compiled statute 5/27-23.4 and not on the concepts it discusses. By gathering information regarding the past opinions of these individuals about this type of education as well as their current opinions, one may discover trends regarding the role of the educator. It is presumed that society has increasingly changed the view of conflict and violence for children over the past few years, but some sources indicate that this change has been slow in permeating the educational systems in this country. By examining the opinions of those who control the curriculum in these schools, an interesting correlation may be discovered between the number of conflict resolution and violence prevention programs and the opinions of schools administrators and teachers alike.
Appendices
Appendix I
(Please mark one answer unless otherwise noted)

I. Demographics
1. Which of the following best describes your community?
   1) Rural  2) Suburban  3) Urban

2. What is the current student population of your school?
   1) Less than 250  2) Between 250 and 750
   3) Between 750 and 1500  4) Greater than 1500

3. What percentage of the student population at your school is each of the following?
   1) Caucasian ______  2) African-American ______
   3) Hispanic ______  4) Other - Please specify: _______________________

II. Program
1. Prior to this survey, were you aware of Illinois State Compiled statute 5/27-23.4 (enclosed)?
   1) Yes  2) No

2. Do you currently offer curricular or non-curricular instruction in violence reduction and conflict resolution?
   1) Yes  2) No (Please skip this section)

3. What is the nature of that instruction?
   1) Program integrated with current curriculum (co-curricular)
   2) Program offered outside of current curriculum (extra-curricular)
   3) Discussion of possibilities, but no set program
   4) Other - Please specify: _______________________

4. Who do you rely on primarily for the implementation of these programs?
   1) Teachers  2) Counselors  3) Outside volunteers
   4) Paid consultants/trainers  5) Student helpers
   6) Other - Please specify: _______________________

5. Is your program mandatory for
   1) All students  2) No students
   3) Some students - Please specify: _______________________

III. Results
1. Which of the following, if any, are results you have received since implementing your program? Please mark whether the change has been a Decrease, Increase, or Neither, and place the percentage by which it has changed to the left of each answer.
   __%  1) Number of fights and other violent incidents (Decrease, Increase, or Neither)
   __%  2) Number of disciplinary infractions (Decrease, Increase, or Neither)
   __%  3) Number of detentions (Decrease, Increase, or Neither)
   __%  4) Number of suspensions (Decrease, Increase, or Neither)
   __%  5) Truancy (Decrease, Increase, or Neither)
2. What difficulties have you had in starting and conducting your program? (Mark all that apply)
   1) Lack of qualified violence reduction and conflict resolution instructors
   2) Lack of funding
   3) Lack of student participation/interest
   4) Lack of teacher participation
   5) Lack of administrative participation
   6) Other - Please specify:

3. What was your original opinion of the enclosed statute?
   1) Favorable - Mark all that apply: increase student’s awareness of conflict, decrease incidents of violence, other - please specify:
   2) Disfavorable - Mark all that apply: too expensive, interferes with other courses, too vague, unnecessary for this state, inappropriate for this age, other - please specify:

4. Has that opinion since changed?
   1) Yes
   2) No

4. Future Plans
1. What are your future plans regarding this statute?
   1) Continue current program
   2) Implement new program (see question 3)
   3) Investigate further into a program (see question 3)
   4) Discontinue pending changes (see question 2)
   5) Discontinue permanently (see question 3)
   6) Other - Please specify:

2. What would you like to change about your program? (Circle all that apply)
   1) Nothing
   2) Location/time of events (if extra-curricular)
   3) Personnel
   4) Program style/methods
   5) Other - Please specify:

3. What would be the biggest help for your school in achieving the goals set by the statute?
   1) Personnel (Circle all that apply: Coordinators, Instructors, Assistants, Other)
   2) Funds
   3) Training for current personnel
   4) Other - Please specify:

4. If an institution of higher learning offered you assistance in implementing a solution for the statute for your district by providing the following, would you be interested? (Mark all that apply)
   1) Money
   2) Program design
   3) Trainers
   4) Internet facilities (listserv, etc.)
   5) Other - Please specify:

Thank you for your responses. Your answers will remain completely anonymous.
Appendix II

(Please mark one answer unless otherwise noted)

I. Demographics

1. Which of the following best describes your community?
   1) Rural    2) Suburban    3) Urban
   14 - 35.9%  17 - 43.6%  8 - 20.5%

2. What is the current student population of your school?
   1) Less than 250  3 - 7.5%
   2) Between 250 and 750  19 - 47.5%
   3) Between 750 and 1500 11 - 27.5%
   4) Greater than 1500  7 - 17.5%

3. What percentage of the student population at your school is each of the following?
   1) Caucasian: N/A
   2) African-American: N/A
   3) Hispanic: N/A
   4) Other - Please specify: N/A

II. Program

1. Prior to this survey, were you aware of Illinois State Compiled statute 5/27-23.4 (enclosed)?
   1) Yes    2) No
   23 - 57.5%  17 - 42.5%

2. Do you currently offer curricular or non-curricular instruction in violence reduction and
   conflict resolution?
   1) Yes    2) No (Please skip this section)
   33 - 82.5%  7 - 17.5%

3. What is the nature of that instruction?
   1) Program integrated with current curriculum (co-curricular) 12 - 36.4%
   2) Program offered outside of current curriculum (extra-curricular) 12 - 36.4%
   3) Discussion of possibilities, but no set program  4 - 12.1%
   4) Other - Please specify:  5 - 15.1%

4. Who do you rely on primarily for the implementation of these programs?
   1) Teachers  18 - 54.5%
   2) Counselors 23 - 69.7%
   3) Outside volunteers  3 - 9.1%
   4) Paid consultants/trainers  4 - 12.1%
   5) Student helpers 10 - 30.3%
   6) Other - Please specify:  5 - 15.1%

5. Is your program mandatory for
   1) All students  13 - 39.4%
   2) No students  9 - 27.3%
   3) Some students - Please specify:  11 - 33.3%
III. Results

1. Which of the following, if any, are results you have received since implementing your program? Please mark whether the change has been a Decrease, Increase, or Neither, and place the percentage by which it has changed to the left of each answer.

- N/A 1) Number of fights and other violent incidents (Decrease, Increase, or Neither)
- N/A 2) Number of disciplinary infractions (Decrease, Increase, or Neither)
- N/A 3) Number of detentions (Decrease, Increase, or Neither)
- N/A 4) Number of suspensions (Decrease, Increase, or Neither)
- N/A 5) Truancy (Decrease, Increase, or Neither)

2. What difficulties have you had in starting and conducting your program? (Mark all that apply)

- 1) Lack of qualified violence reduction and conflict resolution instructors 7 - 21.2%
- 2) Lack of funding 7 - 21.2%
- 3) Lack of student participation/interest 4 - 12.1%
- 4) Lack of teacher participation 13 - 39.4%
- 5) Lack of administrative participation 3 - 9.1%
- 6) Other - Please specify: 4 - 12.1%

Ten respondents (30.3%) marked none of the choices indicating they had had no difficulties with their program.

3. What was your original opinion of the enclosed statute?

- 1) Favorable - Mark all that apply: increase student’s awareness of conflict, decrease incidents of violence, other - please specify: 26 - 78.8%
- 2) Disfavorable - Mark all that apply: too expensive, interferes with other courses, too vague, unnecessary for this state, inappropriate for this age, other - please specify: 6 - 18.2%

One respondent (3%) indicated a neutral opinion stating that the statute had pros and cons.

4. Has that opinion since changed?

- 1) Yes 2) No
- 0 - 0% 32 - 97%

One respondent (3%) marked neither choice and instead wrote “somewhat.” They did not elaborate on this.

IV. Future Plans

1. What are your future plans regarding this statute?

- 1) Continue current program 2) Implement new program (see question 3)
  25 - 71.4% 2 - 5.7%
- 3) Investigate further into a program (see question 3)
  7 - 20%
- 4) Discontinue pending changes (see question 2)
  0 - 0%
- 5) Discontinue permanently (see question 3)
  0 - 0%
- 6) Other - Please specify:
  1 - 2.9% (enhance)

2. What would you like to change about your program? (Circle all that apply)

- 1) Nothing 2) Location/time of events (if extra-curricular)
  14 - 42.4% 2 - 6.1%
- 3) Personnel 4) Program style/methods
  2 - 6.1% 9 - 27.3%
- 5) Other - Please specify:
  6 - 18.1%
3. What would be the biggest help for your school in achieving the goals set by the statute?
   1) Personnel (Circle all that apply: Coordinators, Instructors, Assistants, Other) 16 - 42.1%
   2) Funds 19 - 50%
   3) Training for current personnel 25 - 65.8%
   4) Other - Please specify: 5 - 13.1%

4. If an institution of higher learning offered you assistance in implementing a solution for the statute for your district by providing the following, would you be interested? (Mark all that apply)
   1) Money 25 - 69.4%
   2) Program design 26 - 72.2%
   3) Trainers 25 - 69.4%
   4) Internet facilities (listserv, etc.) 11 - 30.6%
   5) Other - Please specify: 1 - 2.8% (Released time for those already trained)
5/27-23.4. Violence prevention and conflict resolution education

§ 27-23.4. Violence prevention and conflict resolution education. School districts shall provide instruction in violence prevention and conflict resolution education for grades 4 through 12 and may include such instruction in the courses of study regularly taught therein. School districts may give regular school credit for satisfactory completion by the student of such courses.

As used in this Section, "violence prevention and conflict resolution education" means and includes instruction in the following:

(1) The consequences of violent behavior.

(2) The causes of violent reactions to conflict.

(3) Nonviolent conflict resolution techniques.

(4) The relationship between drugs, alcohol and violence.

The State Board of Education shall prepare and make available to all school boards instructional materials that may be used as guidelines for development of a violence prevention program under this Section; provided however that each school board shall determine the appropriate curriculum for satisfying the requirements of this Section. The State Board of Education shall assist in training teachers to provide effective instruction in the violence prevention curriculum.

The State Board of Education and local school boards shall not be required to implement the provisions of this Section unless grants of funds are made available and are received after July 1, 1993 from private sources or from the federal government in amounts sufficient to enable the State Board and local school boards to meet the requirements of this Section. Any funds received by the State or a local educational agency pursuant to the federal Safe and Drug- Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994 [FN1] shall first be applied or appropriated to meet the requirements and implement the provisions of this Section.