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Peer mediation in Massachusetts public middle & high schools: Perceptions of educators

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PEER MEDIATION IN MASSACHUSETTS PUBLIC MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOLS:
PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATORS

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire

in Partial Fulfillment of

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in

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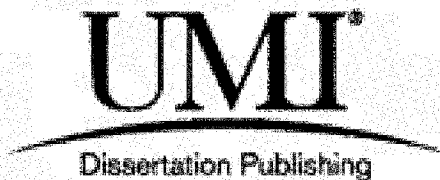
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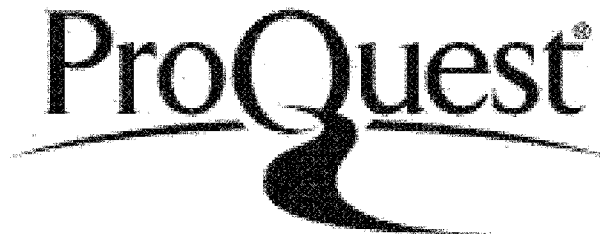


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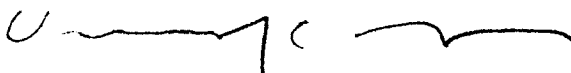
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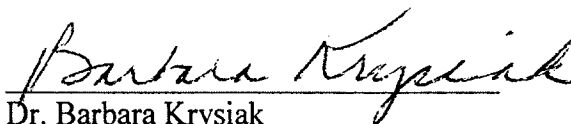
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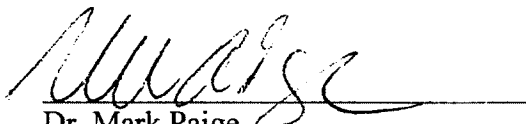
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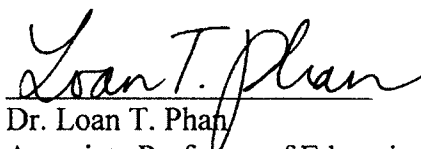
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF CHARTS.....	xii
ABSTRACT.....	xiii

	PAGE
CHAPTER ONE	
Introduction.....	1
Central research question.....	5
Importance/Significance of the Study.....	6
Conceptual/Theoretical frameworks: An introduction.....	10
Methodology.....	11
Research design.....	11
Limitations of study.....	12
CHAPTER TWO	
REVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	
Overview of conflict management and peer mediation research.....	13
Previous research: Educator perceptions of school conflict & leadership.....	13
Student conflict and violence.....	19
Conflict resolution and the location of mediation within that field.....	23
Mediation.....	24
Core values of mediation.....	25
Peer theory.....	26
The function of peer mediation.....	27
Conflict management and educators.....	31
Peer mediation limitations and criticisms.....	33
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	
Introduction.....	37
Survey population.....	37
Survey instrumentation.....	40
Instrument design.....	41
Data Collection procedures.....	42

Data Analysis.....	44
Treatment of results and use of data.....	44
Research Bias Threats.....	45

CHAPTER FOUR: THE DATA AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction.....	50
The central research question and five research sub-questions	50
Survey data analysis.....	51
Definition of terms.....	51
Survey participants.....	51
Survey Section 1: School demographic Information.....	52
Participation of schools and educators in the research survey.....	52
Survey Section 2: Student conflict and violence in your school	59
Research Sub-Question #1	59
Survey Section 3: Peer mediation program characteristics.....	70
Research Sub-Question #2.....	83
Research Sub-Question #3.....	98
Research Sub-Question #4.....	106
Survey Section VI. Program Resources.....	106
Resources and Barriers	125
Research Sub-question #5.....	126
Survey Section VI. Program Barriers	126
Summary of Findings and Conclusions	131

**CHAPTER FIVE:
STUDY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Introduction.....	142
Findings.....	144
Conclusions.....	158
Research Implications.....	164
Recommendations.....	174

REFERENCES	176
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APPENDICES

A Definition of Key Terms.....	194
B IRB Approval for Study Letter.....	201
C Survey Letter of Introduction to Principals.....	202

D	Informed Consent Information Letter (beginning of survey instrument)	203
	Survey Instrument.....	204
	Survey Debriefing Sheet (end of survey instrument)	216
E	Survey Question 12. Open-ended replies	217
	List any concerns about the possibility of student violence in your school	
F	Survey Question 29. Open-ended replies	220
	Explain your reason for the previous question. Why do you Support or Do Not Support your school's peer mediation program?	
G	Survey Question 35. Open-ended replies.....	226
	What currently available resources contribute to the success of your peer mediation program?	
H	Survey Question 36. Open-ended replies.....	230
	What barriers or obstacles stand in the way of operating the most effective peer mediation program in your school? ("Other" item)	
I	Survey Question 37. Open-ended replies	233
	What staff development topics would you find useful to better prevent or reduce student conflict and violence?	
J	Survey Question 38. Open-ended replies	236
	What resources, which are currently not available, would make your peer mediation program more successful?	
K	Survey Question 40. Open-ended replies.....	239
	What other conflict management programs in your school are effective in reducing student conflict?	
L	Survey Question 41. Open-ended replies	241
	Comments: Is there anything you would like to add that would help to understand the success or lack of success of your peer mediation program?	

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1A Participation of schools.....	53
1B Educators' participation by school level.....	53
2A Respondents by School Position.....	53
2B Respondent by School Level and School Position	54
3A Participant Gender by School Level	54
3B Participant Gender by School Position	54
4 Number of years in public education systems	56
5 School location: Rural, Suburban, or Urban.....	57
6 Student Enrollment (SE) of all schools participating in the study.....	58
7 Perceptions of Student Socioeconomic Status (SES)	59
8 My concern for maintaining a safe school environment has increased over the past five years	61
9 I am concerned about the possibility of student violence in my school	62
10 Student behaviors by School Position.....	66
11 Combined scales "Frequently" and "Sometimes" comparing High School and Middle School educators' perceptions of student behaviors at their school.....	66
12 Student behaviors by School Level.....	67
13 Student conflict outcomes by School Position.....	68
14 Student conflict outcomes at high schools and middle schools.....	69
15A Our peer mediations are facilitated by ___ (Administrators, Teachers).....	73
15B Our peer mediations are facilitated by ___ (High school, Middle school)...	74

16	Our peer mediators receive __ hours of peer mediation training.....	75
17	I have been trained in mediation or peer mediation.....	76
18	Our peer mediation program has an Advisory Committee that meets on a regular basis to plan and advocate for the program	77
19	Our program is part of a community-wide violence and bullying prevention program	78
20	Peer mediators meet regularly for case debriefing and in-service training ..	79
21	Referrals of students with conflicts to the school’s peer mediation Program.....	80
22	Our peer mediation program successfully reduces conflicts and violence ...	81
23	Peer mediation program has been evaluated as a violence prevention Strategy	82
24	I understand the concepts that support our peer mediation program	83
25	I support/do not support our Peer Mediation program (Position comparison).....	84
26	Teaching students how to mediate conflicts helps to provide a safe school climate.....	90
27	Teaching students to mediate conflicts prevents the following behaviors (school position).....	91
28	Increased positive behaviors and attitudes in peer mediation disputants (school position).....	94
29	Our peer mediation has reduced school-wide negative behaviors (school position).....	96
30	Our peer mediation program has reduced disciplinary actions such as suspension, expulsion, detention, and other disciplinary actions (school position).....	97
31	I understand the concepts that support our peer mediation program (School level).....	98
32	I support/do not support our peer mediation program	99

33	Teaching students how to mediate conflicts helps to provide a safe school climate	100
34	Teaching students to mediate conflicts prevents the following behaviors (school level).....	101
35	Increased positive behaviors and attitudes in peer mediation disputants (school level).....	103
36	Our peer mediation has reduced school-wide negative behaviors (school level).....	104
37	Our peer mediation program has reduced disciplinary actions such as suspension, expulsion, detention, and other disciplinary actions (school level).....	106
38	Do you think your school needs help determining which violence prevention programs are needed and which are the best?.....	117
39	What barriers or obstacles stand in the way of operating the most effective Peer Mediation program at your school?	127

LIST OF CHARTS

CHART	PAGE
1 Number of years I have held my current position at this school	55
2 Number of years I have worked in public education systems	56
3 My school location: rural, suburban, or urban.....	57

ABSTRACT

PEER MEDIATION IN MASSACHUSETTS PUBLIC MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOLS:

PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATORS

by

Eve I. Noss

University of New Hampshire, May, 2013

Keywords: student conflict, school violence prevention, peer mediation programs, principals' perceptions, conflict resolution, middle schools, high schools.

While many studies related to school violence and its prevention have focused on the perceptions of elementary students and counselors, there is a dearth of research studies that focus on the perceptions of administrators and teachers. This study examines Massachusetts public middle and high school principals, assistant principals, and teachers (n=135), from 30 schools, perceptions of their peer mediation program's impact on student conflicts. Comparisons between administrators and between levels of schools were conducted to provide a finer grain for the analysis.

Methodology: The method of data collection is a mixed, hybrid methodology of 41 quantitative (closed-end) and quasi-quantitative (open-ended) survey questions. The survey instrument was a 10-page, self-administered on-line questionnaire delivered through Survey Monkey, analyzed through descriptive statistics utilizing a comparison of numbers, percentages, and post hoc chi square to determine the differences between the

perceptions of administrators and teachers, and differences between their responses as educators in middle school and high school.

Findings: The findings indicate that administrators and teachers are concerned about student conflict and violence in their schools; administrators and teachers perceive that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase individual student positive behaviors, while only administrators perceive that peer mediation reduces school-wide negative behaviors; similarities and differences exist between middle and high school perceptions that peer mediation successfully reduces conflict, increases positive student behavior, and provides a safe school climate; administrators and teachers perceive there is an unequal distribution of resources that contribute to peer mediation program success; and the top three barriers to successful programs are funding for mediator training, training for faculty/staff, and personnel.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the perceptions of Massachusetts (MA) public middle and high school principals, assistant principals, and teachers regarding the effectiveness of their peer mediation programs. It considers their views of student conflict, whether or not peer mediation is working successfully to reduce conflict, and asks whether there are sufficient resources for the implementation of effective programs. The study provides comparisons on two levels: (1) between educator groups (teacher and administrator) and (2) between middle and high schools levels. The perceptions of principals, assistant principals, and teachers about student violence is important because they set the tone for their entire school in terms of how student conflicts are managed.

While many studies (Ausbrooks, 2010; Cottrell, 2002; Durbin, 2002; Harris, 2005; Noguera, 2000; Stewart, 2000; Teasdale, 2000; Tolson, McDonald, & Moriarty, 1992) related to school violence and its prevention have focused on the perceptions of students, fewer have included the perceptions of secondary school principals, assistant principals, and teachers. Principals manage schools in terms of every day functioning, meeting mandated state and federal initiatives for providing a safe school environment, and achieving academic mandates. As leaders of their schools, principals are in a position to determine the way student conflict and violence are perceived and managed, develop a safe and secure learning environment, and determine which prevention and

intervention policies will be used in their school (Clark, 2000; Culbert, 1999; Jacobson & Lombard, 1992; Pauken, 1997). It is the principal as instructional leader who impacts the total school organization by first “establishing a safe and secure learning environment and a positive, nurturing school climate” which set the tone for further academic expectations in the school as an educational community (Cotton, as cited by Covert, 2004, p. 94).

For example, one perception study of 316 middle school principals in Georgia, 62 percent of whom had experienced gang activity, indicated that school violence is on the upswing in spite of policies, activities, and collaboration. Their recommendations for effective plans to deter gang-related activity included: (1) in-school implementation of conflict resolution, peer mediation, and character education, (2) implementation of school-wide discipline with specific policies, and (3) increased collaborative involvement of parents, social agencies, and the juvenile justice system (Clark, 2000).

Assistant principals are generally responsible for overseeing and implementing many aspects that contribute to a safe learning environment, including discipline strategies, curriculum implementation, staff development, and locating the funding for special initiatives. Guanci (2002) states they are most knowledgeable about interpersonal student conflict, responsible for enforcing the schools’ discipline code, know areas of conflict, and yearly suspension percentages.

Teachers are at the frontline, expected to successfully educate students and simultaneously handle negative behaviors and attitudes that can interfere with the learning process, erupt into conflict or violence, and frighten students and teachers. In 2007, five percent of MA high school students skipped school due to feeling unsafe at

school or on their way to school at least once during the month previous to being surveyed (MA Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education and Department of Public Health, MA DESE & DPH, 2008). Also, students bring outside troubles to school with them, such as the effect of living in a home with domestic violence, substance abuse, or untreated mental disorders. Everett and Price (1997) assert underlying environmental stressors that contribute to violence such as child abuse, media violence, racism, poverty, and unemployment are beyond the reach of schools. However, teachers' observations and experiences are valuable for understanding the extent of violence that exists and the effectiveness of programs to reduce it.

Current best practices for student conflict prevention and intervention practices (Garrard & Lispey, 2007; Jones, 2004) entail a comprehensive conflict management education agenda that includes administrators, faculty, staff, students, and parents. The current trend for effective school conflict management programs is a fully integrated, whole school, collaborative conflict resolution education (CRE) program used by all members of the school system and reflected in the curriculum, rather than so-called "stand alone" programs (Batton, 2002; Ford, 2002; Jones & Kmitta, 2003). Johnson and Johnson (1995a, 1995b, 1996a, 1996b, 2004) suggest schools view conflict as part of the solution, rather than the problem, and recommend engaging all school participants in a commitment to developing a cooperative, rather than competitive environment. Citing the importance of family and community partnerships as crucial to the success of school health prevention programs, The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in *School health profiles: Characteristics of health programs among secondary schools* indicated:

Because many societal factors contribute to adolescent health, safety, and well-being, health promotion and prevention strategies should be implemented through collaborative efforts across multiple societal institutions. Partnerships among schools, families, community members, and other professionals are key elements of effective school health programs (Grunbaum, DiPietra, McManus, Hawkins, & Kann, 2005, p. 7).

Conflict management and resolution education programs provided within collaborative school systems help students, teachers, staff, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and parents develop a better understanding of prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping, bias, diversity issues, the nature of conflict, and conflict resolution skills. Although schools traditionally use disciplinary procedures to handle conflict, teaching alternative dispute resolution theory and skills to students and faculty provides an additional mechanism to prevent and de-escalate student conflicts and fights.

Mediation is one type of conflict management model used to provide on-site dispute resolution. The primary characteristic that sets this form of dispute resolution apart from all others is the involvement of the disputing parties in developing their own resolution. This method is unique, pragmatic, and valuable as it teaches disputants a different way of listening, getting past differences, and working together in a problem solving manner. Mediation is a learned life skill that has continued relevance and utilization as a student's life progresses into college, employment, and social and professional relationships. Professional and community mediation practice is utilized in any arena where disputes occur: marriage and partner relationships, elder care, divorce, child custody, adoption, housing/landlord-tenant, neighborhoods, court systems, juvenile justice systems, corporations, environmental law, and international relations.

When mediation is provided by trained students to resolve conflicts between their student peers, the process is known as *peer mediation* or *school mediation*. Although

some schools provide mediations facilitated by the principal or staff, peer mediation is an important dispute resolution option that teaches students a specific method of problem solving by deep listening, locating common ground, and crafting an agreement with someone they were just fighting with.

Defining whether or not a school has a violence problem is a matter for debate and further research. However, student conflict, harassment, bullying, and violence are clearly in the public eye today, especially following recent student suicides tied to bullying at the middle and high school levels. For example, all Massachusetts school leaders were required by the new bullying prevention and intervention law, M.G.L. c.71, §370 (as added by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010) to establish effective prevention and intervention anti-bullying programs by December 31, 2010 (Massachusetts Trial Court Law Libraries, 2010). The decision to implement any kind of conflict management system depends upon educators' knowledge about student conflict, conflict resolution education, and conflict management options. The literature review that follows contains further descriptions of conflict resolution and mediation, peer mediation, and education policy issues.

Central Research Question

The purpose of this perception study was to examine the extent to which Massachusetts middle and high school administrators and teachers are concerned about student conflict and violence in their school, and the extent to which peer mediation is viewed as a useful method of conflict management. Specifically, the research sought to answer the following question: "Do Massachusetts public middle and high school

administrators and teachers perceive think their peer mediation program is successfully working to reduce student conflicts?” This question is divided into five sub-questions:

1. Are principals, assistant principals, and teachers concerned about student violence in their schools?
2. Do principals, assistant principals, and teachers perceive that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase positive student behavior?
3. Is there a difference between middle and high school educators’ perceptions that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase positive student behavior?
4. What resources do principals, assistant principals, and teachers use to implement their peer mediation programs?
5. What barriers do principals, assistant principals, and teachers perceive exist to their peer mediation programs?

Youth violence prevention and conflict management are highly important to today’s legislators, educators, parents, and students. In fact, as of August 2010, in response to recent bullying incidents and on-going student conflicts, Massachusetts school administrators are required by the state to establish their own bullying prevention and intervention plans.

Importance/Significance of the Study

Over the past decade, concern about school conflict and violence has continued to rise on the part of students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the general public. Although the actual number of events has decreased during this time, the perception among the public is that youth violence is rising, becoming more dangerous, and increasingly pervasive (DeVoe et al., 2004). Cornell (2003) posited that excessive media attention has led to a misperception of the prevalence and likelihood of recurrence of school violence. Wood, Zalud, and Hoag (1996) pointed out over a decade ago that although youth crime has decreased since its high point in the 1970’s, the types of crimes

committed today are more serious and lethal than in the past. Noguera, referencing Pollack (1999) in Polakow (2000) reports that students, teachers, and parents have a greater fear of violent assault at school and greater concerns about safety and student discipline as compared to the previous 10 years. Further, he indicates that estimates of school violence vary according to who is reporting. For example, students are aware of fights and other violent events that may not filter up to principals and teachers, leading to serious underestimations.

Many published research studies have analyzed school conflict and the prevention and resolution of conflict, most often from the perspective of students, as previously mentioned. Additional studies discuss perceptions of teachers (Cole, 2001; Everett, & Price, 1997; Leinhardt & Willert, 2002), social workers or counselors (Astor, Behre, Favril, & Wallace, 1997; Astor, Behre, Wallace, & Favril, 1998; Stone & Isaacs, 2002), and even mothers (Kandakai, Price, Telljohann, & Wilson, 1999). Buffo (2005) studied perceptions of students, teachers, and parents concerning school safety. Humphries (1999) and Bell (2002) examined students' perspectives about their role as mediators and experiences using mediation. Nix and Hale (2007) examined the impact of adherence or deviation from mediation scripts on disputants' perceptions of their mediation experiences. Moreover, many studies on the efficacy of peer mediation are geared to the elementary school level (Bell, M.M., 2002; Bickmore, K., 2002; Ensley, C.M., 1998; Epstein, E.J.B., 1996; Ferrara, J.M., 1994; O'Donnell, H.C., 1999), yet it is at the secondary level where conflicts escalate and erupt into true violence.

For example, the CDC (2008) indicated national rates of school-associated student homicides decreased 1992-2006, followed by a period of relative stability, but

were significantly higher in secondary schools than other levels. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) survey of public school principals, school year 2007-08, indicated a higher percentage at secondary schools of both recorded *violent incidents* (94 percent of high schools, 94 percent of middle schools, and 65 percent of primary schools) and *serious violent incidents* (29 percent of high schools, 22 percent middle schools, and 13 percent of primary schools).

Violent incidents include serious violent incidents; physical attack or fight without a weapon; and threat of physical attack without a weapon. Serious violent incidents include rape or attempted rape; sexual battery other than rape; physical attack or fight with a weapon; threat of physical attack with a weapon; and robbery with or without a weapon (Roberts, Zhang, & Truman, 2010, Table 6.2, pp. 106-107)

Missing from the literature are comprehensive statewide studies that examine the perceptions of high school principals, assistant principals, and teachers who must together provide a safe school environment so as to meet educational goals. Since it is the principals and assistant principals who lead schools, it is important to know how they view peer mediation, how they respond, prevent, and control violence in schools today, and whether they think they have adequate resources for violence prevention programs that are useful in their schools.

Although principals' comments on safe school policies and useful programs abound, there are few research studies of secondary school principals' perceptions of school violence prevention and intervention. "The majority of published studies on violence and weapons in the schools have examined the perceptions of students. Few studies have examined the perceptions of school administrators, prime movers in

curriculum change, regarding violence in America's schools" (Price & Everett, 1997, p. 219).

Although several principals' perceptions studies have included small groups and national surveys (to be discussed further in this proposal), there are no known statewide studies conducted in Massachusetts, which is the focus of my research. For example, the Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution (MODR) surveyed four Boston-area high schools on principals' evaluations of their peer mediation programs. Some studies considered the views of combined administrators, including superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals, and assistant or vice principals. Few have specifically considered the perceptions (opinions, attitudes, views, thoughts, and feelings) of principals or assistant principals on their own.

Regarding peer mediation programs, a vast body of information and commentary exists, but only a small percentage are actual research studies. Much of what is written is descriptions of programs or curriculum, and enthusiastic accounts of how well they work. These descriptions are important anecdotally because they reflect a wide range of interest and usage in schools and community organizations all over the world, but many do not serve as the necessary findings to research literature that give weight to the use of peer mediation as a valid method of student conflict prevention and intervention.

Thus, it is beneficial to learn more about the perceptions of secondary school principals, assistant principals and teachers, and understand how they view the various means of student conflict management and possible resolution. Such perceptions are further discussed in the literature review of chapter two.

Conceptual/Theoretical Frameworks: An Introduction

The conceptual and theoretical frameworks that guide this study are found in the literature on conflict theory, conflict resolution and conflict management, mediation, peer theory, and peer mediation. The basic concepts will be briefly presented here, and detailed in the literature review.

Conflict is an everyday part of life that can bring about positive and negative changes to individuals, groups, and communities. School conflict is nothing new in terms of cliques, altercations in the cafeteria or schoolyard, and even gang fights, but during the past two decades, school shootings and harassment have disrupted and ended the lives of adolescents in this country and worldwide. While bullying has been a persistent problem, most recently schools have seen the emergence of cyberbullying to confound the already difficult task of providing “institutions where all children can learn and grow in safety and dignity” (Dayton, Dupre, & Blankenship, 2011, p. 33).

In response to school violence, a plethora of K-12 curriculum have been created to teach students about respect, prejudice and discrimination, conflict resolution, peace and justice, and leadership skills. Many of these programs stress peer involvement and facilitation because adolescents are often more comfortable with their peers than adults. Among the many choices of conflict resolution programs that exist, mediation is unique as a form of conflict resolution that utilizes mediation theory and skills to resolve conflicts.

Mediation practice is unique because rather than having a conflict heard by a third party and resolved for the disputants, it directly involves the disputants in resolving their conflict together with the help of a trained neutral third party (the mediators). In terms of

peer mediation, it is trained students who help their peers discuss their conflict, and try to find a resolution for it.

The Buddhist philosopher-educator Thich Nhat Hanh (1996) reminds us that for over 2,500 years monks and nuns in India, China, Vietnam, Japan, and Korea have used facilitative forms of conflict resolution such as *mediation and reconciliation* that involve disputants in resolving their own conflict. These methods directly involve disputants as problem solvers, rather than dismissing them as by-standers while others solve their problems for them. This allows disputants to work with each other, develop a clearer understanding of each other's true interests, and transform posturing and anger by working toward a mutually agreed upon resolution.

Methodology

Research Design

This research is a perception/attitude study in the form of a research survey questionnaire. It is a confidential and anonymous survey of principals, assistant principals, and teachers at 77 public middle schools and high schools that have currently operating peer mediation programs in Massachusetts (MA).

Perception studies are a form of quantitative descriptive or survey research. "Quantitative descriptive studies are carried out to obtain information about the preferences, attitudes, practices, concerns, or interests of some group of people" (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p. 11). Survey research is commonly used by education researchers to obtain specific characteristics of a group's feelings or attitudes toward policies in the form of a written questionnaire, survey, or personal interview (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000).

A descriptive research study is “research to describe existing conditions without analyzing relationships among variables” (Fraenkel & Wallen, p. 663). Descriptive statistics allow the researcher to understand perceptions and attitudes. It also provides data to look at the relative strength of responses and compare cross variables.

Limitations of Study

There are five limitations to this study. First, it is limited to public middle and high schools. It does not include schools that are not specifically categorized as middle or high schools by the DESE database, private schools, elementary schools, or universities, all of which also experience student conflict. Second, this study only includes principals, assistant principals, and teachers in middle and high schools. Most studies pertaining to conflict management education have included assorted administrators, teachers, counselors, students, and parents. Third, this study pertains specifically to Massachusetts, and while it may be of interest to education leaders in other states, it is not necessarily generalizable to them. Fourth, one known disadvantage of survey research is the possibility that respondents may not understand the questions. However, considerable care has been taken to develop and re-check the items with principals, assistant principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents who currently hold, or have held, the same positions as those being surveyed. Finally, due to the nature of survey research, people respond only if they are interested and inclined to do so, as this study is not affiliated with any official educational authority. It is possible that those who respond are people with a strong opinion, and this will be part of the analysis in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Overview of Conflict Management and Peer Mediation Research

The framework developed for this study integrates several dimensions of student conflict and violence prevention for changing conflict management in secondary schools. Key elements include the fields of conflict theory, conflict resolution education strategies, peer theory, and education leadership and policy. Overall, the framework helps generate studies for school improvement and leadership development.

Previous research: Educator Perceptions of School Conflict and Leadership

Responses to student violence and school policy initiatives since the benchmark Columbine High School shootings of 1999 have been varied – including building lockdowns, installing guards and security cameras, and developing curriculum and skill building aimed at understanding conflict and conflict management. The impact of youth violence in schools and communities has led to extensive theorizing, program and policy development related to school violence prevention, school safety, interest in creating safe school environment, staff development, and best practices conflict management research.

Frances C. Fowler (2000) suggests that school leaders identify and learn to work with the various dominant political cultures – traditional, moralistic, and individualistic- that influence school policy-making at all levels of government.

Since the Bush administration, the No Child Left Behind legislation, which includes Safe and Drug Free Schools (SDFS) funding initiatives, has required all schools to have a *violent crisis plan* in place. Federal funding for many prevention and intervention programs has been funneled through SDFS. In Massachusetts, SDFS funding has been distributed through the State Department of Education on a competitive basis (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug Free School, January 2004). Unfortunately, as student violence incidents and student suicides resulting from bullying continue, prevention and intervention programs have remained in an underfunded, confused state for several years.

However, on May 3, 2010, Massachusetts signed into law Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools, codified as M.G.L. c.71 paragraph 370 in response to recent cases of extreme bullying that resulted in suicide by several young victims. The new law took effect immediately, and requires all public and private schools to develop and adhere to a plan for prevention, intervention, and resolution of bullying allegations, to be filed with the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) by December 31, 2010. This plan provides the opportunity for schools as a community to determine what best suits their needs, and is in line with current research models of comprehensive, integrated, whole-school planning.

In August 2010, Mitchell D. Chester, the Commissioner of MA DESE, set forth the expectations and requirements of this plan to school district administrators, including a Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan as a suggested blueprint for individual school climate initiatives and needs. The plan requires consultation with a range of school administrators, personnel, law enforcement, parents or guardians,

students, and community members to “strengthen the collaborative approach that is required to build successful prevention and intervention programs. . .to ensure safe and supportive learning environments for students” (Chester, August 24, 2010, p. 1):

This [comprehensive effort] requires school leaders to be proactive in teaching students to be civil to one another and in promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. There is no single approach to developing and implementing an effective bullying prevention and intervention strategy within school climate initiatives for the diverse school districts and schools to which the law applies.... Building on existing resources that are focused on identified community needs and resources will help to ensure that bullying prevention initiatives are integrated into the school district or school programs.... Research indicates that positive behavioral health is closely aligned to academic, social, and emotional success at school, which can be a strong deterrent to bullying and harassing actions. Successful initiatives will result from a whole-school approach to address bullying (Chester, August 24, 2010, p. 1).

Chester’s approach is empowering and challenging, as educators are confronted with a rapidly growing array of program options and shrinking budgets. Superintendents, principals, teachers, counselors, parents, and students may experience conflicts among themselves in how to deal with attitudes and behaviors that form obstacles to students’ academic achievement goals. In discussing problem-solving, school consultant Dougherty (1995) observes, “The term *problem* does not necessarily imply that something is *wrong*. It may simply refer to a situation that needs attention” (p. 8).

In her study of high school administrators’ view of conflicts involving new Canadian immigrant students who had been in the country for five years or less, Robinson (2000) describes the nature of these conflicts and the way they psychologically affect students. She quotes Fris (1992) who describes why he has expanded Morton Deutsch’s definition of conflict: “he defines conflicts as incompatibles that interfere with the accomplishment of objectives, cause injury, and reduce effectiveness. I would expand the word injury to include feelings of hurt, shame, discomfort, deprivation,

inferiority, isolation, low self-esteem, and so on” (p. 4). These descriptions speak to the deep emotions that conflict can create in students, and which in turn can cause a situation to escalate into something larger and dangerous.

Effective secondary school conflict resolution strategies include proactive violence reduction and intervention programs, as well as systematic collaboration between the school and surrounding community (Crawford & Bodine, 2001). For example, Sprague, Smith, and Stieber (2000) surveyed principals on risk and protective factors affecting school safety, school safety concerns, and intervention programs. They stated the attainment of violence free schools would benefit from changing the culture of harassment and bullying. Ron Avi Astor et al. (2001) found that how the school community defines whether its schools are safe depends on perceptions of students, teachers, principals and the public, and there is little research on how to define when a school has a violence problem.

School leaders must view the school as a community. For example, school safety and violence prevention policy makers in New York realized they needed input of community members, leaders, and stakeholders when they found that nonfatal aggression occurs routinely, often unseen by administrators and school personnel (Leinhardt & Willert, 2002). Noguera (in Polakow, 2000) concurs, explaining that principals and staff should look to student perceptions for school safety cues, as they are the primary victims and perpetrators of violence in the school. Ensuring feelings of trust may foster community belonging among students; encouraging anonymous reporting of potential student violence helps students feel comfortable to report without fear of retaliation (Stone & Isaacs, 2002).

Conflict management is a leadership competency to educate employees in negotiation and depersonalizing conflict (Guttman, 2005). In a school setting, these skills enable educators to deescalate difficulties between students (and themselves) before they become a conflict. Principals need to be aware of and include common elements of successful prevention programs that help students to learn how to get along with others and manage their differences (Jenson & Howard, 2001). In addition, Price and Everett (1997) found in their national survey that principals need to be educated so they do not underreport, as they do not understand the etiology of violence, have a limited understanding of risk and protective factors, and problems related to risk factors for future violent behavior. If principals do not understand the relationship between risk and protective factors of violence and prevention programs, they may not be able to determine which types of programs are most useful, or if current programs are achieving set goals. For example, Heerboth (2000) found that principals do not know how to evaluate or assess their own violence prevention programs, or see if they are appropriate for their own population or problems. Other problems arise over assessment or evaluation tools. For example, confusion over terminology can create a discrepancy between responses to questions about status of violence prevention programs and responses to specific interventions (Price & Everett, 1997). Noguera (2000) suggests that close connections between adults and students reduces crime, similar to neighborhood watches. He cautions that administrative preoccupation with controlling student behavior has inadvertently weakened schools' ability to insure safety because prisonlike facilities do not respond to teacher and student fears.

The MetLife national survey of 1,000 teachers' perceptions provides many valuable insights about conflict and violence (Everett & Price, 1997). Teachers voiced concern about adolescent nonfatal violence that can become fatal, expressed interest in the causes of violence and successful educational interventions including non-violent conflict resolution skills, and worried about perceived threats that can keep students and teachers away from school. They indicated knowledge gaps, such as teachers relate violence to minority students, and assumptions such as schools with security guards provide adequate security coverage. Also, they demonstrated awareness of causes of urban school violence such as boredom, lack of motivation, overcrowded schools, and substance abuse. These concerns and interests help school leaders identify barriers and resources for safe schools to maximize learning.

In another example, Cole (2001) found teachers provide insights to principals for developing long range violence reduction plans. She argued that well designed conflict resolution and peer mediation programs with preventive strategies can help create peaceful learning communities that are free of violence. These comprehensive, school-based prevention programs were cited as exemplary by then-Attorney General Janet Reno and Education Secretary Richard Riley.

Finally, Leinhardt and Willert's (2002) study of stakeholders' perceptions included middle and high school personnel, community agency representatives, students, and parents. Stakeholders' views of school safety and management of school violence in 13 school districts in Niagara and Orleans counties, New York were designed to provide feedback to school leaders. Their recommendations illustrate the advantage of including a range of school community members: build a community-based support system where

school safety is a shared responsibility involving everyone, consider the needs of the *whole* student beyond academics to include programs such as peer mediation and anger management, teachers should demonstrate more caring toward students, expand the definition of school violence beyond physical assault, invest in teacher training and staff development, and invest in enhancing policies and procedures for discipline.

The contribution of this study is the statewide and school level comparison of principals', assistant principals', and teachers' perceptions regarding conflict, peer mediation, and resources and barriers to successful programs. It examines the nature of their concerns, perceived barriers, insights, and reasons for success. Additional studies contributing to student conflict prevention and resolution research, conflicting results, and critiques are further discussed in this chapter.

Student conflict and violence

The estimated cost of violence in the United States exceeds \$70 billion per year, according to a CDC study (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, 2007). Youth violence is the second leading cause of death in young people between the ages of 10 and 24 (CDC, 2010). Violence impacts children and adolescents in the United States through unintentional injuries, suicide, and homicide. In 2002, these accounted for 49 percent of all deaths among children aged 10-14, and 76 percent of deaths among adolescents aged 15-19 (Grunbaum, Di Pietra, McManus, Hawkins, & Kann, 2005, p. 6). In addition, violence can cause harm, self harm, disrupt normal stages of development, negatively impact academic achievement, or lead to conflicted relationships with family and peers. According to Winbush (1988),

violence among youth can be self-inflicted or other-inflicting, and distinguishing between the two helps to structure intervention strategies.

School conflict, violence, and victimization are critical concerns for education leaders and policy makers with implications for prevention, intervention, education, and public policy (Fitzgerald, Danielson, Saunders, & Kilpatrick, 2007; Wong, Rosemond, Stein, Langley, Kataoka, & Nadeem, 2007). For example, principals report a continuing increase in covert and overt discrimination against racial, ethnic, religious, class, and cultural minorities at the middle and high school levels (Robinson, 2000), as well as pressure to “do something” about it (Heerboth, 2000). “Our nation’s schools should be safe havens for teaching and learning, free of crime and violence. Any instance of crime or violence at school not only affects the individuals involved but also may disrupt the educational process and affect bystanders, the school itself, and the surrounding community” (Henry, 2000 cited in Dinkes, Cataldi, & Lin-Kelly, 2007, p. iii).

Behaviors that contribute to student violence and unintended injuries are periodically measured by student self-reporting through the national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) of grades 9-12 (CDC, 2010). During the 12 months before the September 2008-December 2009 survey, 31.5 percent of students had been in a physical fight; 11.1 percent had been in a physical fight on school property; 17.5 percent carried a weapon on at least one day; 7.7 percent had been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property; 19.9 percent had been bullied on school property; 9.8 percent had experienced dating violence (hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend); 7.4 percent had ever been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to; 26.1 percent experienced sad or hopeless feelings

almost every day for two or more weeks in a row causing them to stop usual activities; 13.8 percent had seriously considered attempting suicide, made a suicide plan, attempted suicide, or had a suicide attempt treated by a doctor or nurse; 6.3 percent attempted suicide; and 5.0 percent had not gone to school because they felt unsafe on the way to or at school (pp. 5-10).

Youth victimization has been linked to risky behaviors, delinquency, and school problems. The Prevention Researcher (February, 2007) found that one in three youth report being victimized by direct or indirect exposure to violence or neglect. Such violence occurs in schools, home, or community. Perpetrators are often known to the victim, although stranger victimization through the Internet has become a recent concern. The consequences of bullying, according to educational research studies cited by Whitted and Dupper (2005) include: victims may have long-term, emotional, academic, and behavioral problems; children may have lower self-esteem and a range of emotional disorders including anxiety, depression, and loneliness; students may dislike school, cut classes, or drop out; students may avoid public places in school so as to avoid the bully. The *fear* of being bullied causes approximately 160,000 American students to stay home from school each day, according to Vail (as cited in Whitted & Dupper). In 2007, 7.2 percent of students ages 12-18 avoided school activity or places in school because of fear of attack or harm (Roberts et al., NCES, 2010).

Most bullying occurs at school. NCES (Roberts et al., 2010) indicates about 32 percent of students ages 12-18 in 2007 reported having been bullied at school and 4 percent reported having been cyber-bullied. Of those who reported being bullied, 79

percent said they were bullied inside of school, 23 percent on school grounds, 8 percent on the school bus, and 4 percent elsewhere (p. 42).

Electronic aggression, perpetrated through social media technology, seems to be a growing health problem (David-Ferdon & Hertz, 2009). “In 2000, 6 percent of internet users ages 10-17 said they had been the victim of ‘on-line harassment,’ which was defined as threats or other offensive behavior [not sexual solicitation] sent or posted on-line. By 2005, the percentage had increased by 50 percent, to 9 percent” (Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007, in David-Ferson & Hertz, 2009, p. 4).

A 2008 Massachusetts survey of 126 secondary schools on *violence-related behaviors and experiences at school* by over 3,000 public high school students and over 2,000 public middle school students found a significant decrease from 2001 to 2007 in those threatened or injured with a weapon. However, the survey also reported that in 2007, 22 percent of the high school students surveyed reported being bullied, 14 percent reported bullying or pushing around other students in the past year, and 21 percent had personal property stolen or deliberately damaged. *Bullied* is defined as repeatedly teased, threatened, hit, kicked, shunned, or excluded by another student or group of students. Middle school students reported initiating fights (13%), bullying (14%), attempting suicide, and engaging in self-harming behaviors (MA DESE and MA DPH, 2008).

These examples of youth victimizing their peers, in school or through social media, are an indication that youth conflict is not going away, and can be a hidden, unreported problem. Prothrow-Stith (2007) asserts that youth who use violence, aggression, and anger as a way of life require intervention with prevention and education through the combined efforts of educators, policy-makers, and parents. Intervention and

prevention can be used with traditional methods of discipline, and the use of dialogue, the process of listening to understand, can help adults and students within schools to work collaboratively to address rising conflicts (Killion, 2005). A study conducted by McWilliam (2010) explored the effects of school peer mediation as an alternative way to manage bullying and other destructive conflict that impact the well-being of the community, through the perceptions of students, .

Conflict resolution and the location of mediation within that field

Conflict resolution is a general term of *alternate dispute resolution* that covers a broad spectrum of processes located in court services, educational curriculum, and skill building for resolving or managing disputes. Many programs have been developed under the umbrella of conflict resolution, including anti-discrimination and peaceable community initiatives.

Secondary school educators have long recognized the usefulness of conflict resolution programs to prevent violence escalation (Bartsch & Cheurprakobkit, 2002; Burrell, Zirbel, & Allen, 2003; Gewertz, 2003; Pascopella, 2004). There are many opinions as to how best intervene when gossip, fights, harassment, or threats interfere with a student's ability to attend to schooling. A multitude of programs now exist, starting in pre-school and extending to graduate school that attempt to prevent or manage poor treatment between students: building self-esteem, teaching tolerance, dealing with bullies, peer leadership/counseling, conflict resolution, and peer mediation.

Four school-based conflict resolution strategies that can be replicated in other settings are Peer mediation, Process curriculum, Peaceable classrooms, and Peaceable schools. The Peaceable schools model incorporates the elements of the other three

approaches. The Peacemakers Program, established by Johnson and Johnson (2004) and the subject of 16 studies in two countries, trains the entire student body in negotiation and mediation, and is integrated with the curriculum. Other schools use the cadre model, which trains a group of students in conflict resolution skills. In each of these approaches, conflict resolution education is viewed as giving youth nonviolent tools to deal with daily conflicts that can lead to self-destructive and violent behaviors. Each local school district decides how conflict resolution education will be integrated into its overall educational environment. As youth learn to recognize and constructively address what takes place *before* conflict or differences that *lead to* violence, the incidence and intensity of that situation will diminish (Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, 1996).

Mediation

Mediation is one of seven forms of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) identified in the Uniform Rules on Dispute Resolution provided by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court and Trial Court (2003), along with conciliation, arbitration, case evaluation, mini-trial, summary jury trial, and dispute intervention: “Mediation is a voluntary, confidential process in which a neutral person (a mediator) assists disputing parties in identifying and discussing issues of concern, exploring various solutions and developing a settlement that is mutually acceptable to them” (p. 6).

The primary characteristic that sets mediation apart from other ADR processes is the involvement of the disputing parties in developing their own resolution. This method is unique, pragmatic, and valuable as it teaches disputants a different way of listening, getting past differences, and working together in a problem solving manner.

Managing disputes through mediation is widely recognized in international relations, public health, environmental law, corporate, court systems, juvenile justice, corporate, housing/landlord-tenant, neighborhoods, marriage, divorce, child custody, parent-child, elder care, and adoptions. “Mediation works so well because it is forward-looking, not backward-looking. The law looks back to find who was right and who was wrong; mediation looks ahead to find a solution both parties can live with. In law, the court uses its power to dictate a decision; in mediation, you empower yourself to find your own solution” (Lovenheim, 1989, p. 14).

Core values of mediation

The principles of mediation practice are voluntary participation, impartiality, informed consent, confidentiality, empowerment, self-determination, and a safe environment (North Shore Community Mediation Center, NSCMC). Mediators must receive specific training that includes theory and role play practice. Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court adult mediation training standards stipulate a 34 hour minimum, and most community mediation programs require an additional 25 hours of apprenticeship in district court. Peer mediation training standards vary, but this author uses a 20 hour program created by the MA Attorney General Office, comprised of theory and extensive role-plays based on actual cases. Interpersonal skills are also taught, such as earning trust, setting parties at ease, reducing defensive behavior, building trust between parties, empathetic listening, responding productively to emotions, and building the will to settle (Davis, 1986).

According to the Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 233, Section 23C, *Confidentiality* is the principle which affirms that all information received from the parties will be kept with the mediation program. Any exceptions to confidentiality [for example, intent to harm or self-harm] are made clear to the parties prior to receiving their consent to mediate. Mediation *empowers* parties by giving them a voice to tell their story and control the outcome of the dispute. *Self-determination* is “the principle which recognizes that parties to a dispute have the ability and the right to define their issues, needs, and solutions and to determine the outcome of the mediation process without advice or suggestions from the mediators and mediation program staff. The parties have the final say as to the terms of any agreement reached in mediation” (NSCMC Training Handbook, 2012, p. 2).

Mediators are evaluated by mentors, co-mediators, and self-evaluations. They hone critical thinking skills such as defining and clarifying the problem, gathering information to find common ground, helping parties establish reasonable alternatives, testing possible conclusions, and facilitating agreements.

Peer Theory

Peer-led programs include conflict resolution, mediation, prevention education, leadership, tutoring, academic coaching, mentoring, counseling, and personal support. The Concluding Report of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1996) cited peer-mediated counseling and peer tutoring as important ways of turning risks into opportunities.

Peer-led programs are nationally recognized as one of the most cost-effective and comprehensive approaches in increasing school attendance and academic performance, preventing alcohol and other drug abuse, and reducing campus violence. Their benefits also include generating appreciation for racial and ethnic diversity, improving overall student health and self-esteem and creating a healthy, safe, and productive school environment (Forouzesh, Grant, & Donnelly, 2001, pp. 1-2). Peer programs are also empowering to students as they encourage the ability to solve problems without adult assistance (Myrick, 2002).

The function of peer mediation

Mediation in school settings is known as student or *peer mediation*. Conflicts that can be peer mediated include misunderstandings between students, teasing or name-calling, relationship arguments, accusations of theft or destruction of property, rumors and/or fights between groups, and bullying. North Shore Community Mediation Center in Beverly, MA defines peer mediation as “a voluntary process in which student mediators assist other students involved in conflict to resolve disputes. Students are effective mediators because they understand their peers and make problem-solving more natural. Students learn ‘real world’ skills such as active listening, communicated feelings, building trust, and brainstorming solutions” (Peer Mediation Handbook, 2008, p. 2).

As a life skill, peer mediation has continued relevance for students as they progress through school, college, employment, social and professional relationships. As a source of prevention and intervention, peer mediation can be used in conjunction with traditional discipline to resolve conflicts, uphold school behavior policy, and prevent a

reoccurrence of the conflict. NSCMC has found that trained student mediators reduce conflict and potential violence by helping peers tell their side of the story, listen and understand the other side, reach for areas of common ground and possible resolution, and write their own agreement.

Jones (2004) asserts there is a strong connection between conflict resolution programs (CRE), violence prevention, and positive school climate to maximize teaching and learning. It is also a strong component to the development of safe and drug-free schools (p. 233, citing Heerboth, 2000; King, Wagner, & Hedrick, 2001; Oppitz, 2003). She describes CRE as a series of tiers, beginning with early elementary age curriculum such as Second Step which focuses on social and emotional competencies, emotional awareness, empathy and perspective taking, strategic expression, and cultural sensitivity (p. 237, citing Jones & Compton, 2003); followed by the integration of conflict education into school curriculum; content-specific curricula such as negotiation skills training; and targeting programs to address specific problems such as bullying.

Peer mediation is preventive and interventive, and the oldest, most common violence prevention program used by schools (Cohen, 2003). It teaches youth social skills that “reduce the probability of the initial onset of problem. Such learnings are of prime importance and longest lived in terms of a continuum of prevention which also includes secondary and tertiary approaches” (Begun & Huml, 1998, p. 2). Peer mediation on the high school level reduces fighting, suspensions, and expulsions (Prothrow-Stith, 1991), and maximizes the ability of peers to reach out to and lead peers sometimes better than adults can, but only with the willing support of administrators and faculty (Cremin, 2002).

One frequently discussed problem concerning peer mediation and other violence prevention/conflict resolution education programs is they should not exist in a school as a “stand alone” program without a range of collaborative services to address all of the emotional, cognitive, and social skills needed by students as successful learners.

Batton (2002) presents a model for institutionalizing conflict resolution education in Ohio utilizing a comprehensive approach with a focus on building in-school capacity for program development and implementation, as well as program evaluation. Essential to this effort is adult professional development to integrate CRE as a life skill into curriculum, mission statements, disciplinary procedures, and team building efforts (p. 480). Batton, citing Maire Dugan’s (1996) *A Nested Theory of Conflict*, views peer mediation as narrow, issue-specific, and limited to student-to-student relational conflicts, rather than broader and structural-specific conflict, which is a holistic, comprehensive approach reflecting wider and deeper community-base conflicts. In her view, peer mediation is a small piece of a comprehensive conflict resolution education program.

Oregon’s School Conflict Resolution Information Project (SCRIP) program (Ford, 2002) encompasses many forms of CRE depending upon the community: training for staff, parents, police departments; curriculum inclusion such as middle school health classes; peer mediation; videos; and after school programs. Early findings include community involvement, sustained programs, and reduced juvenile crime.

Thus, effective secondary school conflict resolution strategies include proactive violence reduction and intervention programs, as well as systematic collaboration between the school and surrounding community (Crawford & Bodine, 2001). A collaborative school-based CRE is suggested by Lieber (1994), who contends the best

approach to conflict resolution is comprehensive, student centered, and classroom oriented with three levels of instruction: classroom management, direct instruction and practice of conflict resolution skills in the classroom, and curriculum infusion that includes the entire school community (p. 28).

Several strategies to improve school climate were identified by the Massachusetts Attorney General Office (MA OAG) Community Safety Initiative's Schools & Youth Component, and the statewide grant, Improving School Climate Through Violence Prevention, Peer Mediation, and Community Intervention :

- Addressing school policies around bullying, acceptance of differences, and prevention of violence.
- Changing overall school climate through campus-and-community wide education.
- Setting up comprehensive bully prevention programs, including empowering the "bystander"
- Resolving conflict through peer mediation (MA OAG, 2008b).

Between 1989 and 2009, the Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General's Student Resolution Experts (SCORE) program, trained over 5,000 peer mediators who conducted over 25,000 mediations with a 97% success rate. This program views peer mediation as able to empower students to resolve verbal conflicts and fights without violence and with respect:

An effective peer mediation program can be a valuable tool for schools in their effort to minimize conflicts and support positive behavior in students. Peer mediation programs benefit both the students who use the mediation process to resolve their conflicts and the students who participate in the program as peer mediators. These programs can sensitize, educate, and empower students to deal effectively with the difficulties and conflicts that are a natural part of life (MA OAG, 2008c, p. 5).

Successful elements for peer mediation include: (1) a program that has the competency to mediate even the most challenging disputes (e.g., racially motivated or

multi-party disputes); (2) with the capacity to mediate a high volume of conflicts; (3) that is trusted and used by all types of students and staff within the school; (4) that is fully integrated into the school community; and (5) that adheres to principles of ethical mediation practice (p. 7).

Common goals for successful peer mediation programs, according to the Alliance for Conflict Transformation (as cited in MA OAG, 2008c), are based on best practices, respond to the individual needs of diverse communities, decrease violence prevention and discipline problems in schools, improve attitudes and behaviors regarding conflict, improve school climate, and improve academic achievement.

Kate Malek of the Conflict Research Consortium of University of Colorado asserts that programs in K-12 schools and colleges provide student mediators who help their peers resolve disputes; serve as a consensus process to resolve difficult school policy decisions; and involve students, teachers, administrators, and parents in school conflict resolution.

Conflict management and educators

The role of administrators and teachers in school violence prevention and intervention cannot be overestimated. It is vital to include teachers in any effort to promote coordinated change toward school conflict management (Girard & Koch, 1996). “For many schools the addition of social skills and prevention programming may seem to be another ‘drain’ on the teacher’s day...[yet they] are the first line of defense in our nation’s attempt to curb violence” (Begun & Huml, 2008, p. 2). Administrative support is absolutely vital to overcome attitudinal and structural resistance (Cohen, 1995), and

necessary for student participation, educating staff and parents, financial support, funding for training, the coordinator's salary, and dedicated space (Guanci, 2002).

Staff development is needed for comprehensive conflict resolution (CR) education, although it is common to leave faculty and staff out of the prevention effort. Teachers have an extensive impact on school climate by participating in and supporting prevention efforts and setting expectations for students. Several problems with administrators and teachers can occur if they are not included at the outset, as they may not feel there is enough time in their workday, or do not know enough to incorporate CRE information. Girard & Koch (1996) found conflict resolution curricula mainly geared to classrooms, with little available for pre-service or in-service professional development that would prepare teachers, counselors, administrators, psychologists, and policy-makers to understand conflict resolution concepts and techniques. They developed a series of modules with several college and university schools of education: the nature of conflict, concepts and skills of conflict resolution (listening, speaking skills, managing anger), alternative dispute resolution (ADR) including negotiation, mediation, and consensus building, and applying CR in education and the classroom.

Administrators and teachers have a need for conflict management skills to deal with others. Foley's study (2001) found that secondary school principals reported a need for professional development in conflict resolution and development of school-community partnerships. Gmelch & Gates (1998) indicated that conflict-mediating stress was one source of administrator occupational stress and burnout, "arising from the administrator handling conflicts within the school such as trying to resolve differences

between and among personnel, resolving parent and school conflicts, and handling student discipline problems” (p. 147).

Peer mediation limitations and criticisms

Limitations and criticisms of peer mediation focus on individual capacity, quality, and general usefulness. Many charges are now considered out of date, or not conforming to research, nevertheless they are important to consider because they have driven additional studies. For example, Webster (1993) argued that violence prevention programs exist primarily so politicians and school officials can say they have one, do not provide a long term impact on violent behavior, nor decrease victimization risks. Lieber (1994) held “While third party mediation is an important tool for resolving disputes among students, it does not necessarily develop students’ abilities to resolve interpersonal differences on their own” (p. 28). Gottfredson (1997) felt peer mediation was ineffective. The Office of the Surgeon General in 2001 denounced conflict resolution education. Tricia Jones (2002), longtime former editor of Conflict Resolution Quarterly and researcher of CRE and mediation, refuted this criticism as inaccurate, based on very old data, and misapplied. She pointed out that in 2001, the DOE Safe and Drug-Free list of exemplary and promising programs included CR education. Englander (2005) argues against mediating with bullies due to power imbalance between the bully and the victim, and the tendency of bullies to charm and lie.

Additional general criticisms fall into three categories: adolescents mediating their peers can be harmful, it is unreasonable to assume that mediation can be taught to

all students, and it is naïve to assume that mediation can replace discipline for students who have committed infractions.

One response to the fears and concerns underlying these criticisms is offered by the prolific team of Johnson & Johnson (1995b) as a lengthy “what not to do list” in their ironic but helpful “Why don’t violence prevention programs work?” They suggest that educators and practitioners *do not do* the following: use materials that do not focus on program implementation, confuse neighborhood violence prevention with schools, and hold unrealistic expectations about the strength of social forces that impel children toward violence (pp. 63-64).

While the field of mediation is centuries old, and peer mediation has been in use for several decades, peer mediation *research* is still young. For years, many peer mediation programs that considered themselves successful did not conduct evaluation research beyond a description of the program accompanied by an account of how well it worked. Tolson, McDonald, and Moriarty (1992) cite many studies that claimed effectiveness on school climate, mediator self-esteem, resolutions of disputes, decrease in suspension rates, and percent of mediated agreements, but several lacked data or definition of terms, and few measured the effectiveness of peer mediation on the disputants. Referencing Lambert, Shapiro, and Bergin (1986), they caution against unethical mediation practices that can cause client harm or deterioration. Another problem is artificially increased mediation cases due to student “attention” by peer mediators who are socially popular. On the other hand, Humphries (1999) contends that negative popularity status plays a role for mediators, and coordinators can increase

unpopular student status by publicly recognizing contributions to the program or by pairing mediator partners more carefully.

The “apparent” effectiveness of many studies peer mediation is discussed by Johnson & Johnson (1996a), urging programs to keep better records and evaluate properly (Schrumpf as cited in Thousand et al., 1994). Recent research of middle and high school programs present stronger cases of success: Students can be effectively taught to manage peer conflicts, these skills are long-lasting, and without training the natural inclination to manage conflict is destructive (Johnson & Johnson, 2004); a meta-analysis of 43 studies found peer mediation as effective in increasing student conflict knowledge and skills, improving school climate, and reducing negative behavior (Burrell, Zirbel, & Allen, 2003); peer mediators modeling transmitted knowledge, attitudes, and skills that resulted in positive behavior change among disputants (Harris, 2005); peer mediation led to changes in student self-esteem and perceptions of conflict (Durbin, 2002); peer mediation led to changes in the way discipline was viewed as problem solving and punishment (Breunlin, Cimmarusti, Rocco, Bryant-Edwards, & Hetherinton, 2002); peer mediation teams had a significant impact on violent incidents in middle schools but not high schools (Teasdale, 2000); a middle school peer mediation program reduced suspension rates from 18 percent to four percent (Guanci, 2002); another middle school peer mediation program produced a significant increase in knowledge of problem solving, conflict resolution skills, social skills, and interpersonal relations (Stewart, 2000).

Peer mediation can empower the school community by providing a conflict resolution model that changes expectations and behaviors. “[I]f peer mediation is used as

a core component of school wide education for behavior change, it can lead to empowerment of the entire school community and the perception that nonviolent approaches to conflict are the norm, instead of the exception” (Chittooran & Hoenig, 2005, p. 12).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This perception study examined the extent to which MA public middle and high school principals, assistant principals, and teachers are concerned about student conflict in their school, the effectiveness of their peer mediation program to prevent and manage conflict, and the availability of sufficient resources for effective conflict management. It provided comparisons on two levels: (1) between administrators and teachers and (2) between middle and high schools.

The Central Research Question was: “Do Massachusetts public middle and high school administrators and teachers perceive their peer mediation program is successfully working to reduce student conflicts?”

This question was divided into five sub-questions:

1. Are principals, assistant principals, and teachers concerned about student violence in their schools?
2. Do principals, assistant principals, and teachers perceive that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase positive student behavior?
3. Is there a difference between middle and high school educators’ perceptions that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase positive student behavior?
4. What resources do principals, assistant principals, and teachers use to implement their peer mediation programs?
5. What barriers do principals, assistant principals, and teachers perceive exist to their peer mediation programs?

Survey Population

The target population is principals, assistant principals, and teachers from public middle/junior high schools and secondary schools in Massachusetts (MA) designated by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) as middle/junior

and high schools, which have functioning peer mediation programs. This list of public schools includes regular, regional, charter, vocational, technical, and agricultural schools. There were two different database lists provided by the DESE, one that categorized schools as “elementary, middle, and secondary” and the other, which indicated grades at each school. Both lists were used to reach all schools appropriate for this study. The only schools not contacted were a small number of K-6 or K-12 schools that did not constitute middle or high schools, which are the focus of this study.

Middle and high schools were personally contacted by email and telephone through two DESE database lists of principals, executive directors of all statewide Community Mediation Centers, peer mediation educators, and individual school websites to determine whether or not they have an existing peer mediation program, and if so, how long has it been operating. The effort to locate schools with peer mediation programs yielded six categories: schools that have a program, used to have a program, are just starting a program, would like a program, are just ending a program, and have no program.

The original survey population sample for this study was principals, assistant principals, and teachers from a total of 77 middle and high schools that responded “yes” to having a currently operating peer mediation program. However, when the invitations to participate with links to the survey instrument were emailed several times to these 77 schools, 30 schools actually responded to say they would participate in this research study. Of the 30 schools, there are 22 high schools and 8 middle schools. There are 135 participants, including 99 from high schools, 35 from middle schools, and one who chose not to identify their school level. The 135 participants include 16 principals, nine

assistant principals, 103 teachers, and seven who chose not to identify their school position. The 135 survey respondents have peer mediation programs in their schools that have been functioning for two to 25 years.

Survey respondents were asked demographic information about their school level, position or job title, gender, number of years in current position, number of years working in public education systems, school location, total number of student enrollment, student gender percentages, and student socioeconomic status percentages. They were also asked about their perceptions of conflict and violence in their school, concerns about student violence in their school, peer mediation program characteristics, perceptions of peer mediation for conflict management, program resources, and barriers/obstacles to successful peer mediation programs.

Included in the many studies on school conflict and the prevention of conflict are three significant studies concerning counselors or social workers (Astor et al., 1997; Astor et al., 1998; Stone & Isaacs, 2002). Because the focus of this study is on education leadership and policy, and counselors' views have been examined in the past, the dearth of research studies on school administrators made it important to focus on the perceptions of school principals and assistant principals, who set and carry out education policy, and the perceptions of teachers who are in the classrooms with students throughout the day often confronting the student-to-student issues that lead to peer mediation, school counselors were delimited from the study. The research showed that administrators and teachers were missing voices. Although school counselors, adjustment counselors, and social workers were not within the scope of this study, a future study on their views of

school conflict could be a valuable contribution to the field of school violence prevention research.

Survey Instrumentation

This author has made a concerted effort to locate a known, tested survey questionnaire that pertains to this study. After much searching, I could not locate an instrument specifically designed for this study. In fact, several practitioners who offer conflict resolution and peer mediation training to schools, as well as two state agencies (MA Office of Dispute Resolution and MA Department of Public Health) that are concerned with student violence prevention asked to see the results when they are complete. “Because descriptive studies often seek information that is not already available, the development of an appropriate instrument is usually needed. Of course if there is a valid and reliable instrument available, it can be used, but using an instrument just “because it is there” is not a good idea. If you want the appropriate answers, you have to ask the appropriate questions” (Gay & Airasian, p. 277).

Therefore, an instrument has been custom designed for this project. It is based on researching other similar studies; professional experience and coursework by this author; as well as preliminary meetings and conversations with secondary school principals, assistant principals, superintendents, and related organizations to ascertain concerns, thoughts, comments, interests, and perceptions on the topics of student violence prevention and conflict management. The instrument has been shown to these people and re-worked numerous times to reflect their input. The survey instrument is a nine page, self-administered, on-line questionnaire with six parts. It contains objective, subjective,

close-ended questions, open-ended questions, and statements as check-off items on a Likert scale.

Instrument Design

The survey instrument provides demographic information and multiple items measuring perceptions of school conflict, conflict resolution education, peer mediation, program resources, and barriers to operating effective programs. The survey questionnaire instrument is in Appendix E of this dissertation.

This is a hybrid survey that encompassed both quantitative (closed-ended) and quasi-quantitative (open-ended) questions. Each survey question is keyed to a specific research question. The concern for construct validity was addressed by grounding all questions on the survey instrument in the literature of the field.

Part I contains school demographic information (Price & Everett, 1997; Sprague, Smith, & Stieger, 2002).

Part II pertains to Research Question #1 regarding principals', assistant principals', and teachers' concerns about student conflict and violence in their schools (Heerboth, 2001; Jenson & Howard, 2001; National School Boards Association Study in Everett & Price, 1997; Noguera in Polakow, 2000 citing Glassner, 1999 & Pollack, 1999; Everett & Price, 1997; Robinson, 2000; Sprague, Smith, & Stieber, 2002):

Part III pertains to peer mediation program characteristics. Data collected from this section provides a comparison between different programs (Astor, Behre, Favril, & Wallace, 1997; Burrell & Vogl, 1990; Burrell, Zirbel, & Allen, 2003; Jones & Brinkman, 1994; Sprague, Smith, & Stieber, 2002).

Part IV pertains to Research Question #2 regarding the extent to which respondents by their *school position* (principal, assistant principal, or teacher) perceive peer mediation programs as successfully reducing school conflict and increasing positive student behavior. This part also addresses Research Question #3 regarding the extent to which respondents by their *school level* (middle or high school) perceive the successful reduction of school conflict and increase of positive student behavior due to peer mediation programs (Bodtker & Jones, as cited in Burrell et al., 2003; Burrell, Zirbel, & Allen, 2003; Hart & Gundy, 1997; Jenson & Howard, 2001; Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, Ward, & Magnuson as cited in Burrell et al., 2003; Jones, as cited in Burrell et al., 2003; Lindsay, 1998; Robinson, 2000; Sprague, Smith, & Stieber, 2002).

Part V pertains to Research Question #4 about respondents' perceptions of resources used to implement their peer mediation programs, and Research Question #5 about respondents' perceptions of existing program barriers that impact the effectiveness of their peer mediation programs (Astor, Vargas, Pitner, & Meyer in Jenson & Howard, 2001; Everett & Price, 1997; Sprague, Stieber, & Smith, 2002).

Part VI invites respondents to comment or add anything that would help to understand the success or lack of success of their peer mediation program.

Data Collection Procedures

The instrument is an anonymous, confidential survey of middle and high schools in MA that responded "yes" to having peer mediation programs. Principals, assistant principals, and teachers are asked about their perceptions of student conflict and violence, peer mediation, and resources or barriers that affect success. The results will be used in

the dissertation to describe their perceptions on these subjects. There is no possible harm or breach of confidentiality or anonymity. The emailed invitation to participate (Appendix C) and informed consent information letter (Appendix D) clearly states my name, address, phone, email, and purpose of the survey. They also state that individual responses will not be reflected in the data analysis in such a way as to identify any individual respondent. The emailed invitation contains a link to the informed consent information, survey instrument, and debriefing sheet.

Data collection was by means of a survey questionnaire, included in Appendix E. The survey instrument was emailed through the Internet using Survey Monkey. Each principal was emailed an invitation to participate with a link to the survey, and asked to send the message on to assistant principals and teachers. This is a beneficial method because there are potentially over 5,000 respondents and they can be contacted through each school rather than individually emailed. Following the survey distribution, additional reminders were sent one week apart. All email respondents received a message thanking them for participating, and all survey respondents were thanked on the debriefing sheet. Data results will be provided when the data analysis is completed.

Descriptive statistics provides the opportunity to understand the perceptions and attitudes of the respondents. The format looks at the relative strength of the responses and compares cross variables. Through SPSS, Survey Monkey has the capacity to provide frequencies and cross-tab responses, as well as charts, graphs, and tables with the collected data.

There are several advantages to using survey questionnaire research through Survey Monkey. It can accommodate an unlimited sample of individual respondents, is

efficient, not too costly, fast, and environmentally sound. In today's busy world, people are accustomed to email and on-line surveys which are easier to respond to than filling out a nine-page survey by hand and getting it into the mail. Email and Survey Monkey can send initial emails, provide follow up messages for reminders, and thank you messages. This method assures respondents that both quantitative closed-ended and open-ended questions can be answered confidentially and anonymously.

Data analysis

Data collection was through Survey Monkey, responses were downloaded to an Excel file, and analyzed with SPSS. Analysis using descriptive statistics utilizes comparisons of numbers, percentages, and post hoc chi square. These comparisons indicate differences between middle and high schools, and differences of opinion between principals, assistant principals, and teachers. Examples of sample group comparisons included:

- Principals – high school vs. middle school
- Assistant principals – high school vs. middle school
- Teachers – high school vs. middle school
- High School: principals, assistant principals, and teachers
- Middle School: principals, assistant principals, and teachers

Treatment of results and use of data

The data from this research provide comparisons between MA educators, high schools, and middle schools. Such data can serve as a building block for improving educational violence prevention services. Also, it can provide comparative views of principals, assistant principals, and teachers in rural, suburban, and urban areas regarding violence concerns and preferences for prevention programs. The data can also be used by

state departments of public health and education, education and community leaders, education advocates, and conflict resolution educators in the following ways:

1. Identify and address concerns about student violence expressed by administrators and teachers through leadership training and staff development on school conflict and conflict management. Follow up with school community dialogues about student conflict prevention needs, goals, and appropriate prevention and intervention initiatives.
2. Identify and update conflict management delivery systems, using innovative combinations of infused curriculum, programs, peer mediation, and traditional discipline.
3. Identify barriers to resources and work toward eliminating them through improved planning, budgeting, and advocacy procedures.

Research Bias Threats

The choice of this topic came about as a result of this author's professional experience as the director of a community based juvenile delinquency prevention agency, interim chair of a college education department, college social work and education faculty and adjunct positions, mediation experience in court systems and with adolescents and their parents, working with schools to establish peer mediation programs and conduct training, and teaching mediation to adults in schools and in the community.

It was a combination of these experiences that led to a desire to learn more about the perceptions and attitudes of principals, assistant/vice principals, and teachers whose schools utilize peer mediation to prevent and intervene with student conflict and thus reduce the potential for violence. Because this author has been a community mediator for

17 years and a peer mediation program educator for 16 years at middle and high schools, it is important to examine the issue of researcher bias and how the values of the researcher may influence the conduct and conclusions of the study. “Researchers should be aware of sources of sampling bias and do their best to avoid it” (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p. 136).

Babbie (2001) discusses conscious and unconscious sampling bias as a possibility for researchers who are unaware of the risks in choosing the sample, or biases the researcher may create by not selecting the sample carefully. These can include selecting samples based on simple convenience, the researcher’s personal leanings, over-representing or under-representing a group because of the particular time or location of a survey, interview, or poll. “In connection with sampling, *bias* simply means that those selected are not typical or representative of the larger populations they have been chosen from. This kind of bias does not have to be intentional” (Babbie, p. 182). Care has been taken to avoid sampling bias by contacting every public middle and high school in Massachusetts to determine which have peer mediation programs, and then inviting all of those to participate in this study.

First, this researcher took care to avoid sampling bias threats by making numerous efforts to discover how many public middle and high schools are in Massachusetts through statewide community mediation centers, mediation trainers, two separate DOE school database lists, individual school websites, and DOE search information. All schools were contacted by email and telephone to see who has a peer mediation program and how long it has been running. It should be stated that school searches were defined as grades seven and eight for middle schools, recognizing that many middle schools also

may or may not include grades five, six, or nine, and grades ten, eleven, and twelve for high schools, and recognizing that many high schools may or may not also include grade nine. In addition, care was taken to not select a small number of K-6 and K-12 schools because although they possess middle and high school age students, they do not contain the same cultural environment as typical middle and high schools, which is important to this study.

Second, due to the mediation education work this researcher has done in schools, it has been important to consider accurate reporting of positive and negative responses regarding the relationship of student conflict and peer mediation programs. For example, the decision to survey only schools that have a peer mediation program came about in order to avoid sampling bias because a researcher cannot be sure whether a participant truly understands the questions if they have no knowledge or experience with the subject. Thus, if one has no knowledge or experience of peer mediation, one's perception of it is based upon hear-say and the impressions of others.

As a teacher and developer of school mediation programs, this researcher has seen many principals, assistant principals, and teachers embrace the notion of students mediating conflicts with other students and use mediation skills in other parts of their lives. She has spoken with principals and assistant principals who freely stated they could not do their jobs without their school's peer mediation, because their office would be constantly full of students who had been in fights and disagreements that interfere with running a school. These administrators and teachers support their program by referring cases, encouraging students of all types (including negative leaders) to become peer

mediators, and help secure funding, space, personnel, training, materials, and support among other faculty and staff.

On the other hand, this researcher has experienced many principals, assistant principals, and teachers who disapprove of students being involved with “hands on” peer mediation and other conflict resolution programs because of reasons including: they view this involvement as students disciplining other students; principals end functioning programs by removing the coordinator, room, time to mediate, and training; middle and high school principals do not provide any resources or support for a peer mediation program after students were trained as peer mediators through an initiative championed by the district superintendent; a high school principal states that although the program could run, she did not think students should be mediating in her school – despite fully participating in the 20-hour training with her own students and teachers where she learned conflict theory, steps and stages of the mediation process, and role-playing a variety of real student conflicts; teachers state that students choose peer mediation so they can “get out of” detention or other disciplinary measures; and principals state they are not sure what mediation is but do not want it in their school.

It was witnessing this dichotomy of responses that created an interest in this researcher to examine the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding peer mediation.

Third, to ensure against bias, the survey instrument was reviewed and tried out by school principals, assistant principals, superintendents, assistant superintendents, teachers, peer mediation program coordinators, and the Dissertation Committee advisor and members. These reviews resulted in many changes of the questions, wording, and

content to make sure that the survey instrument reflects the research questions and has a neutral stance.

This researcher has been committed to fully reporting the responses and perceptions of all study participants in a non-biased manner, and to maintain the utmost neutrality as she researches a topic that she finds personally intriguing.

CHAPTER IV

THE DATA AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

This study examined the perceptions of principals, assistant principals, and teachers in Massachusetts public middle and high schools that have a peer mediation program.

This perception study used a mixed methodology of 41 quantitative and qualitative survey questions. The instrument compared the viewpoints of administrators and teachers to ascertain if there was a difference in their concern about increasing student violence, the impact of peer mediation programs on student behavior and outcomes, and resources and barriers that enhance or hinder their student violence prevention initiatives. The study also compared the responses of these educators to see if there was a difference between their views about the impact of their peer mediation program on student conflict based upon whether they work in a middle or high school.

The Central Research Question:

Do Massachusetts public middle and high school administrators and teachers perceive their peer mediation program is successfully working to reduce student conflicts?

Five Research Sub-Questions were framed from the central research question:

1. *Are principals, assistant principals, and teachers concerned about student violence in their schools?*
2. *Do principals, assistant principals, and teachers perceive that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase positive student behavior?*
3. *Is there a difference between middle and high school perceptions that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase positive student behavior?*
4. *What resources do principals, assistant principals, and teachers use to implement their peer mediation programs?*
5. *What barriers do principals, assistant principals, and teachers perceive exist to their peer mediation programs?*

Survey Data Analysis

Definition of terms

For the purpose of data analysis, the terms “participants,” “respondents,” and “educators” are used interchangeably. Additional terms and explanations used in the analysis of the data include:

School Level - refers to middle schools and high schools

Position - refers to position or job title: principal, assistant/vice principal, teacher

Assistant principal - refers to assistant and vice principals

Un-indicated - survey respondents who did not indicate their school level or position

Because survey participants resulted in an uneven distribution of principals (n=16), assistant principals (n=9), and teachers (n=103), some areas of analysis will combine principals and assistant principals under the title “administrators.”

Survey Participants

All Massachusetts public middle and high schools that had a functioning peer mediation program were invited to participate in the research. The principal or program coordinator was contacted about participation in the study (see Appendix C for survey letter of introduction to principals). Individual educators (principals, assistant principals,

and teachers) from the schools were invited to take part in the study through the principals or program coordinators. Because anonymity of responses for the participants was guaranteed, the researcher has data on which schools agreed to participate but there is no information on the respondent's school. The demographic information below provides a description of the participating educators and their schools.

Survey section 1: School Demographic Information

This section contains responses to survey questions about the participants and the schools at which they work, including identification of their school as middle or high school; identification of their position as principal, assistant principals, or teacher; their gender; number of years they have held their current position at school; number of years they have worked in public education systems; the location of their school in rural, suburban, or urban setting; total number of students enrolled at their school; percentage of students at their school by gender; and student socioeconomic status as defined by reduced or free lunch at their school.

Participation of schools and educators in the research survey

For the study, data sources from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) were used to locate all appropriate public middle and high schools (see Chapter III, Methodology, Survey Population for detailed explanation). As a result, approximately 482 public middle schools and 376 public high schools were contacted to see if they had a functioning peer mediation program. Of these, 77 schools (48 high schools and 29 middle schools) identified as having a current peer mediation program. All principals of the 77 schools were contacted to participate, and as pre-

determined by this research study, these principals were asked to contact their assistant principals and teachers to participate by forwarding the invitation and survey link. Therefore, it is not known how many assistant principals and teachers were actually contacted by the principals.

Of the 77 schools with peer mediation programs, 30 schools participated (39%), including 22 high schools and 8 middle schools (Table 1A). Of the 135 individuals who participated in the survey, there were 99 from high schools, 35 from middle schools, and one who did not identify their school level (Table 1B). The 135 participants included 103 teachers, 16 principals, nine assistant principals, and seven who did not identify their school position (Table 2A). One hundred and twenty-seven out of 135 participants identified both their school position and school level (Table 2B).

Table 1A. Participation of Schools

High schools	22
Middle schools	8
Total Participating Schools	30

Table 1B. Educators' Participation by School Level

High school educators	99
Middle school educators	35
Total answered	134
Skipped question	1

Table 2A. Respondents by School Position

Principals	16	12.5%
Assistant Principals	9	7.0%
Teachers	103	80.5%
Total answered	128	100.0%
Skipped question	7	

Table 2B. Respondents by School Level and School Position

Position	High schools	Middle schools	Totals
Principal	11	5	16
Assistant principal	6	2	8
Teacher	76	27	103
Total answered	93	34	127

Table 3A. Participant Gender by School Level

School Level			
Gender	Total	High School	Middle School
Female	97	68	28
Male	38	31	7
Total	135		
Total answered	134	99	35

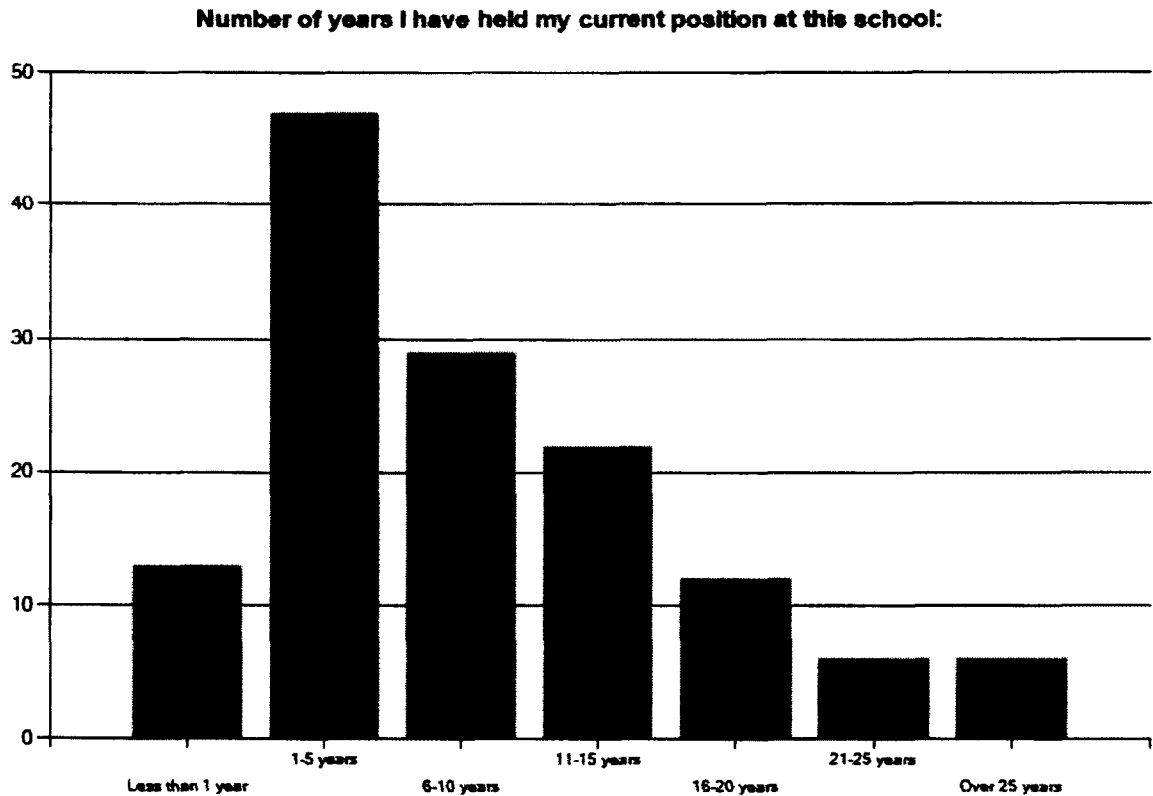
Table 3B. Participant Gender by School Position

School Position				
Gender	Total	Principal	Assistant Principal	Teacher
Female	97	7	4	79
Male	38	9	5	24
Total	135			
Total answered	128	16	9	103

More high schools than middle schools responded. As expected, more teachers than administrators were represented in the study. This response by gender also is representative of the gender representation in Education (Table 3A and 3B).

Number of years in current position: Almost one-half of the respondents have been in their current position five years or less (Chart 1). Sixty percent (60.0%) of the middle school educators and 39.4 percent of the high school educators fit into this category. Just over three-quarters of the administrators had less than six years of experience while 35.9 percent of the teachers had the same amount of experience. The respondents' time in their position is fairly short. When the six to 10 year category is added in, two-thirds (65.9%) of the respondents are accounted for.

Chart 1.



Number of years worked in public education systems: The respondents were also asked how long they worked in public education (Chart 2). This provided a longer view of their educational experience. For example, 68 percent of the school administrators had more

than 20 years of experience, while 22.3 percent of the teachers had the same amount of experience.

Chart 2. Total Responses: number years worked in public education systems

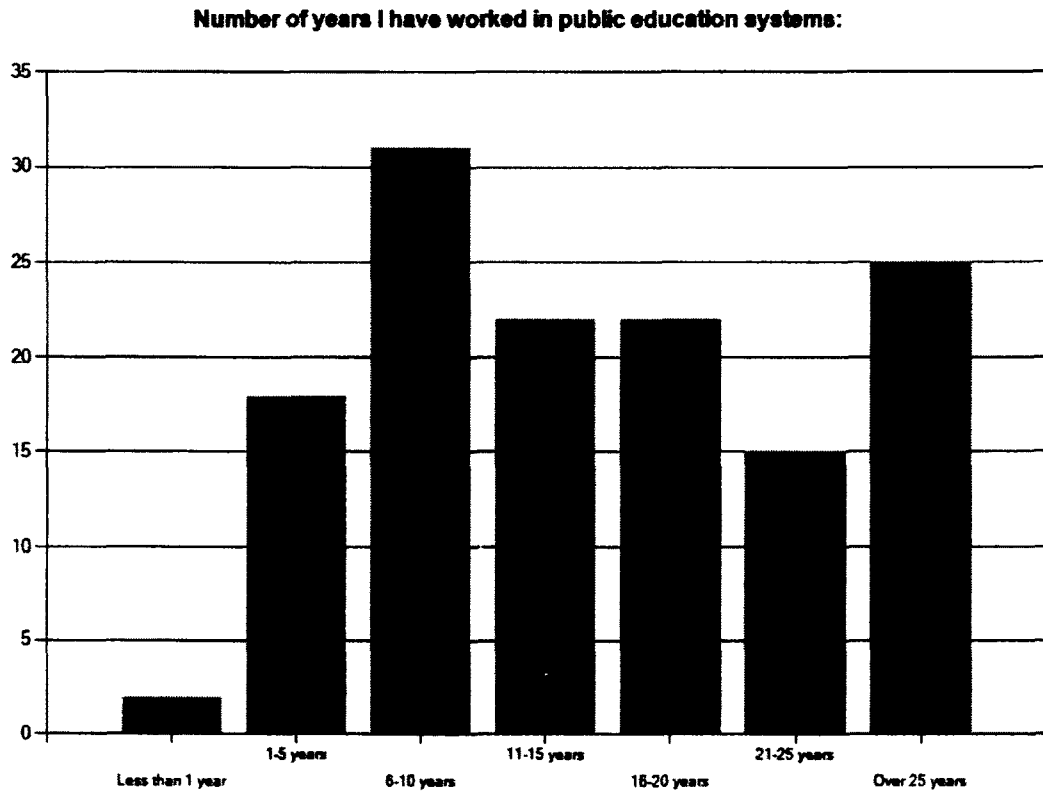


Table 4. Number of years in public education systems

Number of years	Total Responses	
	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 1 year	1.5%	2
1-5 years	13.3%	18
6-10 years	23.0%	31
11-15 years	16.3%	22
16-20 years	16.3%	22
21-25 years	11.1%	15
Over 25 years	18.5%	25
Answered question		135

School location (rural, suburban, or urban): Of the 135 total participants, 134 indicated the location of their school as rural, suburban, or urban (Chart 3). Of these, 61.9 percent

(83) schools are in suburban areas, 28.4 percent (38) schools are in rural areas, and 9.7 percent (13) schools are in urban areas (Table 5). Of the 133 who indicated their school level, 72.4 percent are from high schools located in suburban areas, and 57.1 percent are from middle schools located in rural areas. Of the 128 respondents who indicated their school position, the greatest number of principals (59.3%), assistant principals (88.9%), and teachers (61.2%) were all from schools in suburban locations.

Chart 3. School location: rural, suburban, or urban

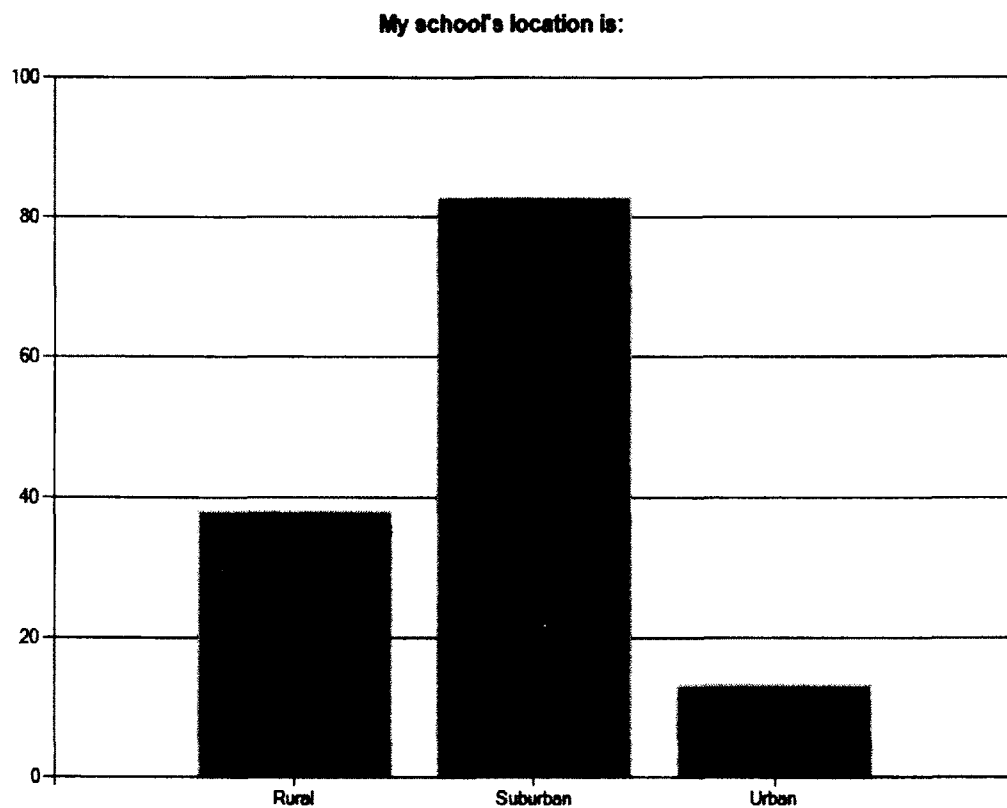


Table 5. School location: Rural, Suburban, or Urban

	Totals	School Levels			School Positions			
	Total Response	High Schools	Middle Schools	Response Totals	Principal	Assistant Principal	Teacher	Response Totals

Rural	28.4% (38)	18.4% (18)	57.1% (20)	28.6% (38)	25.0% (4)	0.0% (0)	32.0% (33)	28.9% (37)
Suburban	61.9% (83)	72.4% (71)	31.4% (11)	61.7% (82)	56.3% (9)	88.9% (8)	61.2% (63)	62.5% (80)
Urban	9.7% (13)	9.2% (9)	11.4% (4)	9.8% (13)	18.8% (3)	11.1% (1)	6.8% (7)	8.6% (11)
Answered question	134	98	35	134	16	9	103	128
Skipped question	1	1		0	0	0	0	0

Student enrollment: Assuming that principals are most familiar with student enrollments at their school, Table 6 (below) reports the responses of all participating principals (16) of middle and high schools who indicated an enrollment range of 331-1,800 students. At the school level, 11 high school principals reported a range of 380-1,800 students, with a mean of 914.9; and five middle school principals reported a range of 331-913 students, with a mean of 494.2.

Table 6. Student Enrollment (SE) of all schools participating in the study

11 High School Principals' perceptions of student enrollment													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Range	Median
SE	1,000	1,800	475	475	380	474	1,100	1,800	1,200	560	800	380-1,800	914.9

5 Middle School Principals' perceptions of student enrollment							
	1	2	3	4	5	Range	Median
SE	507	331	360	913	360	331-913	494.2

Student Socioeconomic Status (SES): Federal reduced lunch and free lunch counts are used as a proxy for socioeconomic status (SES). This report assumes that the principal has a greater understanding of the actual numbers because she/he has to report the data. Table 7 lists the range and means for the data reported by all principals (16)

participating in the research study on the SES of their student body. It indicates that a fairly substantial percentage of students receive free lunch at some of the middle and high schools. However, generalizing from these data must be approached with caution because principals from 16 schools responded to this question out of the 30 schools participating in this study

Table 7. Principals' Perceptions of Student Socioeconomic Status (SES)

School Level	Reduced Lunch	Free Lunch
Middle School	Mean= 17.5	Mean= 35.4
	Range= 7-25%	Range= 20-78%
High School	Mean= 13.5	Mean= 12
	Range= 1-34%	Range= 1-50%

Survey Section 2: Student Conflict and Violence in Your School

Research Sub-Question #1

Are principals, assistant principals, and teachers concerned about student violence in their schools?

Responses from administrators and teachers indicated concern about student violence in their schools as well as the possibility of violence in their schools. About 25 percent of the survey participants, mostly teachers, provided specific reasons for their concerns. Interestingly, many teachers stated they lacked enough information about student conflict in their schools to the extent that they could not answer some of the questions, opting for the "Do Not Know" scale item. It is unknown why they did not know about student conflict.

The responses to Questions 10 and 11 were arrayed in a Likert type scale with a forced choice using the following scale: (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Disagree, and (4) Strongly Disagree. These two questions ask educators about the level of concern they

have regarding safe school environment and the potential of student violence in their school. Question 12 was an open-ended, follow-up question asking for comments on concerns. Questions 13 and 14 asked about 13 student behaviors and 11 student conflict outcomes, and were also arrayed in a Likert type scale with a forced choice using the scale: (1) Frequently, (2) Sometimes, (3) Rarely, (4) Never, and (5) Do Not Know. The questions comprising these scales are listed below. The responses were tabulated and a winnowing process was used to develop themes that emerged from the responses to the open-ended question.

My concern for maintaining a safe school environment has increased over the past five years.

The respondents' concern about maintaining a safe environment has increased during the last five years. Only 4.2 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed. The majority of principals, assistant principals, and teachers at both middle and high school levels indicated their concern has increased over the past five years (Question 10). However, approximately 25.6 percent of the respondents were not concerned, and these were mostly teachers, evenly split between middle and high schools (Table 8).

Of the 135 study participants, 125 responded to this question, with 74.4 percent (93) indicating they were concerned about the school environment (Strongly agree and Agree combined). The majority of principals (93.8%), assistant principals (87.5%), and teachers (71.2%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. However, almost one-third of teachers (28.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. When the data are reviewed at

the school level, 74.8 percent of high school and 73.5 percent of middle school respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

Table 8. My concern for maintaining a safe school environment has increased over the past five years

Scale	Total Response	School Positions			School Levels	
		Principals	Asst Principals	Teachers	High School	Middle School
Strongly Agree	25.6% (32)	31.3% (5)	25.0% (2)	22.3% (21)	27.5% (25)	20.6% (7)
Agree	48.8% (61)	62.5% (10)	62.5% (5)	48.9% (46)	47.3% (43)	52.9% (18)
Disagree	22.4% (28)	6.3% (2)	12.5% (1)	24.5% (23)	22.0% (20)	23.5% (8)
Strongly Disagree	3.2% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (4)	3.3% (3)	2.9% (1)
Answered question	125	16	8	94	91	34

I am concerned about the possibility of student violence in my school.

There is a significant difference between the concerns of administrators and teachers, as indicated by the Chi Square test of independence, ($\chi^2(3, N = 118) = 11.11, p = .011$). Both administrators (83.3%) and teachers (57.4%) are concerned about the possibility (question 11, Agree and Strongly Agree), however only the teachers indicated extreme concern (10.6% Strongly Agree). Of the educators who were not concerned (Disagree and Strongly Disagree), most were teachers (42.6%) followed by a smaller percentage of administrators (16.6%).

At the school level, respondents from middle schools (64.7%) and high schools (62.6%) were about equally concerned about the possibility of student violence (Strongly Agree and Agree).

About 7.8 percent (10) of respondents who provided their School Position and 6.7 percent (9) who provided their School Level skipped this question. Those who skipped the question were mainly high school teachers (Table 9).

Table 9. I am concerned about the possibility of student violence in my school

Scale	School Position		School Level	
	Administrators	Teacher	High School	Middle School
Strongly Agree	0.0% (0)	10.6% (10)	11.0% (10)	5.9% (2)
Agree	83.3% (20)	46.8% (44)	51.6% (47)	58.8% (20)
Disagree	12.5% (3)	38.3% (36)	34.1% (31)	29.4% (10)
Strongly Disagree	4.1% (1)	4.3% (4)	3.3% (3)	5.9% (2)
Answered question	24	94	91	34
Skipped question	1	9	8	1

List any concerns about the possibility of student violence in my school.

This follow-up to the previous questions provided an opportunity for educators to indicate their specific concerns in an open-ended format (Question 12). There were 33 responses out of 135 total survey participants (24%). All individual responses can be found in Appendix F.

The themes reflect concern about (1) budget cuts causing decreased resources for schools and communities in a rapidly changing society; (2) increased student aggression, fights, bullying, and gangs; (3) lack of impulse control and student de-sensitization toward violence; (4) changes in ethnic and socioeconomic populations impacting family structures and values; and (5) an eroding sense of safety and security by school personnel.

At the high school level, there were 19 replies including 14 teachers, 5 assistant principals, and no principals. Three out of the five high school assistant principals stated they had “no specific concerns, but no school is immune to the possibility of student violence,” and one added that having prevention programs in place is important. Another assistant principal highlighted the interaction of two problems mentioned above: population changes and decreased resources, “360 students from 30 different communities sharing one space with each other as well as 50 staff members.” The fifth succinctly echoed several themes: “fights weapons fear.”

High school teachers discussed budget cuts, increased conflicts, decreased school resources, increased aggressive fights, changes in family and community structures, and “changes in social discourse and skills to deflect conflict.” These teachers cited increasingly violent fights that lead to more hospitalizations, student desensitization toward violence, gangs, bullying, societal anger that “seems to pop out once in a while in violent ways,” and “former students entering the building with malicious intent.” As one high school teacher stated, “We have a changing population of students – many of them coming from very dysfunctional families.” Another noted, “Many inner city students with very poor academic and social skills have moved into the district in the past 5-7 years. Biggest problem is administration fails to refer these students to our peer mediation program!” Another high school teacher described budget cuts that led to the loss of their school/police liaison, resulting in “personal vulnerability.” Other high school teachers blamed budget cuts for the increase of student:teacher ratios that has resulted in more students falling through the cracks, and not getting necessary attention or services. Population changes leading to an increase in language barriers in the classroom,

possibly due to new immigrants, have rendered teachers unable to follow student conversation [and perhaps unable to make themselves understood]. Finally, high school teachers described the problem of increased student aggression combined with decreased impulse control, “conflict management skills have declined, social skills have declined.”

At the middle school level, 14 respondents included 12 teachers, 1 principal, and 1 assistant principal. Middle school administrators cited increased personal violence and the erosion of personal safety for students and staff. The single middle school principal stated, “The concerns for violence in the school mirror those of our larger society.” The single middle school assistant principal simply stated, “Assaults.”

Middle school teachers discussed increased group fighting, angry students, increased access to handguns and weapons, bullying and resulting fights, lack of impulse control and self control, the need for harsher consequences in response to small offenses, and increased funding of early intervention programs to prevent student conflicts from expanding into serious assaults. For example, one middle school teacher wanted “to send a clear message of zero tolerance for disrespect, insubordination, or violence.” Some middle school teachers thought incidents of conflicts are rising, while others said violence is rare. One middle school teacher described the unfortunate effect of decreased school funding and rising student conflict, “There have been more physical acts of aggression this year and our staff numbers are low due to budget cuts. The district is positive but tense as a whole.”

How often do you think students at your school engage in these behaviors?

Administrators and teachers rated the frequency at which they thought students at their school engaged in 13 verbal and physical behaviors: *Gossip/Rumors, Verbal Threats, Bullying, Cyberbullying, Sexting, Harassment, Assaults, Physical Threats, Fighting, Threats On Staff, Vandalism, Weapons Carrying, and Gang Activity* (Question 13). *Gossip/Rumor, Verbal Threats, Bullying, and Harassment* were rated as the most frequently occurring by administrators and teachers. The least frequently occurring were *Threats on Staff, Weapons Carrying, and Gang Activity* (Table 10).

A statistical difference was found between teachers' and administrators' perceptions of *Physical Threats* ($\chi^2(3, N = 118) = 8.28, p = .041$). *Physical Threats* was considered a problem by 59.6 percent of teachers and 33.3 percent of administrators (Frequently and Sometimes scales combined), illustrated by Table 10. In addition, while the majority of administrators (87.4%) and teachers (54.2%) thought *Vandalism* did not occur much at all (rarely/never scales), an additional 41.6 percent of teachers thought *Vandalism* is a problem at their school (frequently/sometimes scales).

It is worth noting the percentage of teachers who responded "Do not know" about student *Sexting* (18.9%), *Weapon carrying* (18.9%), and *Gang activity* (19.8%) at their schools (Table 11). Respondents who did not know about *Sexting* were about evenly split between the high schools (17.4%) and middle schools (23.5%), but more middle school respondents (23.5%) than high school respondents (14.1%) did not know about *Gang activity*. Over twice as many high school respondents (19.6%) as middle school respondents (8.6%) did not know about student *Weapons carrying* in their schools (Table 12).

Table 10. Student behaviors by School Position:

A = Administrators (Principals and Assistant Principals)

T = Teachers

Behavior	Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Do not know	
	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T
Gossip/Rumors	70.8% 17	88.4% 84	25.0% 6	10.5% 10	12.5% 1	1.1% 1	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
Verbal threats	21.7% 5	30.5% 29	56.5% 13	53.7% 51	21.7% 5	13.7% 13	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	2.1% 2
Bullying	8.3% 2	22.9% 22	75.0% 18	62.5% 60	16.6% 4	13.5% 13	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	1.0% 1
Cyberbullying	20.8% 5	29.2% 28	79.1% 19	54.2% 52	0.0% 0	8.3% 8	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	8.3% 8
Sexting	4.1% 1	15.8% 15	45.8% 11	46.3% 44	53.3% 8	18.9% 18	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	16.6% 4	18.9% 18
Harassment	4.1% 1	20.0% 19	70.8% 17	53.7% 51	25.0% 6	21.1% 20	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	5.3% 5
Assaults	0.0% 0	2.1% 2	20.8% 5	27.1% 26	75% 18	65.6% 63	4.1% 1	1.0% 1	0.0% 0	4.2% 4
Physical threats	0.0% 0	6.4% 6	33.3% 8	53.2% 50	66.6% 16	36.2% 34	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	4.3% 4
Fighting	0.0% 0	4.3% 4	29.1% 7	42.6% 40	70.8% 17	51.1% 48	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	2.1% 2
Threats on staff	0.0% 0	2.1% 2	0.0% 0	10.4% 10	70.8% 17	71.9% 69	29.1% 7	10.4% 10	0.0% 0	5.2% 5
Vandalism	0.0% 0	8.3% 8	12.5% 3	33.3% 32	83.3% 20	52.1% 50	4.1% 1	2.1% 2	0.0% 0	4.2% 4
Weapon Carrying	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	12.5% 3	8.4% 8	45.8% 11	53.7% 51	33.3% 8	18.9% 18	8.3% 2	18.9% 18
Gang activity	0.0% 0	1.0% 1	21.7% 2	4.2% 4	47.8% 11	41.7% 40	43.4% 10	33.3% 32	0.0% 0	19.8% 19

Table 11. Combined scales “Frequently” and “Sometimes,” comparing High School and Middle School educators’ perceptions of student behaviors at their school.

High School Educators	%	Middle School Educators	%
Gossip/rumor	97.9	Gossip/rumor	100.0
Cyberbullying	89.3	Verbal threats	88.2
Bullying	86.0	Bullying	82.3
Verbal threats	81.3	Harassment	73.5
Harassment	76.1	Physical threats	67.6
Sexting	66.3	Cyberbullying	61.7
Physical threats	49.5	Fighting	50.0
Vandalism	43.0	Sexting	44.1
Fighting	38.5	Assaults	32.4
Assaults	24.7	Vandalism	17.6

Threats on staff	10.8	Threats on staff	5.9
Weapons carrying	9.8	Weapons carrying	5.9
Gang activity	5.4	Gang activity	5.9

Table 12. Student behaviors by School Level. High School = HS Middle School= MS

Behavior	Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Do not know	
	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS
Gossip/Rumors	85.9% (79)	82.4% (28)	12.0% (11)	17.6% (6)	2.2% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Verbal threats	28.6% (26)	29.4% (10)	52.7% (48)	58.8% (20)	16.5% (15)	11.8% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.2% (2)	0.0% (0)
Bullying	17.2% (16)	29.4% (10)	68.8% (64)	52.9% (18)	12.9% (12)	17.6% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.1% (1)	0.0% (0)
Cyber bullying	28.0% (26)	26.5% (9)	61.3% (57)	52.9% (18)	6.5% (6)	8.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (4)	11.8% (4)
Sexting	16.3% (15)	5.9% (2)	50.0% (46)	38.2% (13)	16.3% (15)	32.4% (11)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	17.4% (16)	23.5% (8)
Harassment	17.4% (16)	17.6% (6)	58.7% (54)	55.9% (19)	20.7% (19)	20.6% (7)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.3% (3)	5.9% (2)
Assaults	3.2% (3)	0.0% (0)	21.5% (20)	32.4% (11)	68.8% (64)	67.6% (23)	2.2% (2)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (4)	0.0% (0)
Physical threats	6.6% (6)	2.9% (1)	42.9% (39)	64.7% (22)	47.3% (43)	29.4% (10)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.3% (3)	2.9% (1)
Fighting	4.4% (4)	2.9% (1)	34.1% (31)	47.1% (16)	59.3% (54)	50.0% (17)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.2% (2)	0.0% (0)
Threats on staff	2.2% (2)	0.0% (0)	8.6% (8)	5.9% (2)	68.8% (64)	82.4% (28)	17.2% (16)	5.9% (2)	3.2% (3)	5.9% (2)
Vandalism	8.6% (8)	2.9% (1)	34.4% (32)	14.7% (5)	49.5% (46)	82.4% (28)	3.2% (3)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (4)	0.0% (0)
Weapon carrying	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	9.8% (9)	5.9% (2)	48.9% (45)	58.8% (20)	21.7% (20)	26.5% (9)	19.6% (18)	8.6% (3)
Gang activity	1.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (4)	5.9% (2)	43.5% (40)	41.2% (14)	37.0% (43)	29.4% (10)	14.1% (13)	23.5% (8)

To what extent do you think student conflict leads to these outcomes in your school?

Survey participants rated the frequency of 11 outcome items that are possible results of student conflict in their school (question 14). Of the respondents who indicated their school position, the majority of administrators and teachers agreed on five outcomes of student conflict: *Depression, Fear of other students, Poor attendance, Poor grades, and Truancy*. Also, the majority of teachers viewed *Dropping out* as an outcome, but

administrators did not (Table 13). Most administrators and teachers agreed that *Weapons carrying* and *Gang involvement* were not a problem in their schools. However, a statistical difference was found between the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding *Vandalism* ($\chi^2 (4, N = 118) = 14.08, p = .007$). This meant that most administrators (73.9%) did not consider *Vandalism* an outcome, but teachers were divided between 48.5 percent who did consider it an outcome, and 37.9 percent who did not.

Many teachers indicated Do Not Know on five items: *Weapons carrying* (19.8%), *Gang involvement* (18.9%), *Stealing* (13.8%), *In-school substance use* (13.8%), and *Vandalism* (13.7%). If teachers do not know whether these items occur in their schools, there could be a lack of information about student conflict or the effect of prevention programs.

Table 13. Student conflict outcomes by School Position
 A = Administrators (Principals and Assistant Principals)
 T = Teachers

Conflict outcomes	Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Do not know	
	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T
Poor attendance	4.1% (1)	22.9% (22)	79.2% (19)	60.4% (58)	16.6% (4)	14.6% (14)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	2.1% (2)
Poor Grades	4.1% (1)	25.0% (24)	79% (19)	61.5% (59)	16.6% (4)	11.5% (11)	0% (0)	1.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	1.0% (0)
Fear of other students	16.6% (4)	26.0% (25)	70.8% (17)	59.4% (57)	12.5% (3)	11.5% (11)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.1% (3)
Depression	8.3% (2)	26.3% (25)	87.5% (21)	64.2% (61)	4.1% (1)	5.3% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.2% (4)
Truancy	4.1% (1)	16.8% (16)	66.6% (16)	62.1% (59)	29.2% (7)	16.8% (16)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.2% (4)
Dropping out	4.1% (1)	7.3% (7)	33.3% (8)	43.8% (42)	50.0% (12)	34.4% (33)	12.5% (3)	8.3% (8)	0.0% (0)	6.3% (6)
Weapon carrying	0.0% (0)	3.1% (3)	29.2% (7)	11.5% (11)	37.5% (9)	50.0% (48)	25.0% (6)	15.6% (15)	8.3% (2)	19.8% (19)

Gang involvement	0.0% (0)	2.1% (2)	12.5% (3)	11.6% (11)	37.5% (9)	37.9% (36)	41.6% (10)	29.5% (28)	8.3% (2)	18.9% (18)
Stealing	0.0% (0)	6.3% (6)	20.8% (5)	38.9% (37)	50.0% (12)	33.7% (32)	16.6% (4)	8.4% (8)	12.5% (3)	12.6% (12)
In-school substance use	0.0% (0)	6.4% (6)	33.3% (8)	42.6% (40)	45.8% (11)	31.9% (30)	12.5% (3)	5.3% (5)	8.3% (2)	13.8% (13)
Vandalism	0% (0)	7.4% (7)	21.7% (5)	41.1% (39)	69.6% (16)	28.4% (27)	4.3% (1)	9.5% (9)	4.3% (1)	13.7% (13)

At the school level (Table 14), most middle and high school respondents thought that five areas of student conflict outcomes exist in their schools, including: *Poor attendance, Poor grades, Fear of other students, Depression, and Truancy*. Also, many high school respondents viewed *Dropping out (50.0%) and In-School Substance Use (48.4%)* as outcomes. High school and middle school respondents (11.8%-19.4%) did not seem to know whether the last five items were outcomes or not: *Weapons carrying, Gang involvement, Stealing, In-school substance use, and Vandalism*. This raises a possible question as to whether they need more information on conflict management and related prevention programs.

Table 14. Student conflict outcomes at high schools (HS) and middle schools (MS)

Conflict outcomes	Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Do not know	
	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS
Poor attendance	21.5% (20)	17.6% (6)	65.6% (61)	55.9% (19)	11.8% (11)	23.5% (8)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.1% (1)	2.9% (1)
Poor Grades	21.5% (20)	23.5% (8)	64.5% (60)	61.8% (21)	11.8% (11)	14.7% (5)	1.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	1.1% (1)	0.0% (0)
Fear of other students	22.6% (21)	32.4% (11)	61.3% (57)	58.8% (20)	12.9% (12)	8.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.2% (3)	0.0% (0)
Depression	21.7% (20)	29.4% (10)	68.5% (63)	64.7% (22)	5.4% (5)	5.9% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (4)	0.0% (0)
Truancy	17.6% (16)	8.8% (3)	59.3% (54)	70.6% (24)	19.8% (18)	17.6% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.3% (3)	2.9% (1)
Dropping out	5.4% (5)	8.8% (3)	44.6% (41)	32.4% (11)	37.0% (34)	44.1% (15)	8.7% (8)	8.8% (3)	4.3% (4)	5.9% (2)
Weapon carrying	3.2% (3)	0.0% (0)	14.0% (13)	20.6% (7)	47.3% (44)	47.1% (16)	16.1% (15)	20.6% (18)	19.4% (18)	11.8% (4)

								(7)		
Gang involvement	2.2% (2)	0.0% (0)	11.0% (10)	14.7% (5)	37.4% (34)	35.3% (12)	31.9% (29)	32.4% (11)	17.6% (16)	17.6% (6)
Stealing	7.6% (7)	0.0% (0)	33.7% (31)	38.2% (13)	35.9% (33)	38.2% (13)	9.8% (9)	8.8% (3)	13.0% (12)	14.7% (5)
In-school substance use	7.7% (7)	0.0% (0)	40.7% (37)	35.3% (12)	35.2% (32)	38.2% (13)	4.4% (4)	11.8% (4)	12.1% (11)	14.7% (5)
Vandalism	6.6% (6)	5.9% (2)	35.2% (32)	38.2% (13)	38.5% (35)	32.4% (11)	7.7% (7)	8.8% (3)	12.1% (11)	14.7% (5%)

Survey Part III

Peer Mediation Program Characteristics

This section provides a summary and discussion of responses to Survey Questions 15-26 concerning the characteristics and organization of participants' peer mediation programs. The data provide perceptions of the responding principals, assistant principals, and teachers as to how their peer mediation program functions, comparisons between school positions (administrators and teachers), comparisons between school levels (middle and high schools), and how these programs are viewed by the respondents in terms of conflict and violence prevention.

Peer Mediation programs have existed since the 1960's throughout the United States and abroad, and function as a means of reducing and managing conflicts in schools by utilizing trained students to mediate conflicts between their peers (Cohen, 2005). The main principle of mediation is that disputants engage in a dialogue with each other that is facilitated by peer mediators, come to understand each other's positions and interests, and reach a resolution or agreement that they create themselves (citations to follow).

Although a wide range of programmatic options exist, such as mediation of students that are facilitated by administrators or combinations of faculty and students, this study is

interested in student-facilitated mediation programs with an adult coordinator, and where student mediators are trained a standard 16-20 hours. Mediators are taught to facilitate, rather than direct the resolution or provide advice. Referrals of disputing students to peer mediation programs come from school administrators, faculty, staff, and self-referrals (Gilhooley and Scheuch, 2000). Peer mediation is often used by administrators in conjunction with other disciplinary measures such as detention, suspension, or expulsion, as these uphold school discipline policy, while the mediation addresses the core of the conflict itself. Chapter two describes the mediation process in further detail.

Responses to the Peer Mediation Program Characteristics questions were provided by 135 survey participants from 30 schools in Massachusetts, including 22 high schools and eight middle schools. Participants who identified their *school level* included 99 high school respondents and 35 middle school respondents. One participant did not indicate their school level. Participants who identified their *school position* included 16 principals, 9 assistant principals, and 103 teachers. Seven participants did not indicate their school position.

Study participants were asked how long their peer mediation program has been operating. Responding administrators (22) and teachers (70) indicated a range of 2-25 years of operation (question 15). These respondents represented 77 percent of the middle school participants and 72 percent of the high school participants. The question was skipped by 36 participants, perhaps indicating a lack of information about their program.

Participants were asked who runs their peer mediation program (question 16). As a whole, participants indicated their school's program is overseen by program coordinators (35.5%), school counselors (33.1%), teachers (26.4%), or assistant

principals (.8%). Only 4.1 percent (5) respondents did not know who runs their program, all teachers, about evenly divided between high schools and middle schools. In addition, 14 participants skipped this question. Administrators indicated their programs are run by counselors (54%), followed by coordinators (33%) and teachers (13%). However, teachers thought their programs are about evenly run by coordinators (35.2%), teachers (30.8%), and counselors (27.5%). In addition, 13 respondents thought their programs are run by other combinations of faculty and staff, including a teacher and counselor team, school psychologist, outside community agency, and the local Community Mediation Program. It is important to know how the leadership of peer mediation programs is perceived by administrators and teachers because they provide the referrals to their school's program, and without referrals, the program ceases to exist. The responses to this question indicate a possible lack of clarity among teachers as to who is running their programs.

Survey participants were asked who facilitates the peer mediation sessions at their school (question 17). Facilitation refers to who actually conducts the mediation session, defined in this study as *students* mediating their peers, not adults. The criteria of student-facilitated peer mediation was clearly stated when schools were initially asked to participate in the study. However, by School Position (Table 15A), *Students Only* facilitation is indicated by only 21 percent of administrators and 31.9 percent of teachers, as the vast majority thought *Students & Staff* facilitate. Also, eleven percent of teachers do not know who facilitates, and they are mostly from high schools. In addition, the question was skipped by 13 participants.

Table 15A. Our peer mediations are facilitated by: ____

Mediation Facilitator	Administrators	Teacher	Response Totals
Students Only	21.0% (5)	31.9% (29)	29.6% (34)
Staff Only	0.0% (0)	2.2% (2)	1.7% (2)
Students & Staff	79.0% (19)	54.9% (50)	60.0% (69)
I do not know	0.0% (0)	11.0% (10)	8.7% (10)
Other	2 replies	3 replies	5
Answered question	24	91	115
Skipped question			13

At the School Level (Table 15B), *Students Only* facilitation is indicated by only 38.6 percent of high school and 9.1 percent of middle school respondents. The concern for respondents' perceptions regarding facilitation is that administrators, faculty, and staff may be reluctant to refer students to their program if they do not know who facilitates the mediations. Also, it is difficult to know whether these perceptions are accurate or not, for example, it is standard procedure for an adult coordinator or staff to screen the student conflicts to see if they are appropriate for mediation. This screening could be perceived as "facilitation" by those not completely familiar with how the program works. Another concern is that programs can change over time due to budget and staff cutbacks, and these changes can impact who is available to facilitate mediations. For example, some schools reported that their budgets to train students on how to mediate has become limited or non-existent, leaving the facilitation to a small group of previously trained upperclassmen, along with a mix of administrators, counselors, and teachers.

Table 15B. Our peer mediations are facilitated by:

Mediation Facilitator	High School	Middle School	Response Totals
Students only	38.6% (34)	9.1% (3)	30.6% (37)
Staff Only	2.3% (2)	0.0% (0)	1.7% (2)
Students & Staff	51.1% (45)	81.8% (27)	59.5% (72)
Do Not Know	8.0% (7)	9.1% (3)	8.3% (10)
Other	5 replies	1 reply	6
Answered question	88	33	121
Skipped question			13

Survey participants were asked their perceptions about the length of time devoted to Peer Mediator Training (question 18). The standard is 16-20 training hours (Association for Conflict Resolution, 2007; Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General, Community Information and Education Division, 2008), and includes conflict theory, conflict resolution theory, the stages of mediation, the role of the mediator, mediator bias, neutrality, voluntariness, confidentiality, many role plays based on real cases, and multi-party cases. The study found that only 21.3 percent of all respondents thought their peer mediation program provides 16-20 hours of mediator training, including 25 percent of administrators and 17.4 percent of teachers (Table 16). About one-third of respondents (28.7%) indicated their peer mediators receive 10 hours or less of training. In addition, 39.9 percent did not know, including 51.5 percent of teachers, and an additional 13 participants skipped the question. This is a concern because if these scores accurately reflect the amount of training peer mediators receive, students are seriously under-trained by generally accepted standards, which can hamper their ability to mediate. If they are not accurate, one wonders why not? Not knowing the quantity and quality of training that peer mediators receive can seriously impact the referrals teachers

make to the program, and lack of referrals can seriously undermine a program's funding and existence.

Table 16. Our peer mediators receive _____ hours of peer mediation training.

Hours	Total participant Responses	Administrators	Teacher
1-5	5.7% (7)	12.5% (3)	4.3% (4)
6-10	23.0% (28)	41.6% (10)	18.5% (17)
11-15	10.7% (13)	16.6% (4)	8.7% (8)
16-20	21.3% (26)	25% (6)	17.4% (16)
I do not know	39.3% (48)	4.7% (1)	51.1% (47)
Answered question	122	24	92
Skipped question	13		

Survey participants were asked if they have ever been trained in mediation or peer mediation (question 19). About two-thirds of total respondents (62.0%) have not been trained (Table 17). Although most administrators have been trained (62.5%), most teachers (72.5%) have not. At the school level, the majority of middle (57.6%) and high school (63.6%) respondents have not been trained.

These responses raise a concern because a lack of mediation training can limit administrators' and teachers' understanding and support of their program. Training that includes faculty and staff enhances their knowledge of conflict theory and mediation practice, which strengthens their interest and referrals. Also, mediation training provides first-hand experience of what the students are learning, and can give adults a new respect for the capacity of students to mediate successfully. This researcher has trained middle

and high school educators who had no idea what kinds of student conflicts are mediated until they participated (with student trainees) as mediators and disputants in training role plays such as boyfriend/girlfriend fights, gossip and rumor, minor harassment, prejudice and discrimination, theft, and multi-party involving large groups of students involved in a conflict.

Table 17. I have been trained in mediation or peer mediation.

	Total Participant Responses	Administrators	Teachers	High School	Middle School
Yes	38.0% (46)	62.5% (15)	27.5% (25)	36.4% (32)	42.4% (14)
No	62.0% (75)	37.5% (9)	72.5% (66)	63.6% (56)	57.6% (19)
Answered question	121	24	91	88	33
Skipped question	14				

Survey participants were asked if they have a Peer Mediation Advisory Committee (question 21). Advisory committees usually consist of educators, students, parents, and community mediation organization staff who meet on a regular basis to plan and advocate for their program. For example, they can provide concrete assistance such as publicity and marketing, in-service and advanced training for mediators, fundraising, grant writing, and contacting community leaders and funders if funding is threatened. School peer mediation programs without an Advisory Committee have no one to stand up for them if funding gets tight, or if an incoming administrator has a different view of peer mediation and wants to change or dismantle the program. Respondents indicated that only 12.5 percent of administrators and 19.4 percent of teachers thought that their school has a Peer Mediation Advisory Committee (Table 18). A higher percentage of high

school respondents (20.2%) than middle school respondents (15.2%) thought they had such a committee. If there is no committee, it becomes more difficult to protect the program’s assets such as funding, the program coordinator, mediator training, space, materials, and time to mediate. While all of the administrators were able to say whether or not they have an Advisory Committee, half of the teachers (49.5%) did not know. Therefore, it is possible that they do not know how the program operates, who to go to if they have a problem, or how to support the program if they are needed.

Table 18. Our peer mediation program has an Advisory Committee (educators, students, and /or parents) that meets on a regular basis to plan and advocate for the program.

	Administrators	Teachers	High school	Middle school
Yes	12.5% (3)	19.4% (18)	20.2% (18)	15.2% (5)
No	87.5% (21)	31.2% (29)	41.6% (37)	48.5% (16)
I do not know	0.0% (0)	49.5% (46)	38.2% (34)	36.4% (12)
Answered question	24	93	89	33
Skipped question	11			

Survey participants were asked if their peer mediation program is part of a community-wide violence and bullying prevention program (question 22). This data indicate whether or not the program is integrated into an up to date comprehensive, planned effort to prevent youth violence, or if it is a “stand alone” program which is not tied into anything specific, and therefore must compete for funds and staffing with other better organized programs. Responding administrators were equally split, as 50.0 percent think their program is part of a community wide prevention effort, and 50.0 percent do not think so (Table 19), followed by one-third of teachers (33.3%) who do think their

program is part of a community effort. Of concern is that over one-half (53.8%) of the teachers did not know, including 48.5 percent at middle schools and 37.8 percent at high schools. The total of 40.7 percent respondents who do not know indicates a possible lack of awareness or information among teachers as to how their peer mediation program fits in to their school’s policy and practice plans for violence and bullying prevention. Therefore, it is possible that they would not make referrals or be involved in these initiatives.

Table 19. Our program is part of a community-wide violence and bullying prevention program.

	Total Participant Response	Administrator	Teacher	High school	Middle school
Yes	38.2% (47)	50.0% (12)	33.3% (31)	41.1% (37)	30.3% (10)
No	21.1% (26)	50.0% (12)	12.9% (12)	21.1% (19)	21.2% (7)
I do not know	40.7% (50)	0.0% (0)	53.8% (50)	37.8% (34)	48.5% (16)
Answered question	123	24	93	90	33
Skipped question	12				

Participants were asked if their peer mediators meet regularly for case debriefing and in-service training (question 23). These meetings provide the opportunity for the program coordinator and peer mediators to review difficult cases and keep their skills fresh with on-going and advanced training. Most administrators (62.5%) indicated that peer mediators did meet regularly, but 16.6 percent did not know (Table 20). Teachers were evenly split between thinking peer mediators meet regularly (46.7%) and “I do not know” (46.7%). At the school level, over half of the high school respondents (55.1%) thought peer mediators meet regularly, but only 39.4 percent of middle school

respondents agreed. Of concern are the administrators and teachers at middle schools (42.4%) and high schools (38.2%) that indicated do not know. It is possible that lack of information could have a negative effect on educators' support of the programs at both school levels, particularly if half the teachers are unaware that their mediators are trained and prepped on a regular basis.

Table 20. Peer mediators meet regularly for case debriefing and in-service training.

	Total Response	Administrators	Teachers	High School	Middle school
Yes	50.8% (62)	62.5% (15)	46.7% (43)	55.1% (49)	39.4% (13)
No	9.8% (12)	20.8% (5)	6.5% (6)	6.7% (6)	18.2% (6)
I do not know	39.3% (48)	16.6% (4)	46.7% (43)	38.2% (34)	42.4% (14)
Answered question	122	24	92	89	33
Skipped question	13				

Survey participants were asked if they refer students with conflicts to their peer mediation program (question 24). Referrals from administrators, teachers, counselors, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and students themselves are essential for the program's existence, keep the program alive, signal supporters and funders that peer mediation is valued within the school. When the whole school community has been educated about mediation theory and how the program works, usually through presentations including mock role plays by the coordinator and peer mediators, school staff and students usually feel more comfortable referring students who are having a problem with each other. The majority of administrators (95.8%) indicated they do refer (often or sometimes scales), followed by the majority of teachers (59.2%). Of concern is the 40.9 percent of teachers

who rarely or never refer (Table 21). At the school level, respondents at middle schools (72.7%) refer more than high schools (66.7%), therefore more high school respondents rarely or never refer (33.4%). Referrals indicate trust in the program's ability to help students resolve conflicts. Therefore, a lack of referrals can indicate a lack of trust in peer mediators' ability or capacity to mediate, or a lack of understanding as to how the program functions. Lack of referrals can be devastating to a program, and even shut it down.

Table 21. Referrals of students with conflicts to the school's peer mediation program.

	Total Response	Administrators	Teachers	High School	Middle school
Often	25.2% (31)	33.3% (8)	22.6% (21)	25.6% (23)	24.2% (8)
Sometimes	43.1% (53)	62.5% (15)	36.6% (34)	41.1% (37)	48.5% (16)
Rarely	17.9% (22)	4.1% (1)	22.6% (21)	17.8% (16)	18.2% (6)
Never	13.8% (17)	0.0% (0)	18.3% (17)	15.6% (14)	9.1% (3)
Answered question	123	24	93	90	33
Skipped question	12				

Question #25 asked the respondents if their peer mediation program successfully reduces conflicts and violence. All administrators strongly agreed or agreed, followed by 84.1 percent of teachers. Therefore, only teachers (15.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed (Table 22). At the school level, respondents at high schools (88.1%) and middle schools (87.1%) were about evenly matched. There is concern if teachers do not think their peer mediation successfully reduces conflicts and violence. Their perceptions could indicate a lack of information and data about how their peer mediation program functions and what it accomplishes, or could indicate the need for a discussion to find out

where their perceptions are coming from, and why. Addressing this negative perception could go a long way to improving communication, participation, and support from teachers for the program.

Table 22. Our peer mediation program successfully reduces conflicts and violence.

	Total Response	Administrators	Teachers	High School	Middle school
Strongly Agree	27.8% (32)	31.8% (7)	25.0% (22)	29.8% (25)	22.6% (7)
Agree	60.0% (69)	68.1% (15)	59.1% (52)	58.3% (49)	64.5% (20)
Disagree	9.6% (11)	0.0% (0)	12.5% (11)	8.3% (7)	12.9% (4)
Strongly Disagree	2.6% (3)	0.0% (0)	3.4% (3)	3.6% (3)	0.0% (0)
Answered question	115	22	88	84	31
Skipped question	20				

Study participants were asked if their peer mediation program has been evaluated as a violence prevention strategy (question 26). One of the problems with initial and continued funding for peer mediation programs has been intermittent or non-existent data collection and program evaluation. Today, youth violence prevention funding is data-driven, and programs are expected to be interconnected, functioning on a whole-school level, and able to provide evidence that they work. Program evaluation provides a mechanism for schools to track and prove program functioning and success. It can give funders, administrators, faculty, students, and the community-at-large information on how well the program is reducing student conflict. For example, data can be collected on the number of referrals to peer mediation and who they are from, then compared to the number of sessions that actually take place, followed by the number of resolutions or agreements that come out of them. Data can indicate whether there has been an increase

or decrease in disciplinary consequences as a result of peer mediation, or if the number or frequency of negative student behaviors or conflicts has increased or decreased. Program evaluation can provide information on disputant satisfaction with the mediators, mediation process, fairness of the resolution, and intention to follow through on agreements. It can also provide an opportunity for mediators to conduct self and peer evaluations, weigh in on referrals and follow-up, program strengths and weaknesses, and in-service training needs.

Unfortunately, the majority of respondents from middle schools (54.5%) and high schools (60.5%) indicated “I Do Not Know,” and 70.3% were teachers (Table 23). This does not necessarily mean that program evaluation is not occurring, but perhaps teachers are simply not aware of it, or included in it. If teachers are not aware of whether or not their program is evaluated and connected to violence prevention strategies, they may not use or support it.

Another concern is that more principals perceive their programs are not evaluated (43.8%) than are evaluated (37.5%), and 18.8 percent do not know. Assistant principals were split evenly three ways between thinking their programs are evaluated (33.3%), are not evaluated (33.3%), and not knowing (33.3%). More teachers thought their programs are evaluated (19.8%) than not evaluated (9.9%), and as mentioned above, the vast majority did not know.

Table 23. Peer mediation program has been evaluated as a violence prevention strategy.

	Total Response	Administrators	Teachers	High School	Middle school
Yes	24.4% (29)	36.3% (8)	19.8% (18)	24.4% (21)	24.2% (8)
No	16.8% (20)	40.9% (9)	9.9% (9)	15.1% (13)	21.2% (7)

I do not know	58.8% (70)	22.7% (5)	70.3% (64)	60.5% (52)	54.5% (18)
Answered question	119	22	91	86	33
Skipped question	16				

Research Sub-Question #2:

Do principals, assistant principals, and teachers perceive that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase positive student behavior?

Survey participants were asked if they understand the concepts that support their Peer Mediation program (question 27). All administrators and 93 percent of teachers indicated they do understand (Table 24, strongly agree and agree scales). Only six teachers disagreed (5.4%) and 23 skipped the question. Several of the responses to the following questions in this section provide insights as to ways of understanding and not understanding of these concepts by the respondents.

Table 24. I understand the concepts that support our Peer Mediation Program

	Total Responses	Administrators	Teachers	High School	Middle School
Strongly Agree	50.0% (56)	65% (13)	44.2% (38)	50.6% (40)	48.5% (16)
Agree	44.6% (50)	35% (7)	48.8% (42)	46.8% (37)	39.4% (13)
Disagree	5.4% (6)	0.0% (0)	7.0% (6)	2.5% (2)	12.1% (4)
Strongly Disagree	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Answered question	112	20	86	79	33
Skipped question	23				

Participants were asked if they Support or Do Not Support their Peer Mediation Program (question #28). It is important to ask if administrators and teachers support their

program or not because it can reflect commitment, frustration, or perceived problems. This researcher has found that administrators and faculty often have strong opinions about peer mediation programs, and although participation in the survey was voluntary, assumptions about what respondents think cannot be made. All administrators and most teachers (95.4%) indicated they do Support their program (Table 25). Only four teachers (3.5% total) Do Not Support their program, and 22 participants skipped the question. Specific reasons for support and lack of support are explored in the next question, and do provide a better understanding of possible program issues and weaknesses.

Table 25. I support/do not support our Peer Mediation program

	Total Responses	Administrators	Teachers	High School	Middle School
SUPPORT	96.5% (109)	100% (20)	95.4% (83)	96.3% (77)	97.0% (32)
DO NOT SUPPORT	3.5% (4)	0.0% (0)	4.6% (4)	3.8% (3)	3.0% (1)
Answered question	113	20	87	80	33
Skipped question	22				

Why do you Support your school's peer mediation program?

As a follow-up to the previous question, participants were asked to explain their reasons for supporting or not supporting their programs by providing open-ended replies (question #29). Replies were provided by 12 administrators (48%), 56 teachers (41.4%), and four who identified their school level but not their school position.

A review of the responses reveals four reasons for supporting their programs (Appendix G). The responding educators believe that their peer mediation program provides a safe place, helps to prevent conflicts from escalating, supports the socio-

emotional growth of the participants, and provides a set of conflict resolution skills for the students.

The first reason offered by school administrators is the program provides a neutral, unbiased, voluntary, and confidential opportunity to resolve conflicts. In other words the program is a safe place. One teacher stated, "I think Peer mediation is important because it takes students outside of the situation and allows them to sit down and talk about it in a safe place with someone acting as the neutral" (middle school). A middle school assistant principal wrote, "It provides Intervention and is a proactive approach to conflict." One principal stated, "students get a chance for their voice [to be] heard and understood without judgment being passed" (high school).

Second, the principals and assistant principals believe that their program helps to keep conflicts from escalating. A middle school principal stated, "It has been a proactive intervention and also served to deescalate problems that have already surfaced." Another agreed, "peer mediation has successfully diffused a number of situations that would have otherwise risen to the level of school administration discipline and consequences" (high school). A high school assistant principal wrote, "Prevention - early intervention prevents serious situations from occurring. Student leadership/mentor training benefits the practitioner and all students and staff." A middle school teacher stated, "I support the program because [it] really prevents future conflicts." And a high school teacher wrote, "Peer Mediation is a program that not only reduces student conflict by helping students come to agreements. It also serves as a preventative program that encourages positive interactions between students and focuses on bullying prevention."

The third reason that their peer mediation program is successful is that it aids the socio-emotional growth of the student participants. One assistant principal described the program as assisting in “solving student to student conflict, student to teacher conflict and teacher to teacher conflict. It is a way to teach our students different social skills and give them the ability to solve problems. It is another RESOURCE for students to be able to access before they make a bad decision” (middle school, emphasis in original). Another assistant principal concurred, “I strongly support the program and would encourage the district to expand it to upper elementary grades as well. It provides valuable skills and increases student understanding of individual differences. It also increases empathy” (high school). A high school added, “I feel all students deserve the right to resolve conflict with dignity. Some may need this modeled for them as they may not have experienced healthy strategies for resolving conflict. Our mediation program guides this process.”

The last reason is the applicability of conflict resolution skills to other situations. For example a middle school principal wrote, “PM teaches everyone involved important social skills. Conflict is a normal part of life that everyone encounters, and the PM program teaches young people how to appropriately navigate the challenges that conflicts present” (middle school). A high school teacher stated, “I think it teaches our student population valuable interpersonal skills and reduces potential violent and harmful situations.” Another teacher wrote, “The program promotes a positive message and demonstrates valuable skills for “real life” experiences,” and a middle school teacher offered, “It is important for students to learn peaceful ways to solve problems.”

These four reasons support a conclusion from the responding educators that their peer mediation programs provide an effective and needed service. A middle principal explained, "I have been actively involved in my district's program for 18 years. I have been the district coordinator and adviser until now because I have recently been appointed as Principal. I know how effective peer mediation has been for our district and have numbers to back that statement." Similarly, a high school assistant principal stated, "I have been a peer mediation advisor and trainer in middle and high schools over the past 21 years and can attest to the value of such programs." A middle school teacher echoed the administrators writing, "it is an important part of a total violence prevention program." Another teacher said, "[it] has a good success rate with observable results" (high school); and another concurred, "I believe in mediation as a process at any age. I've seen it work first-hand with the middle school population for the past 10 years" (middle school).

Why do you Not Support your peer mediation program?

Lack of support was noted by three high school teachers and one middle school teacher who described problems with mediator selection criteria, training, in-service training, program coordination, goal development, implementation, performance evaluation of individual mediators, program effectiveness, and marketing (Appendix G). This researcher found that these issues can result from failures to screen applicants' motivation to be a mediator; assess their ability to maintain neutrality, lack of bias, and confidentiality; choose a cross-section of the student body to serve as mediators rather than one or two cliques; or schedule mediations so they do not conflict with classes. For

example, one high school teacher said, "It attracts the same type of student-female, typically high-achieving. In many instances, I do not think the students chosen are the ones that others would feel the most comfortable sharing their problems with. I honestly believe the pull for most students is that it gets them out of class." Another high school teacher stated, "Too much time for peer mediators away from the classroom for training, etc. Rarely utilized program, unsure of any real results." A third teacher simply wrote, "Ineffective at achieving goals stated" (high school).

Lack of support was also expressed by one teacher who developed a negative perception of peer mediation through complaints brought by students. Doubt was expressed about the mediators' capacity to be neutral and unbiased, or facilitate the mediation properly. The middle school respondent wrote:

I feel that it is not helpful to all students. I have been told by many students that they did not find it helpful at all and was very awkward. I understand that the mediators are to be confidential but I still do not think that having students opening up to others is always judgment free. I also feel that the conflicts are never truly resolved. Peer mediators at a high school level could be effective but at a middle school I do not feel that they have enough life experiences to draw from to help approach conflicts with different views.

Two important concerns were raised by this teacher's comment. First, it appears that confidentiality was not kept if students brought complaints to faculty rather than to the program coordinator, and second, there seems to be a breakdown in communication if these complaints cause the teacher to have serious doubts about the program but has not brought them to the program coordinator so they could be examined and addressed. For example, if the conflicts never were really resolved or mediators did not receive enough training, these should be addressed.

Altogether, these *lack of support* comments provide insights as to the need for dialogue between the faculty and program coordinator concerning what the program is trying to achieve, feedback on what they think is successful or unsuccessful, and corrective actions to consider.

Mixed Support

Some high school and middle school teachers indicated both positive and negative aspects of their program's effectiveness (Appendix G). Responses provide benefits of peer mediation, such as it is effective in reducing conflicts and negative behaviors. Negative themes include: program coordinators and peer mediators could do a better job educating the school community about program goals and effectiveness, mediations should be scheduled outside of class time, and students misuse the program to misbehave.

For example, teachers state they are in favor of peer mediation because it reduces the escalation of issues, but they are not in favor because students use it to get out of class, as one stated "At times, it has reduced the escalation of issues and resolved them before physical violence has broken out. At times, students use it as a scapegoat to get out of class" (high school). Also, they do not regard mediation between students in the same way as mediation between students and faculty or administrators, as one teacher stated, "I support student-student mediation but not student-teacher mediation" (high school).

Middle school teachers with mixed support also indicate that their programs deal effectively with conflictive behavior, but are not in favor of peer mediation taking precedence over class time, particularly if students are doing poorly academically. "I

support it, though it does take students out of class for a significant amount of time. Sometimes these students are failing classes. While I certainly support the program and its efforts, if a student is failing classes, they should not be excused from class for a mediation - especially when the state then comes back to me asking why the student is failing the course and/or MCAS” (middle school).

Other concerns were that peer mediation worsens certain problems and behaviors, promotes attention-getting behaviors, and does not work on a long term basis. For example, “The program seems to ameliorate conflictive behavior. However there are certain students who thrive on the attention and seek out mediation with the same group of peers. They do not seem to have any permanent solutions and for these kids I do not find it effective” (middle school). Another teacher concurs, “I do support the program, but I also feel that it often exacerbates problems or empowers students to engage in behaviors that they previously did not” (middle school).

Participants were asked if teaching students how to mediate conflicts helps to provide a safe school climate (question 30). All administrators and most teachers (97.7%) indicated agreement (Table 26, strongly agree and agree scales). This response clearly indicates that teaching students to mediate is viewed by respondents as contributing toward safe school climate, as conflicts are prevented and reduced in their schools.

Table 26. Teaching students how to mediate conflicts helps to provide a safe school climate.

	Administrators	Teachers	Response Totals
Strongly Agree	75% (15)	54.0% (47)	57.9% (62)
Agree	25% (5)	43.7% (38)	40.2% (43)

Disagree	0% (0)	2.3% (2)	1.9% (2)
Strongly Disagree	0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Answered question	20	87	107
Skipped question			21

Survey participants were asked if teaching students to mediate prevents 12 specific types of conflictive behaviors (question 31), including gossip/rumor, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, cyberbullying, sexting, racial conflict, ethnic conflict, gender conflict, social class conflict, fighting in school, and fighting out of school. The majority of administrators and teachers indicated that peer mediation prevents all 12 behaviors (Table 27). However, a higher percentage of administrators than teachers thought this was the case (strongly agree and agree scales). On the other hand, almost one-third (32.2%) of teachers did not think that mediation prevents Gossip/Rumor, followed by one-fourth (25.6%) of teachers concerning Sexting. There is some concern that several respondents chose “Do not know,” which could indicate a lack of program evaluation regarding the impact of mediation sessions on student behaviors, or lack of communication with school staff on program effectiveness. For example, more than 15 percent of administrators chose “Do not know” for Sexting, Cyberbullying, and Racial conflict, while more than 15 percent of teachers chose do not know about Sexting, Racial conflict, and Ethnic conflict.

Table 27. Teaching students to mediate prevents the following behaviors (School Position)
A = Administrators T = Teachers

Student Behaviors	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Do not know	
	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T

Gossip & Rumor	15% (3)	17.2% (15)	75% (15)	44.8% (39)	5% (1)	27.6% (24)	0% (0)	4.6% (4)	5% (1)	5.7% (5)
Harassment	25% (5)	16.1% (14)	70% (14)	67.8% (59)	0.0% (0)	10.3% (9)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	5% (1)	5.7% (5)
Sexual Harassment	10% (2)	14.9% (13)	75% (15)	62.1% (54)	5% (1)	13.8% (12)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	10% (2)	9.2% (8)
Bullying	20% (4)	16.1% (14)	70% (14)	66.7% (58)	5% (1)	11.5% (10)	0.0% (0)	1.1% (1)	5% (1)	4.6% (4)
Cyber Bullying	15% (3)	11.6% (10)	55% (11)	55.8% (48)	15% (3)	20.9% (18)	0.0% (0)	2.3% (2)	15% (3)	9.3% (8)
Sexting	10% (2)	10.5% (9)	40% (8)	44.2% (38)	25% (5)	22.1% (19)	0.0% (0)	3.5% (3)	25% (5)	19.8% (17)
Racial Conflict	15% (3)	15.1% (13)	65% (13)	58.1% (50)	5% (1)	10.5% (9)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (1)	15% (3)	15.1% (13)
Ethnic Conflict	15% (3)	17.2% (15)	65% (13)	57.5% (50)	5% (1)	8.0% (7)	0.0% (0)	1.1% (1)	15% (3)	16.1% (14)
Gender Conflict	15% (3)	16.3% (14)	75% (15)	58.1% (50)	0.0% (0)	11.6% (10)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (1)	10% (2)	12.8% (11)
Social Class Conflict	15.7% (3)	16.3% (14)	68.4% (13)	58.1% (50)	5.3% (1)	10.5% (9)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (1)	10.5% (2)	14.0% (12)
Fighting in School	40% (8)	19.8% (17)	55% (11)	65.1% (56)	0.0% (0)	9.3% (8)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	5% (1)	5.8% (5)
Fighting out of School	31.6% (6)	16.1% (14)	47.4% (9)	54.0% (47)	10.5% (2)	14.9% (13)	0.0% (0)	2.3% (2)	10.5% (2)	12.6% (11)
Answered question: 20 Administrators + 87 Teachers =107 respondents										
Skipped question: 21										

Participants were asked if their peer mediation program has increased the 11 positive behaviors and attitudes in students who have gone through peer mediation (the disputants) including: Ability to resolve conflicts, Academic achievement, Attendance, Attitude toward other ethnic groups, Attitude toward other social groups, Attitude toward

other economic groups, Communication skills, Concern for other students, Cooperative spirit, Problem solving, and Self-esteem (question 32). The majority of administrators indicated that peer mediation has impacted disputants' positive behaviors and attitudes in every category (Table 28, strongly agree and agree scales), while the majority of teachers thought disputants were impacted in all categories except Academic achievement (40.5%) and Attendance (48.8%).

Administrators and teachers had statistically significant different responses to "Attitude toward other social groups," ($\chi^2 (4, N = 105) = 11.13, p = .025$), indicated by 95 percent of administrators and 57.7 percent of teachers. They also differed significantly regarding "Attitude toward other economic groups," ($\chi^2 (4, N = 104) = 13.02, p = .011$), indicated by 90 percent of administrators and 52.4 percent of teachers. For both responses administrators more strongly agreed than teachers that there was an increased behavior and attitude on the part of participating students. Although conflicts among teens that are based upon economic and social differences can be a problem at various schools, for example, the musical *West Side Story*, it is not known why administrators and teachers have such disparate points of view regarding the positive influences of peer mediation on disputants.

Of some concern is the use of the "Do not know" scale by 25 percent of administrators regarding the impact of peer mediation on disputants' Academic Achievement, followed by teachers on Academic achievement (41.7%), School attendance (39.3%), Attitude toward other ethnic groups (39.3%), Attitude toward other social groups (36.5%), Attitude toward other economic groups (40.5%), Concern for other students (20.2%), and Self esteem (28.2%). These perceptions could be due to a

lack of evaluating the impact of peer mediation on changes in disputants' positive behaviors and attitudes, or simply a lack of communication with faculty and administration on program outcomes for disputants.

Table 28. Increased positive behaviors and attitudes in peer mediation disputants
A = Administrators T = Teachers

Disputants' Behavior	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Do not know	
	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T
Ability to resolve conflicts	30% (6)	15.3% (13)	65% (13)	62.4% (53)	0.0% (0)	3.5% (3)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (1)	5% (1)	17.6% (15)
Academic Achievement	5% (1)	6.0% (5)	55% (11)	34.5% (29)	15% (3)	14.3% (12)	0% (0)	3.6% (3)	25% (5)	41.7% (35)
School Attendance	5% (1)	7.1% (6)	70% (14)	41.7% (35)	10% (2)	8.3% (7)	0.0% (0)	3.6% (3)	15% (3)	39.3% (33)
Attitude toward other ethnic groups	5% (1)	11.9% (10)	75% (15)	44.0% (37)	5% (1)	2.4 % (2)	0% (0)	2.4% (2)	15% (3)	39.3% (33)
Attitude toward other social groups	10% (2)	11.8% (10)	85% (17)	45.9% (39)	0.0% (0)	3.5% (3)	0.0% (0)	2.4% (2)	5% (1)	36.5% (31)
Attitude toward other economic groups	5% (1)	11.9% (10)	85% (17)	40.5% (34)	0.0% (0)	6.0% (5)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (1)	10% (2)	40.5% (34)
Communication skills	30% (6)	16.5% (14)	65% (13)	62.4% (14)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (1)	5% (1)	18.8% (16)
Concern for other students	35% (7)	15.5% (13)	60% (12)	58.3% (49)	0.0% (0)	4.8% (4)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (1)	5% (1)	20.2% (17)
Cooperative spirit	15% (3)	15.3% (13)	80% (16)	56.5% (48)	0.0% (0)	8.2% (7)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (1)	5% (1)	18.8% (16)
Problem solving	20% (4)	14.3% (12)	75% (15)	65.5% (55)	0.0% (0)	2.4% (2)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (1)	5% (1)	16.7% (14)
Self-esteem	10% (2)	15.3% (13)	80% (16)	50.6% (43)	0.0% (0)	4.7% (4)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (1)	10% (2)	28.2% (24)
Answered question: 20 Administrators + 85 Teachers = 105										
Skipped question: 23										

Participants were asked if their peer mediation program has reduced 13 school-wide negative behaviors (question 33), including gang-related activities, incidents of

school vandalism, incidents of substance abuse, incidents of fighting, incidents of harassment, incidents of gossip/rumor, incidents of bullying, incidents of hate crimes, incidents of smoking, poor grades, reported suicide attempts, truancy, and weapons brought to school. The majority of administrators and teachers agreed that peer mediation has reduced four types of behaviors: incidents of fighting, harassment, gossip/rumor, and bullying (Table 29, strongly agree and agree scales).

Significant differences between administrators and teachers were found in nine of the behavior categories, all of which contained a greater percentage of administrators than teachers who perceived that peer mediation successfully reduced the negative behaviors. The nine categories are: gang-related activities ($\chi^2 (4, N = 102) = 10.00, p = .040$), school vandalism ($\chi^2 (4, N = 102) = 12.50, p = .014$), fighting ($\chi^2 (4, N = 103) = 10.37, p = .035$), harassment ($\chi^2 (4, N = 102) = 10.31, p = .036$), smoking ($\chi^2 (4, N = 102) = 9.89, p = .042$), poor grades ($\chi^2 (4, N = 102) = 10.87, p = .028$), suicide attempts ($\chi^2 (4, N = 102) = 10.08, p = .039$), truancy ($\chi^2 (4, N = 103) = 9.79, p = .044$), and weapons brought to school ($\chi^2 (4, N = 101) = 15.17, p = .004$). It is possible that administrators are more aware of these behaviors as they may occur more frequently on a school-wide basis, rather than in the classroom. Or perhaps, teachers are simply less aware of the impact of their peer mediation programs for some reason.

Also of interest is the number of respondents who chose the "Do not know" category. For example, 30-40 percent of administrators indicated they did not know the extent to which their peer mediation reduces gang-related activities, smoking, and reported suicide attempts. It is possible that these particular activities do not occur frequently enough to measure in participating school locations, or are not evaluated by

their peer mediation programs. Moreover, 51.8 to 72.0 percent of teachers indicated they did not know the impact of peer mediation on nine of the 13 categories, including gang-related activities, school vandalism, substance abuse, hate crimes, smoking, poor grades, reported suicide attempts, truancy, and weapons brought to school. This large percentage of teachers also raises the possibility of lack of program evaluation, as well as simply not informing faculty and staff about the effectiveness of their programs based upon evaluations.

Table 29. Peer mediation program has reduced school wide negative behaviors
A = Administrators T = Teachers

Negative Behaviors	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Do Not Know	
	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T
Gang-related activities	10% (2)	3.7% (3)	30% (6)	20.7% (17)	25% (5)	7.3% (6)	5% (1)	3.7% (3)	30% (6)	64.6% (53)
Incidents of school vandalism	10% (2)	3.7% (3)	55% (11)	20.7% (17)	10% (2)	13.4% (11)	0.0% (0)	2.4% (2)	25% (5)	59.8% (49)
Incidents of substance abuse	10.5% (2)	4.8% (4)	31.6% (6)	15.7% (13)	31.6% (6)	15.7% (13)	0.0% (0)	6.0% (5)	26.3% (5)	57.8% (48)
Incidents of fighting	20% (4)	8.4% (7)	75% (15)	49.4% (41)	0.0% (0)	6.0% (5)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (1)	5% (1)	34.9% (29)
Incidents of harassment	10% (2)	8.5% (7)	85% (17)	48.8% (40)	0.0% (0)	4.9% (4)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (1)	5% (1)	36.6% (30)
Incidents of gossip/rumor	20% (4)	8.4% (7)	70% (14)	47.0% (39)	5% (1)	13.3% (11)	0.0% (0)	2.4% (2)	5% (1)	28.9% (24)
Incidents of bullying	10% (2)	8.4% (7)	80% (16)	49.4% (41)	5% (1)	7.2% (6)	0.0% (0)	2.4% (2)	5% (1)	32.5% (27)
Incidents of hate crimes	10% (2)	7.2% (6)	60% (12)	33.7% (28)	10% (2)	6.0% (5)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (1)	20% (4)	51.8% (43)
Incidents of smoking	5% (1)	4.9% (4)	20% (4)	13.4% (11)	45% (9)	17.1% (14)	0.0% (0)	8.5% (7)	30% (6)	56.1% (46)
Poor grades	10% (2)	3.7% (3)	50% (10)	23.2% (19)	20% (4)	13.4% (11)	0.0% (0)	3.7% (3)	20% (4)	56.1% (46)
Reported suicide attempts	10% (2)	4.9% (4)	25% (5)	15.9% (13)	25% (5)	6.1% (5)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (1)	40% (8)	72.0% (59)
Truancy	10% (2)	4.8% (4)	40% (8)	22.9% (19)	25% (5)	9.6% (8)	0.0% (0)	2.4% (2)	25% (5)	60.2% (50)
Weapons	10%	4.9%	35%	13.6%	30%	9.9%	0.0%	2.5%	25%	69.1%

brought to school	(2)	(4)	(7)	(11)	(6)	(8)	(0)	(2)	(5)	(56)
Answered question: 20 Administrators + 83 Teachers = 103 respondents										
Skipped question: 25										

Study participants were asked if their Peer Mediation program has reduced disciplinary actions such as suspension, expulsion, detention, and other disciplinary actions (question 34).

Administrators and teachers responses differed significantly on the impact of peer mediation on reducing disciplinary actions ($\chi^2 (4, N = 101) = 16.36, p = .003$) as indicated by 90 percent of administrators and 48.8 percent of teachers (Table 30). In terms of their role, it is likely that principals and assistant principals are more aware of student disciplinary actions than teachers, but the reduction of such actions due to peer mediation could be of value to all school faculty and staff. One concern is the 40.2 percent of teachers who chose the “Do not know” category, indicating a possible lack of information or awareness of the impact of peer mediation on disciplinary actions. In addition, this researcher has found this issue to be highly controversial in some middle and high schools because some educators worry that students who commit infractions could “use” peer mediation to “get out of” necessary detention, suspension, or expulsion. They may not be aware that combining the two methods can be beneficial: students can be disciplined, but also given the opportunity to resolve conflicts with other students that may have caused the behaviors that had to be addressed, which may reduce the need for disciplinary actions in the future.

Table 30. Our Peer Mediation program has reduced disciplinary actions such as suspension, expulsion, detention, and other disciplinary actions.

	Administrators	Teachers	Response Totals
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Strongly Agree	37% (7)	11.0% (9)	15.8% (16)
Agree	53% (10)	37.8% (31)	40.6% (41)
Disagree	10.5% (2)	6.1% (5)	6.9% (7)
Strongly Disagree	0.0% (0)	4.9% (4)	4.0% (4)
Do Not Know	0.0% (0)	40.2% (33)	32.7% (33)
Answered question	19	82	101
Skipped question			27

Research Sub-Question #3:

Is there a difference between middle and high school perceptions that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase positive student behavior?

Survey participants were asked if they understand the concepts that support their Peer Mediation program (question #27). At the school level, a higher percentage of high school respondents (97.4%) than middle school educators (87.9%) indicated that they understand the concepts that support their peer mediation program (Table 31, strongly agree and agree scales). Those who disagreed were four middle school teachers and two high school teachers. These six teachers are not enough to indicate any significant difference between the two school levels, but some of their possible reasons can be found in the other questions in this section.

Table 31. I understand the concepts that support our Peer Mediation Program

	Total Responses	Administrators	Teachers	High School	Middle School
Strongly Agree	50.0% (56)	65% (13)	44.2% (38)	50.6% (40)	48.5% (16)
Agree	44.6% (50)	35% (7)	48.8% (42)	46.8% (37)	39.4% (13)
Disagree	5.4% (6)	0.0% (0)	7.0% (6)	2.5% (2)	12.1% (4)

Strongly Disagree	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Answered question	112	20	86	79	33
Skipped question	23				

Participants were asked if they support or do not support their peer mediation program (question 28). There was overwhelming support from middle school (97.0%) and high school (96.3%) respondents, with no significant difference between them (Table 32).

Table 32. I support/do not support our Peer Mediation program

	Total Responses	Administrators	Teachers	High School	Middle School
Support	96.5% (109)	100% (20)	95.4% (83)	96.3% (77)	97.0% (32)
Do Not Support	3.5% (4)	0.0% (0)	4.6% (4)	3.8% (3)	3.0% (1)
Answered question	113	20	87	80	33
Skipped question	22				

As a follow-up to the previous question, participants were asked to explain their reasons as to why they Support or Do Not Support their school's peer mediation program (question 29). A comprehensive discussion of the open-ended replies pertaining to this survey question can be found above in Sub-question #2. There were no significant differences between the middle and high school replies in terms of educators' support, lack of support, or mixed support.

Participants were asked if teaching students how to mediate conflicts helps to provide a safe school climate (question #30). There was no significant difference between middle (100%) and high school (97.5%) responses (Table 33, strongly agree and

agree scales). Participating educators at both school levels think that mediation does contribute to safe school climate.

Table 33. Teaching students how to mediate conflicts helps to provide a safe school climate.

	High School	Middle school	Response Totals
Strongly Agree	60.0% (48)	51.5% (17)	57.5% (65)
Agree	37.5% (30)	48.5% (16)	40.7% (46)
Disagree	2.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	1.8% (2)
Strongly Disagree	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Answered question	80	33	113
Skipped question			21

School respondents were asked to indicate whether teaching students to mediate prevents 12 specific types of conflictive behaviors (question 31). There is a statistically significant difference between high school and middle school respondents on the question of “Fighting out of school” ($\chi^2 (4, N = 112) = 11.14, p = .025$) as indicated by a greater percentage of high school (77.6%) than middle school (59.4%) respondents (Table 34, strongly agree and agree scales). Also, there is a greater percentage of high school than middle school respondents who thought that peer mediation had an effect on Gossip/Rumor, Harassment, Sexual harassment, Bullying, Cyberbullying, Sexting, Gender conflict, Social class conflict, Fighting in school, and Fighting out of school (strongly agree and agree scales). Unfortunately, this could be due to the fact that a greater percentage of middle school than high school respondents indicated “Do not know” on every item except Racial conflict (which were rated equally) concerning the impact of peer mediation. There is some concern that high school respondents may have

a better sense of how their peer mediation program prevents these conflictive school behaviors, while many middle school respondents do not seem to have this information.

Table 34. Teaching students to mediate conflicts prevents the following behaviors (School Level).

High School = HS Middle School= MS

Behavior	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Do not know	
	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS
Gossip/ Rumor	17.5% (14)	15.2% (5)	53.8% (43)	45.5% (15)	21.3% (17)	27.3% (9)	3.8% (3)	30.0% (1)	3.8% (3)	9.1% (3)
Harassment	18.8% (15)	15.2% (5)	68.8% (55)	66.7% (22)	8.8% (7)	9.1% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.8% (3)	9.1% (3)
Sexual Harassment	13.8% (11)	12.1% (4)	67.5% (54)	57.6% (19)	12.5% (10)	12.1% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	6.3% (5)	18.2% (6)
Bullying	15.0% (12)	18.2% (6)	68.8% (55)	63.6% (21)	12.5% (10)	9.1% (3)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.5% (2)	9.1% (3)
Cyber Bullying	12.7% (10)	9.1% (3)	58.2% (46)	51.5% (17)	21.5% (17)	18.2% (6)	1.3% (1)	3.0% (1)	6.3% (5)	18.2% (6)
Sexting	10.1% (8)	9.1% (3)	45.6% (36)	36.4% (12)	24.1% (19)	24.2% (8)	1.3% (1)	6.1% (2)	19.0% (15)	24.2% (8)
Racial conflict	13.9% (11)	15.2% (5)	58.2% (46)	60.6% (20)	11.4% (9)	9.1% (3)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	15.2% (12)	15.2% (5)
Ethnic conflict	16.3% (13)	15.2% (5)	57.5% (46)	60.6% (20)	10.0% (8)	6.1% (2)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	15.0% (12)	18.2% (6)
Gender conflict	15.2% (12)	15.2% (5)	62.0% (49)	60.6% (20)	12.7% (10)	6.1% (2)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	8.9% (7)	18.2% (6)
Social class conflict	16.7% (13)	12.1% (4)	60.3% (47)	57.6% (19)	11.5% (9)	9.1% (3)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	10.3% (8)	21.2% (7)
Fighting in school	25.3% (20)	15.2% (5)	62.0% (49)	69.7% (23)	7.6% (6)	9.1% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	5.1% (4)	6.1% (2)
Fighting out of school	21.3% (17)	9.4% (3)	56.3% (45)	50.0% (16)	15.0% (12)	12.5% (4)	0.0% (0)	6.3% (2)	7.5% (6)	21.9% (7)
Answered question: 80 High school + 33 Middle school = 113 Total Responses										
Skipped question: 21										

Participants were asked if their peer mediation program has increased 11 positive behaviors and attitudes in students who have gone through peer mediation (the disputants), including: ability to resolve conflicts, academic achievement, attendance,

attitude toward other ethnic groups, attitude toward other social groups, attitude toward other economic groups, communication skills, concern for other students, cooperative spirit, problem solving, and self-esteem (question 32). With the exception of academic achievement (discussed below), the majority of middle and high school respondents agreed (Table 35, strongly agree and agree scale) that peer mediation has increased disputants' positive behaviors and attitudes in 10 of the 11 categories. This could indicate that participating middle and high schools have been equally successful in achieving behavioral gains through peer mediation, and are successful in monitoring and advertising these program outcomes.

It is interesting to note that the number of middle and high school educators who responded differed significantly in their perceptions of the impact of peer mediation on disputants' academic achievement ($\chi^2 (4, N = 110) = 10.44, p = .034$). It is not known why more educators from middle schools than high schools consider Academic achievement as an outcome for mediated disputants, but open-ended comments could provide further insights.

A concern pertaining to the responses is the use of the "Do not know" scale, which exceeds 20 percent in over half of the categories for both middle and high schools, including academic achievement (mentioned above), school attendance, attitude toward other ethnic groups, attitude toward other social groups, attitude toward other economic groups, and self-esteem. Although several of these categories were chosen by the majority of respondents (mentioned above) as areas of increased positive behaviors and attitudes in peer mediation disputants, it is possible that this information was not known or made available to all of the educators in participating middle and high schools.

Table 35. Increased positive behaviors and attitudes in peer mediation disputants.

High School = HS Middle School= MS

Disputants' Behavior	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Do not know	
	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS
Ability to resolve conflicts	20.3% (16)	18.8% (6)	60.8% (48)	65.6% (21)	2.5% (2)	3.1% (1)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	15.2% (12)	12.5% (4)
Academic Achievement	6.4% (5)	3.1% (1)	32.1% (25)	59.4% (19)	16.7% (13)	9.4% (3)	1.3% (1)	6.3% (2)	43.6% (34)	21.9% (7)
School Attendance	7.7% (6)	3.1% (1)	43.6% (34)	59.4% (19)	10.3% (8)	6.3% (2)	1.3% (1)	6.3% (2)	37.2% (29)	25.0% (8)
Attitude toward other ethnic groups	10.3% (8)	9.4% (3)	53.8% (42)	46.9% (15)	3.8% (3)	3.1% (1)	1.3% (1)	3.1% (1)	30.8% (24)	37.5% (12)
Attitude toward other social groups	11.4% (9)	9.4% (3)	54.4% (43)	56.3% (18)	3.8% (3)	3.1% (1)	1.3% (1)	3.1% (1)	29.1% (23)	28.1% (9)
Attitude toward other economic groups	10.3% (8)	9.4% (3)	52.6% (41)	46.9% (15)	5.1% (4)	6.3% (2)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	30.8% (24)	37.5% (12)
Communication skills	24.1% (19)	12.5% (4)	58.2% (46)	71.9% (23)	0.0% (0)	3.1% (1)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	16.5% (13)	12.5% (4)
Concern for other students	21.8% (17)	12.5% (4)	57.7% (45)	65.6% (21)	3.8% (3)	3.1% (1)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	15.4% (12)	18.8% (6)
Cooperative spirit	19.0% (15)	9.4% (3)	57.0% (45)	71.9% (23)	7.6% (6)	3.1% (1)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	15.2% (12)	15.6% (5)
Problem solving	19.0% (15)	12.9% (4)	63.3% (50)	71.0% (22)	2.5% (2)	3.2% (1)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	13.9% (11)	12.9% (4)
Self-esteem	15.2% (12)	9.4% (3)	57.0% (45)	59.4% (19)	5.1% (4)	3.1% (1)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	21.5% (17)	28.1% (9)
Answered question: 79 High School + 32 Middle School = 111 School Respondents										
Skipped question: 23										

Participants were asked if their peer mediation program has reduced 13 school-wide negative behaviors (question 33), including gang-related activities, incidents of school vandalism, incidents of substance abuse, incidents of fighting, incidents of harassment, incidents of gossip/rumor, incidents of bullying, incidents of hate crimes, incidents of smoking, poor grades, reported suicide attempts, truancy, and weapons brought to school. Although no statistically significant differences were found between

middle and high schools, it is interesting to note that more high school respondents thought peer mediation had reduced incidents of fighting, harassment, gossip/rumor, bullying, hate crimes, and reported suicide attempts, while more middle school respondents thought peer mediation had reduced smoking, poor grades, and weapons brought to school (Table 36).

There is concern that over 50 percent of both middle and high school respondents chose the “Do not know” scale for seven of the 13 categories: gang-related activities, school vandalism, substance abuse, smoking, reported suicide attempts, truancy, and weapons brought to school. In addition, over 50 percent of middle school respondents chose “Do not know” for poor grades, and over 50 percent of high school respondents chose “Do not know” for hate crimes. This is a clear indication that at least half of the respondents at both school levels are not familiar with the effectiveness of their programs, and that perhaps their programs are not evaluating the relationship between mediation and many of these school-wide negative behaviors.

Table 36. Our peer mediation program has reduced school wide negative behaviors.
High School = HS Middle School= MS

Negative Behaviors	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Do not know	
	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS
Gang-related activities	5.3% (4)	3.1% (1)	22.4% (17)	21.9% (7)	9.2% (7)	12.5% (4)	6.6% (5)	0.0% (0)	56.6% (43)	62.5% (20)
Incidents of school vandalism	5.3% (4)	3.1% (1)	25.0% (19)	31.3% (10)	11.8% (9)	15.6% (5)	2.6% (2)	0.0% (0)	55.3% (42)	50.0% (16)
Incidents of substance abuse	6.5% (5)	3.2% (1)	19.5% (15)	16.1% (5)	15.6% (12)	25.8% (8)	6.5% (5)	0.0% (0)	51.9% (40)	54.8% (17)
Incidents of fighting	11.7% (9)	9.4% (3)	58.4% (45)	50.0% (16)	5.2% (4)	3.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	3.1% (1)	24.7% (19)	34.4% (11)
Incidents of harassment	10.5% (8)	6.3% (2)	60.5% (46)	46.9% (15)	5.3% (4)	3.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	3.1% (1)	23.7% (18)	40.6% (13)
Incidents of	13.2%	9.4%	52.6%	50.0%	10.5%	12.5%	1.3%	3.1%	22.4%	25.0%

gossip/rumor	(10)	(3)	(40)	(16)	(8)	(4)	(1)	(1)	(17)	(8)
Incidents of bullying	10.4% (8)	6.3% (2)	58.4% (45)	53.1% (17)	5.2% (4)	9.4% (3)	1.3% (1)	3.1% (1)	24.7% (19)	28.1% (9)
Incidents of hate crimes	7.8% (6)	6.3% (2)	41.6% (32)	31.3% (10)	6.5% (5)	12.5% (4)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	42.9% (33)	50.0% (16)
Incidents of smoking	5.3% (4)	3.1% (1)	10.5% (8)	25.0% (8)	25.0% (19)	18.8% (6)	9.2% (7)	0.0% (0)	50.0% (38)	53.1% (17)
Poor grades	5.3% (4)	3.1% (1)	21.1% (16)	46.9% (15)	17.1% (13)	9.4% (3)	2.6% (2)	3.1% (1)	53.9% (41)	37.5% (12)
Reported suicide attempts	6.6% (5)	3.1% (1)	18.4% (14)	15.6% (5)	9.2% (7)	12.5% (4)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	64.5% (49)	68.8% (22)
Truancy	6.5% (5)	3.1% (1)	27.3% (21)	31.3% (10)	13.0% (10)	12.5% (4)	2.6% (2)	0.0% (0)	50.6% (39)	53.1% (17)
Weapons brought to school	6.8% (5)	3.1% (1)	13.5% (10)	25.0% (8)	13.5% (10)	12.5% (4)	4.1% (3)	0.0% (0)	62.2% (46)	59.4% (19)
Answered question: 74 High School + 32 Middle School = 106 Respondents										
Skipped question: 25										

Study participants were asked if their Peer Mediation program has reduced disciplinary actions such as suspension, expulsion, detention, and other disciplinary actions (question 34).

There was very little difference between perceptions at the school level, as 58.7 percent of high schools and 53.2 percent of middle schools indicated that their peer mediation programs have reduced disciplinary actions (Table 37, strongly agree and agree scales). However, of concern is that about one-third of high school (30.7%) and middle school (37.5%) respondents chose the “Do Not Know” category, indicating a possible lack of information or awareness about the impact of their programs on disciplinary actions. These responses are of interest because peer mediation and disciplinary actions can go hand in hand when needed, and peer mediation can be used to resolve conflicts between students, therefore possibly reducing the need for as many disciplinary actions in the future.

Table 37. Our Peer Mediation program has reduced disciplinary actions such as suspension, expulsion, detention, and other disciplinary actions.

	High school	Middle school	Response Totals
Strongly Agree	16.0% (12)	18.8% (6)	16.8% (18)
Agree	42.7% (32)	34.4% (11)	40.2% (43)
Disagree	6.7% (5)	6.3% (2)	6.5% (7)
Strongly Disagree	4.0% (3)	3.1% (1)	3.7% (4)
Do not know	30.7% (23)	37.5% (12)	32.7% (35)
Answered question	75	32	107
Skipped question			27

Research Sub-Question #4

What resources do principals, assistant principals, and teachers use to implement their peer mediation programs?

Survey Section VI. Program Resources

This section compares the perceptions of administrators and teachers, at middle and high school levels, pertaining to the resources they use for the peer mediation programs. These perceptions are related to Research Sub-Question #4, and Survey Questions 35-41.

Survey participants were asked to describe the currently available resources that contribute to the success of their peer mediation program (question 35). Open-ended replies were received from six principals, five assistant principals, thirty teachers, and three educators who did not indicate their position. Of these respondents, there were 29 from high schools and 15 from middle schools. All individual replies are listed in Appendix H.

Principals focused on the availability of internal and external resources, funding, and training to maintain a healthy peer mediation program. For example, they referred to having a program coordinator, training for students to learn mediation skills and practice, training for all teachers and students on how to access the program, program visibility and advertising, replacement funding for the defunct Safe and Drug Free Schools grants (United Way, district funding, school or local foundations that partner with community mediation programs to provide a program director), student groups that support and provide supplementary training, stipends for advisors, and stipends for students to be trained as peer mediators [this researcher was not previously aware of schools that pay students to mediate].

One principal described how well internal and external resources can be joined together to nourish a peer mediation program, “Our Foundation provides \$10,000 a year to partner with a community-based mediation program which provides our program director. The Student Services Team actively supports the program and provides supplementary leadership training. All teachers and students are trained on how to access the program” (Middle school).

Assistant principals mentioned resources such as funding, program coordinators, training for mediators, and strong support from administrators and the PTO. They highlighted the importance of receiving funding for contracts with community agencies, “Funds to pay for an outside coordinator to run the program, Funds to pay for outside group to train our mediators” (High school). Also, one assistant principal described the availability of a resource that successfully resolves a contentious issue that many survey respondents mentioned is a problem with their peer mediation program, “We have a large

number of trained mediators so someone is available during study or free blocks any time during the school day to mediate quickly without disrupting student learning if a referral is made to the counselor or school psychologist” (High school). A teacher concurred, “He [the program coordinator] does try to work with the teachers about when it is best to take a student out of class when I feel I have to say that I can't let a student leave because we are taking a test/studying for a test” (Middle school).

Teachers also mentioned resources such as funding, supplemental funding from grants, and training. However, they also described many types of socio-emotional and logistical resources, including the enthusiasm of mediators, teacher support, supportive administration, dedication of students in maintaining confidentiality, coordinator stability over a long period of time, program accessibility, support from other programs such as SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving) and GSA (Gay/Straight Alliance), space and rooms in which to mediate, field trips and regional conferences for mediators and coordinators, dedication to the program by the coordinator and trained mediators, earned credit for peer mediator participation, adjustment counselors who run the program, coordinators who make an effort to not take students out of class when they have a test, flexible administration/staff, motivated students, and on-going support from the local police department, group counseling, adjustment counselors and guidance team, teachers, school psychologists, and vice principals.

Another vital resource is program continuity, as one teacher explained, “Stability in who the coordinator is; over the last 8 years it has been two people in charge; the first four years, it was K [initials deleted] and the last 4 years it has been H [initials deleted]. They have each done a great job and the transition from K to H was seamless” (High

school). Another teacher described the importance of continuity of mediator in-service training and outreach, “We meet once per schedule (every six days) for an hour to discuss mediations, strategies... We have that one hour period available for mediations so students don't have to be removed from classes to mediate.....Our mediators are visible to their peers and will offer their services when they see the need. Our administration fully supports peer mediation” (Middle school).

High school educators who did not identify their positions commented on additional important resources such as ADL (Anti-Defamation League) Youth Congress training [leadership training in dealing with prejudice and discrimination], experienced coordinators who provide program outreach, support from the local violence prevention center, and program coordinators who usually follows up with conflicts on the day they occur. As one educator stated, “Having an experienced peer mediation coordinator on staff is key. The coordinator is able to address student conflicts in a timely fashion, train new peer mediators each year and provide program outreach” (High school, unidentified respondent).

Question 36 pertains to barriers, and is addressed in the section for Research Sub-Question #5, rather than in this section which discusses resources.

Survey participants were asked what staff development topics they would find useful to better prevent or reduce student conflict and violence (question 37). Open ended replies were provided by 43 respondents, including 11 administrators, 30 teachers, and two unidentified educators. Of the respondents, 32 were from high schools and 11 were from middle schools. The majority of participants (91) skipped this question.

Respondents' replies are discussed below, and listed individually in Appendix J. The responses were analyzed to develop seven themes.

1. Identifying normal developmental stages

A middle school assistant principal suggested, "Addressing psycho-social needs of students," and a teacher asked for "Training or early recognition/intervention by staff" (High school). A principal suggested "Ongoing training on trauma sensitivity and how to support healthy social skill development" (Middle school), and along the same theme, an unidentified high school educator asked for information about "Crisis intervention, how to talk down a student who's escalating or chronically on edge. More use of the school psychologist, for referrals when a student is agitated." These suggestions indicate the desire to tap into special knowledge of counselors, psychologists, and other specialists in adolescent development to address concerns when a student is losing control.

2. Understanding conflict and developing conflict management skills for educators

This theme is slightly different than the developmental stages theme in that it focuses not on the application of professional knowledge but on building knowledge and skills. As part of this theme, one assistant principal recommended training all teachers in conflict resolution. One teacher stated, "Just having an awareness of the ways in which student conflict can arise should be enough. This way, if an adult sees the behavior or suspects the behavior, they can address it" (Middle school). Another teacher concurred, "professional development signs of conflict, conflict resolution skills" (High school). Another teacher added, "I think general tips on how to respond to certain situations (such as gossip/rumors) would be helpful" (Middle school). An assistant principal suggested

broad based training that would provide all teachers with practical skills, “Conflict mediation skills to use as a teacher in a classroom” (Middle school).

3. Cultural competency in dealing with conflict

A high school teacher captured this theme writing, “We should encourage periodic training to the staff about diversity issues, stress among the students, and new populations of students entering the school.” Two principals also requested diversity training and gender equity education, but did not elaborate on their reasons (High schools).

4. Bullying and dealing with aggressive students

One teacher pointed out the need to understand new policy issues concerning bullying and suggested, “Mediation trainings connected to anti-bullying initiatives coming from state” (High school). An assistant principal suggested “identifying and responding to peer aggression and/or bullying” (High school). One teacher requested education on “Bullying, dating violence, control issues within couples” (High school).

5. Bystander education.

This theme is tied to bullying because the act of bullying often involves the role of bystanders as potential facilitators or reactors to bullying. Teachers asked for information on how to intervene and not be a bystander (High school). One teacher suggested, “training in the area of bystander education general sensitivity training to human relationships and communication” (High school). Another teacher asked for “training on how to intervene and NOT be a bystander (this goes for students as well-- they need specific STRATEGIES that can be used when they see conflict or bullying)” (High school).

6. Understanding peer mediation and improving their current programs

Many respondents exuded frustration over a lack of information about their school's program and its effectiveness. For example, one teacher asked for a few specifics, "Exactly the procedure and what happen...Possible ways for staff to approach these various issues...Maybe some statistics about the numbers of fights, bullying, reports, etc. We do not know the effect if the numbers are not shared...Is anyone even keeping data?" (High school). Another teacher tersely said, "tell us what the kids get for training tape a mediation and let us watch" (Middle school). Another teacher suggested, "Informing teachers about the Peer Mediation process, giving them some hard data and success of the program" (High school).

7. Helping faculty and staff understand the connection between disciplinary actions and peer mediation

One teacher said, "The staff is sometimes hesitant to suggest mediations and instead offer discipline such as detentions..." (High school). Another teacher described related obstacles, "The staff isn't really cohesive in their desires to support mediation. Many prefer a punitive approach. I would think more mediation education and some minimal training might help but the school won't make time for it. I have tried as has the present coordinator" (High school). Another teacher offered a possible solution, "Get teachers involved in the trainings and in the outreach. Ensure that staff continue buying into the importance of making peer mediation referrals" (High school).

Additional suggestions for improving faculty and staff support for peer mediation were also offered. For example, one teacher said, "I think all teachers should be trained in peer mediation and anti-bullying techniques" (Middle school). Another teacher suggested "teaching staff how to use the peer mediation program more

effectively” (Middle school). One principal suggested educating everyone on making referrals to the peer mediation program (Middle school). An assistant principal said training should include the importance of teacher involvement in their peer mediation program (High school). A teacher concurred, citing the need for “more understanding by faculty as to how to identify and refer peer mediation disputes” (High school). One assistant principal suggested, “Student demonstrations of typical peer mediation referrals so that the staff learns how the process works” (High school), another assistant principal agreed, “Student mediator presentations so that staff can see how the process works” (High school). Teachers provided additional suggestions such as skits, roleplays, assemblies, data on effectiveness and success (High school).

Respondents were asked what resources, which are currently not available, would make their Peer Mediation program more successful (question 38). This open-ended question provided an opportunity for educators to reply in their own words, describing what needs improvement or is missing in their programs. Of the 41 respondents who provided their position, there were four principals, six assistant principals, and 31 teachers. Of the 43 respondents who indicated their school level, there were 28 from high schools and 15 from middle schools. All individual replies are listed in Appendix K.

Funding was the most common unavailable resource that would make a difference to these programs. Respondents described financial needs for mediator training, specialized training, full time coordinators, additional staff, and a mediator field trip to a regional conference. For example, one principal replied, “More money for additional training and staff participation” (Middle school), and another principal

remarked, “More funding would allow the program to become even more impactful” (Middle school). While one assistant principal simply said, “Time and funding” (Middle school), another had a very specific request, “more funding to make the program a full time position not just 10 hours a week” (High school). A teacher noted, “Time and funding to hold more trainings” (Middle school), while another teacher specifically mentioned “funding for training new mediators” (High school). Another teacher described the need for mediator field trips, “Increased funding to support an annual field trip to the Peacemaker conferences; increased funding for Bystander training” (High school). Finally, one teacher simply said, “MONEY!!!!!!!!!!!!” (High school).

Time was another necessary, currently unavailable resource for many respondents. One teacher raised the issue of mediation not interfering with classes, “Time for mediation that is not class time” (High school). A teacher suggested, “More time for the coordinator” (High school). An assistant principal stated, “Time and funding” (Middle school), and finally, four teachers and one respondent with an un-indicated position simply replied, “Time!” (High school).

Mediation training was mentioned as another necessary, currently unavailable resource. Replies included the need for in-service training for mediators, training new mediators, student training, teacher and staff training, and specific types of training. One principal said, “more training for staff, more funding for training” (High school), while a teacher noted, “Not all teachers are trained. Only a small amount of students are trained” (Middle school). A teacher suggested “a day to teach all students how to use peer mediation-- model it, etc.” (Middle school), and another teacher suggested, “In-service

training” (High school). This was supported by another teacher who suggested, “increased funding for Bystander training” (High school).

Space for mediations was another unavailable resource. Several teachers noted the need for a dedicated space for their program (High school), and one teacher described it further, “A better room/location for the program which would be more visible and yet private for confidentiality purposes” (High school).

A coordinator or advisor to supervise the program, who is not dividing their time with other responsibilities, was another missing resource in some schools. One teacher cited the need for “A full time peer mediator/conflict resolution staff person” (High school), while another teacher explained, “... dedicated space time for advisor (not as an addition to full time teaching responsibilities). One teacher offered a unique idea that suggests the possible need for a coordinator, “A group of faculty to oversee the mediators” (Middle school).

Faculty support was also a needed resource, including more staff participation and support from faculty and staff. One unidentified educator commented, “We have lots of resources – it’s staff buy-in that makes it most difficult to sustain the program!” A teacher said, “Meeting times with faculty” (High school). One principal stated the need for staff participation (High school), while a teacher simply said, “More staff to help” (Middle school).

Additional unavailable resources were also described that support and augment existing programs. For example, one teacher mentioned “A mediator in the high school and space dedicated to this program” (High school), while another suggested a

“Comprehensive health education program” (High school), and an assistant principal suggested a Peacebuilders program.

Teachers cited the need for “more promotion” and “More information to let students know that the program is available would be helpful (advertising)” (High school).

Survey participants were asked if they think their school needs help determining which violence prevention programs are needed, and which are the best (question 39). Of the 94 respondents who indicated their position, there were 20 administrators and 74 teachers. Of the 100 respondents who indicated their school level, there were 70 from high schools and 30 from middle schools. Thirty-four participants skipped the question (Table 35).

The number of administrators and teachers who responded differed significantly in their opinion as to whether or not their school needs help, $\chi^2 (2, N = 94) = 25.52, p = .000$. This difference was indicated by the majority of administrators (85%) who do not think they need help, while teachers who were divided into three groups: 40.5 percent need help, 24.3 percent do not need help, and 35.1 percent do not know. Interestingly, more high school respondents than middle school respondents indicated they do and do not need help.

Of concern is the 40.0 percent of middle school and 26.0 percent of high school respondents who chose the “I do not know” category, all of whom are teachers. This suggests that over one-third of responding teachers (35.1%) may possibly not have enough knowledge about their school’s violence prevention programs to know if they need help or not.

Table 38. Do you think your school needs help determining which violence prevention programs are needed and which are the best?

	Administrator	Teacher	Position Totals	High school	Middle school	School Totals
Yes	15% (3)	40.5% (30)	35.1% (33)	38.6% (27)	23.3% (7)	34.0% (34)
No	85% (17)	24.3% (18)	37.2% (35)	41.4% (29)	36.7% (11)	40.0% (40)
I do not know	0.0% (0)	35.1% (26)	27.7% (26)	20.0% (14)	40.0% (12)	26.0% (26)
Answered question	20	74	94	70	30	100
Skipped			34			34

Survey participants were asked an open-ended question about what other conflict management programs in their school are effective in reducing student conflict (question 40). Of the 29 respondents who indicated their position, there were replies from seven administrators and 22 teachers. Of the 32 respondents who indicated their school level, there were 23 high school replies and nine middle school replies. All individual replies are listed in Appendix L.

Principals from high schools did not reply. One middle school principal indicated a long-term commitment to training mediators, “We have been using the School Mediation Associates Program for the past 18 years” [Richard Cohen, author and educator in the peer mediation field]. Another principal described a tie-in between restorative justice and discipline, “Our whole disciplinary process is based in restorative practices which support students’ skill development” (Middle school). Another principal cited the use of several prevention programs, “Training for Active Bystanders, Advisory Life Skills curriculum, [and] Social Skills groups for identified students” (Middle school).

Two assistant principals from high schools described high school mediators training younger students in conflict management. For example, “Our peer mediators present an anti-bullying training to the middle school 6th graders every fall, sponsored by the town Family and Youth Services Program,” and “Our anti-bullying training by the peer mediators to the 6th graders in the middle school.” Other assistant principals provided additional examples of student-focused conflict prevention and management programs, for example, one mentioned a formal student leadership program (High school), and another said, “TAB (Training Active Bystanders) [and] Student Ambassadors MIRA (Make it Right Approach)” (High school). Assistant principals from middle schools did not reply.

Teachers provided several examples of how their schools reduce conflict. For example, one teacher remarked, “Standard disciplinary measures Overall attitude of students and parents” (High school), while another said “Antibullying education as well as conflict resolution; the peer mediation coordinator does a great job at helping to understand the difference between conflict and true bullying” (High school). Another teacher added, “We have great teachers who have bonded well with our students. We also have an adopt a freshmen program where upper classmen adopt a freshmen for the entire year. This has been very helpful to the freshmen” (High school).

Teachers also described several educational programs and student groups, as one explained, “Preventative measures. After-school clubs to increase awareness and involve students” (Middle school). Another said, “Peer leader programs and wellness curriculum” (High school). Another teacher said, “We have a Peace club, Goodwill club and Spirit club that help with school atmosphere” (Middle school). Other teachers cited

the Anti-Defamation League [education on prejudice and discrimination], resource officers, peer leaders, anti-bullying, Students Against Drunk Driving, Gay-Straight Alliance, and Rachel's Promise.

High school respondents who did not indicate their position cited the importance of guidance counselors, and another concurred, "Adjustment counselors run a program for students dealing with anger issues." Another said, "One of our AP's [assistant principal] is very good at reducing conflict and making referrals, contacting parents, etc."

Of interest and concern is that 11 of the 32 respondents provided replies that indicate complete lack of knowledge pertaining to other conflict management programs in their schools. These replies included, "I don't know of any, IDK [I don't know], I do not believe there are other programs, N/A, None, There are no other programs, We do not have any, We don't have any others but we could benefit from substance abuse prevention and intervention as well as more programs, do not know, NONE, and We have no others." These remarks indicate a possible lack of conflict management programs or curriculum in the schools of these particular respondents, as well as lack of awareness or poor marketing for programs that do exist.

At the end of the Survey, participants were invited to add any open-ended comments that would help to understand the success or lack of success of their peer mediation program (question 41). Since this researcher began this research study, many peer mediation programs have disappeared or shrunken to the point of barely functioning, while others have grown and prospered. Comments about success are enlightening and provide insights as to how peer mediation programs are kept alive in schools, despite ongoing challenges. Comments on lack of success describe the myriad of struggles that

plague prevention and intervention programs today, including years of miscommunication and neglect. But even lack of success can suggest what could be done to ameliorate these debilitating problems, in terms of policy changes and advocacy.

Thirty-six responses were provided by three principals, five assistant principals, 25 teachers, and three educators who did not indicate their position. There were 28 high school responses and eight middle school responses. All individual replies are listed in Appendix M. There were eight themes found from these replies.

Success

Success of peer mediation programs, according to the responding educators, is due to educating the students and staff about the program, providing system-wide training to ensure understanding and support, providing a program coordinator, and having the support of administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, and students. As one principal explained, “I think when the staff knows the students well, students will be more likely to seek help when issues arise. If staff is aware of peer mediation as a tool, they can help point students who may be reluctant towards mediation” (High school). One respondent who did not identify their position explained, “Having the support of administrators, teachers and guidance counselors is an important factor. The program is well received by the students as well. Each year we have seen an increase in the number of students who request mediation, or want to refer a friend who is having a dispute with someone” (High School). A teacher cited another important reason for success, “We have a fantastic coordinator!” (Middle school). Referrals are vital to the program’s success, “Referrals to our mediation co-ordinator provides the school with a valuable resource in working with

our "at risk" population" (High school). A respondent who did not indicate their position said, "The Peer Mediation Center is a successful program to help students to resolve problems before they escalate to major conflicts. Students at this school realize that they can access the the center for various types of issues and know that there are always options to help" (High School).

Programs are successful when they are part of the entire school culture. One assistant principal explained, "Having been a trainer of peer mediators for many years, I am an advocate for creating a system-wide program that helps to train students at all levels how to deal with conflict in appropriate ways" (High school). Another assistant principal said, "This is believed in here...it is a part of our school culture and has been counted on to assist with conflict from all sides" (High school). Another high school assistant principal described system-wide cultural acceptance that yields success:

My experience has been that upper elementary students can learn the mediation process and they are eager to resolve issue such as playground disputes. When kids are trained early on they carry that skill into middle school which is where the peer mediation program is generally most used. It's hard to get high school students to agree to mediation because their lives and emotions are so much more complex. When they do agree to mediate, the success rate for effectively resolving problems is high.

We have many trained peer mediators who never get to use their skills in actual sessions since the referral rate is low. I tell them at the training session that mediating is a service that is great to provide to their peers and if we don't need to use them, that's fine too. If the program exists throughout the system, it becomes an accepted part of the culture and is therefore more supported by staff, students and parents.

Success also comes from keeping the program moving forward in spite of setbacks. As one principal explained, "Mediation programs can be organically grown, without outside resources, if necessary. Students are eager to learn these skills and to then help others. Even if one class period is allocated for the training, a school can make

it happen” (Middle school). A teacher concurs, “Keep what we already have going and fully funded! Get teachers more involved in the annual recruiting and training of new peer mediators!” (High school).

Lack of Success

Lack of success comes from changes in the priorities of government-funded initiatives and changes in the preferences of local school officials.

Such changes can destroy or cripple funding for mediator training, salaries for program coordinators, and publicity to educate students, faculty, staff, and parents. As one assistant principal stated, “The lack of federal and state funding represents more than a loss of funds, it signals to schools that this type of program is ‘nice to have’ but not necessary” (High school). A teacher concurred, “State demands on the school, district and staff do not meet up with your goals. It puts teachers in a very difficult situation” (Middle school). Another teacher describes what happens when support is removed or threatened, “Time, space, and support are the biggest thing that we lack. Support would be the most important and thinking of ways to promote it more to faculty is difficult” (High School).

Lack of success results from faculty and staff not being educated and kept informed about their school’s program and its effectiveness.

Respondents would like to know about what the program is, and whether or not it is effective. For example, one teacher said, “Staff /student issues are not communicated to the populations therefore the only information that we receive is hearsay” (Middle school). Another teacher said, “I’d like to see more statistical evidence of what the

success rate is for peer mediation so I can be more informed about its usefulness in school” (Middle school). Another teacher simply said, “Statistical data” (High school).

Some respondents expressed great frustration at being left in the dark, while simultaneously being expected to refer to programs they know little or nothing about. As one teacher explained, “Teachers are sometimes frustrated by the time missed by peer mediators for training. It might be helpful to make the "successes" or mediations available to teachers. This can be tricky because of confidentiality, but if there were a way to publicize to teachers the success of the program, perhaps it would be smoother!” (High school). Another teacher stated, “Teachers never get an indication of whether or not the program is utilized or working. It's a behind the scenes thing where the impact we feel is the peer mediators seemingly [are] always at training or missing classes” (High school). Another teacher concurred, “Staff /student issues are not communicated to the populations therefore the only information that we receive is hearsay” (Middle school).

One high school teacher described the source of frustration:

No one shares the data. How can anyone answer these questions if the facts are not shared? We do not know the details of the program. I am sorry I could not give more information on this survey but I do not know the information to share with you. So, maybe the first step would be to share the information with the faculty and staff. I truly believe in data driven decision making and this would be an ideal place for it. Best of luck on your doctorate.

Problems that have not been addressed are another reason for lack of success.

Respondents indicated that peer mediation is sometimes not taken seriously, students take advantage of it, mediation causes students to miss class, and mediation is only offered to certain types of students rather than everyone. For example, one teacher stated, “Program is seen by participants as a way to get out of classes regularly for free lunches. Enough said” (High school).

Another teacher said, “Lack of success is related to academics (sic). Teachers do not support students missing class time” (High school). Another related issue is how to provide adequate time to mediate without jeopardizing student instruction. For example, one teacher remarked, “The amount of time that a true mediation takes is a detriment to students (mediators and those experiencing conflict)” (High school).

Lack of visibility and marketing takes a serious toll.

As one teacher said, “I don’t think every teacher or student knows about the program. It is like a closed society” (High school). Another teacher concurred, “We have amazing, trained peer mediators, but very few referrals. We have only done 3 this year. That is the hardest part” (High school). Another teacher described what happens when the peer mediation program does a poor job of educating their own school community, “I think many teachers do not use it because they don’t think about it. I think the program needs more visibility, and support/acknowledgement from administration and peer mediators” (high school).

Lack of success results from limiting mediation and conflict management to the school setting, rather than broadening them into community, because many youth problems stem from community problems.

One teacher pointed out that conflicts are connected to a student’s total environment, internal and external to school, “The mediation program is limited to only acts that occur on school grounds. A typical student spends less than 12 percent of their time on school grounds, a typical student with problems requiring mediation, less. Resolving any real problems must be spearheaded by the community, not schools” (High school). Another teacher remarked on the need for additional prevention programs, “Although I feel as

though conflict leads to substance abuse and truancy, I do not think our peer mediation program addresses the necessary population to help those issues. I do feel that peer mediation is successful for the students that are targeted by the mediation sessions, but I do not think that it reaches all of the students that would possibly benefit” (High school).

Resources and Barriers

Research Sub-Question #4 above asked survey participants to describe resources that contribute to the success of their peer mediation program (survey question 35), but embedded in these replies were several pertinent remarks about barriers and obstacles. These can also be found in Appendix H. For example, one assistant principal citing de-funding, simply stated, “Our resources have been completely cut” (High school). In discussing resources, a teacher offered candid descriptions of the scarcity of program resources and inadequate salary for the coordinator, “Other than the fact that we have a room for our coordinator and a training each year for new mediators, none. We have a bulletin board available for our use and we have to do candy fundraisers to support the extras at a training such as snacks for trainees!!! Our coordinator is grossly underpaid for her efforts and has been for the past 7 years. She needs a better salary and more hours than the present 20/week” (High school). Two other replies referenced unfortunate lack of program support and outdated program curricula. For example, a teacher said, “I believe the only resource available is the adjustment counselor that runs the program” (Middle school). Another teacher stated, “We rely on our past training and knowledge, old books and videos” (Middle school). These mixed comments reflect the difficulty

schools experience as resources become increasingly limited, and they must strain to maintain their programs, because they perceive peer mediation itself as a vital resource.

The next section will discuss participating educators' perceptions of barriers that prevent their peer mediation programs from operating at their full potential.

Research Sub-question #5

What barriers do principals, assistant principals, and teachers perceive exist to their peer mediation programs?

Survey Section VI. Program Barriers

This section compares the perceptions of administrators and teachers, at middle and high school levels, pertaining to the barriers and obstacles that interfere with the success of their peer mediation programs. These perceptions are specifically related to Research Sub-Question #5, and Survey Question 36.

Survey participants were asked to respond to 13 items describing what barriers or obstacles stand in the way of operating the most effective peer mediation program at their school (question 36) including: We have no barriers, Funding, Personnel, Space, Materials, Training for new peer mediators, Training for faculty/staff, Support from the school committee, Support from the superintendent, Support from school faculty & staff, Support from students, Support from parents, and an "Other" category for open-ended responses (Appendix I). Because respondents were encouraged to check all barriers/obstacles categories that apply, the percentages do not add up to 100 percent (Table 33).

Of the 91 total educators who indicated their school position, the top three barriers were funding (50.5%), training for faculty/staff (46.2%), and personnel (35.2%). The

three largest discrepancies between administrators and teachers are faculty/staff support, training for faculty/staff, and funding. Disaggregating the responses by school level reveal that the three top barriers or obstacles are the same with same order for responses by position; funding, training for faculty/staff, and personnel. However, there is a marked difference between the school levels on the space and materials. For both space and materials, the high school respondents perceived a larger barrier/obstacle than their middle school counterparts. It is unknown as to why the difference exists. The difference is 20.9 percent for space and 9.3 percent for materials. There were no other differences between high school and middle school responses as large as 9.3 percent. The factors that are considered to be the least barrier or obstacle are superintendent and school committee support. The respondents believe that external power brokers do not stand in the way of their program. What was surprising was the number of respondents who stated that there were no barriers.

Table 39. What barriers or obstacles stand in the way of operating the most effective Peer Mediation program at your school? (Please check all that apply)

	Admin	Teacher	Educator Total	High school	Middle school	School Total
We have no barriers	21% (4)	13.9% (10)	15.4% (14)	17.4% (12)	14.8% (4)	16.7% (16)
Funding	68% (13)	45.8% (33)	50.5% (46)	46.4% (32)	51.9% (14)	47.9% (46)
Personnel	47% (9)	31.9% (23)	35.2% (32)	34.8% (24)	33.3% (9)	34.4% (33)
Space	10.5% (2)	20.8% (15)	18.7% (17)	24.6% (17)	3.7% (1)	10.4% (10)
Materials	5.3% (1)	12.5% (9)	11.0% (10)	13.0% (9)	3.7% (1)	10.4% (10)
Training for peer mediators	21% (4)	25.0% (18)	24.2% (22)	23.2% (16)	22.2% (6)	22.9% (22)
Training for faculty/staff	26% (5)	51.4% (37)	46.2% (42)	46.4% (32)	40.7% (11)	44.8% (43)

School Comm Support	0.0% (0)	6.9% (5)	5.5% (5)	5.8% (4)	3.7% (1)	6.3% (6)
Superintendent Support	0.0% (0)	8.3% (6)	6.6% (6)	7.2% (5)	3.7% (1)	6.3% (6)
Faculty & Staff Support	0.0% (0)	27.8% (20)	22.0% (20)	23.2% (16)	18.5% (5)	21.9% (21)
Student Support	10.5% (2)	26.4% (19)	23.1% (21)	24.6% (17)	18.5% (5)	22.9% (22)
Parent Support	5.3% (1)	12.5% (9)	11.0% (10)	8.7% (6)	14.8% (4)	10.4% (10)
Other	3 replies	20 replies	23	19 replies	7 replies	26
Answered question	19	72	91	69	27	96
Skipped			37			38

The following open-ended comments about barriers are arranged by theme. They were respondents' replies to "Other (please specify)." Five themes were revealed in the analysis. All of the replies can be found in Appendix I.

1. Funding uncertainty

Teachers described frustration (and perhaps fear) in not knowing if there will be enough money to keep their mediators' skills up to date, and to provide continuity for their program coordinator's position. One teacher remarked, "We get lots of lip service from the central administration. They hail the program before the press or when the state or others evaluate us and then fail to properly fund us to do ongoing training on an advanced level" (High school). Another teacher explained, "Funding is always a concern, but so far it appears to be under control, although there are never any guarantees that [initial of program coordinator] will return since he gets laid-off every summer and we hope he gets re-called to return every September for another school year. So far so good!" (High school).

2. Not having enough time

This is another barrier which speaks to several different issues. One assistant principal simply said, “Time” (Middle school). Time can mean many things, for example, one teacher referred to lack of time to provide mediations and not having a dedicated coordinator who has enough time to oversee the program, “Time- Many teachers do not want students out of class to participate in the Peer Mediation program. This creates an obstacle. Also, the time of the staff running the program is divided. Their full time jobs interfere with their ability to dedicate more time to the program” (High school). Another view of the scheduling conflict for borderline students is stated by this teacher “Due to scheduling, peer mediation often takes kids out of class. While I understand the value of mediation, many of our students who struggle with schoolwork miss important classroom learning time and do not make up their work/come for extra help afterward. I see some staff members even more frustrated with this than me, and I think it reflects badly on the mediation program, even if unnecessarily” (Middle school). Another teacher cited lack of time for scheduling and perhaps enough time to explain the concept of confidentiality to prospective disputants, “TIME. My peer mediators are extremely over scheduled and finding a time for them to meet is almost impossible. Also, many conflicts that would be great referrals to peer mediation don't go through b/c the students in conflict don't feel comfortable discussing their private issues in front of peers” (High school).

Some educators registered surprise and unhappiness about the actual amount of time it took to mediate a conflict, and do not think the average school day can accommodate this form of conflict management, as indicated by this unidentified

educator's reply, "Time on Learning reduces the time available to plan frequent peer mediations. A Less formal process is utilized to meet our needs" (Middle school).

3. The perception that peer mediation may not be a good fit or is underutilized

For example, an assistant principal replied, "A lot of issues are not appropriate for mediation or disputants are not interested in participating in mediation. We also have such a small school population ... with bigger numbers maybe we would have more cases to mediate" (High school). A teacher had a similar viewpoint, but with a different explanation, "The students. I believe we have an apathetic student body. They simply do not care about much of anything. I find that they use Peer Mediation as something they do AFTER a problem has affected them, instead of using is PROACTIVELY" (High school). Another teacher remarked, "I think that this service is underutilized. While I feel that people support the program, it is not used as often as it could be" (High school).

4. Students' lack of understanding as to how peer mediation works.

For example, one teacher replied, "For students to feel they are not being "snitches" when asking for help" (High school). Another teacher remarked, "Getting all of the students to buy into the program" (High school). These comments indicate a lack of information about conflict, conflict theory, and conflict resolution or management. They also indicate a lack of information about the basic tenets of peer mediation programs (confidentiality, neutrality, voluntariness)

5. Lack of information/marketing about peer mediation and program effectiveness.

For example, one teacher replied, "Administrators need to be educated on mediation so that have an understanding of what mediation is and how and why it works" (High

school). Another teacher simply said, “Communication” (Middle school). Several teachers indicated they lacked enough information to answer the question, for example, “don't know about other barriers because I don't know how involved we've become as teachers with any training etc.” (High school). Another teacher concurred, “I do not know. Our school program does not share with the staff any data about the effectiveness of the program. I do not know many details about the program” (Middle school). Another teacher agreed, “Faculty really knows very little about this program if they are not involved in it, as far as I can tell” (Middle school). Another teacher suggested, “They need to be more out in the open and introduced to faculty and the students. also some information should be given to staff and students describing what they do and what the group is used for” (High school). An unidentified educator also pointed out, “Perhaps just more publicity and promotion of the program. Not sure how many faculty or students know much about the program or its success. Publication of data (anonymous of course) would be very useful. How many sessions conducted, student ratings of success, etc.” (High school).

Chapter IV

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

Central Research Question:

Do Massachusetts public middle and high school administrators and teachers think their peer mediation program is successfully working to reduce student conflicts?

Reviewing the data from the five sub-research questions in terms of the central research question shows that Massachusetts public middle and high school administrators

and teachers who responded to this survey (n=135) think their peer mediation program is successfully working to reduce student conflicts.

Research Sub-question #1:

Are principals, assistant principals, and teachers concerned about student violence in their schools?

Administrators and teachers are concerned about student conflict and violence in their schools. Respondents' concern (74.4%) for maintaining a safe school environment has increased over the past five years, and most (63.2%) are concerned about the possibility of violence in their schools. A significant statistical difference was found between administrators (83.3%), teachers (57.4%) who are concerned, and teachers who are not concerned (42.6%). Major reasons for concerns include funding cuts causing decreased resources; increased student aggression, fights, bullying, and gangs; lack of impulse control and student de-sensitization toward violence; changes in ethnic and socioeconomic populations impacting family structures and values, and an eroding sense of safety and security by school personnel.

Respondents indicated that negative behaviors that students most frequently engage in at their schools include: gossip/rumors, verbal threats, bullying, and harassment. Teachers also cited physical threats and vandalism as frequent behaviors. A statistical difference was found between teachers (59.6%) and administrators (33.3%) concerning students engaging in physical threats. Also, a much higher percentage of teachers (41.6%) than administrators (12.5%) were concerned about student vandalism. The most frequent outcomes of student conflict perceived by the majority of administrators and teachers are poor attendance, poor grades, fear of other students, depression, and truancy. Teachers also cited dropping out and vandalism as outcomes,

and high school respondents cited in-school substance use as an outcome. A statistical difference was found between administrators (73.9%) who do not think vandalism is an outcome, and divided teachers who think vandalism is an outcome (48.5%), do not think so (37.9%), and do not know (13.7%).

Conclusions and Recommendations: Administrators and teachers are concerned and in general agreement about student conflict, related causes, and outcomes in their schools. Several teachers are not concerned about violence in their schools, yet are concerned about physical threats, and have mixed views of student vandalism as a negative behavior and a conflict outcome. Concerns about possible school violence can be addressed by specific programs or curriculum. The four most frequent negative student behaviors are connected to conflicts between students that are often referred to peer mediation while in the early stages before they escalate. It is recommended that peer mediation programs include the indicated student conflict outcomes when evaluating effectiveness. A major concern is teachers who chose “I do not know” for questions about student conflict, student behaviors, or their peer mediation program. Teachers stand on the front lines, and may not access resources if they are uninformed.

Research Sub-questions #2:

Do principals, assistant principals, and teachers perceive that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase positive student behavior?

Administrators and teachers think they understand the concepts that support their program, and most *support* their program and provide four reasons: it provides a safe neutral place to resolve conflicts, de-escalates conflicts, enhances socio-emotional

growth, and provides life skills. Reasons for *not supporting* their program include lack of information, mediation selection criteria, training, goals, implementation, evaluation, mediator performance, marketing, and doubting the capacity of middle school students to properly mediate. *Mixed supporters* find mediation effective, but it allows students to use it to get out of class (including failing students), does not work long term, and does not inform faculty as to what it is and accomplishes.

Respondents concur that teaching students how to mediate helps to provide a safe school climate, and teaching students how to mediate conflicts prevents 12 negative behaviors such as gossip/rumor, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, cyberbullying, sexting, racial conflict, ethnic conflict, gender conflict, social class conflict, fighting in school, and fighting out of school, although some teachers do not think it prevents gossip/rumor and sexting. More than 15 percent of teachers chose the “do not know” scale for several items.

Peer mediation programs were found to increase all 11 positive behaviors and attitudes in the disputants who have gone through mediation, including ability to resolve conflicts, academic achievement, attendance, attitude toward other ethnic groups, attitude toward other social groups, attitude toward other economic groups, communication skills, concern for other students, cooperative spirit, problem solving, and self-esteem. Teachers do not think it affected disputants’ academic achievement and attendance. Statistically significant differences were found where a higher percentage of administrators (95%) than teachers (57.7%) thought peer mediation impacted “attitude toward other social groups.” Another statistically significant difference was found where a higher percentage of administrators (90%) than teachers (52.4%) thought peer

mediation impacted “attitude toward other economic groups.” Many respondents chose the “do not know” scale.

Peer mediation was found to reduce four school-wide negative behaviors, including incidents of fighting, harassment, gossip/rumor, and bullying. However, statistically significant differences were found as higher percentages of administrators than teachers thought peer mediation reduced gang-related activities, school vandalism, fighting, harassment, smoking, poor grades, suicide attempts, truancy, and weapons brought to school. Many respondents chose the “do not know” scale.

Peer mediation resulted in the reduction of disciplinary actions such as suspension, expulsion, detention, and other disciplinary actions. A statistically significant difference was found where a higher percentage of administrators (90%) than teachers (48.8%) agree that peer mediation reduces disciplinary actions, and teachers who did not know (40.2%).

Conclusions and Recommendations: The majority of administrators and teachers perceive that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase positive student behavior. Reasons for lack of support and mixed support for mediation programs should be examined and addressed. Negative behaviors and school-wide negative behaviors could be examined and evaluated in terms of impact on mediators, disputants, and program effectiveness. Areas where teachers and administrators disagreed concerning increased positive behaviors and attitudes of mediated disputants could be further examined and evaluated, for example, academic achievement, attendance, attitude toward other social groups and attitude toward other economic groups. The percentage of

teachers who could not answer questions was alarming. Connected to this issue is an apparent need to respond to faculty resentment and frustration by creating formal structures so they feel informed and involved.

Research Sub-Question #3:

Is there a difference between middle and high school perceptions that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase positive student behavior?

Respondents from high schools thought they understand the concepts that support their peer mediation program more than respondents from middle schools. Support for their programs was indicated by most respondents at both school levels. Reasons for support, lack of support, and mixed support are discussed above in Sub-question #2.

Teaching students how to mediate conflicts helps to provide a safe school climate was supported by the majority of middle and high schools. However, more high school than middle school respondents thought teaching students how to mediate conflicts prevents gossip/rumor, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, cyberbullying, sexting, gender conflict, social class conflict, fighting in school, and fighting out of school. A statistically significant difference was found in the impact of peer mediation on fighting out of school” where a higher percentage of high school respondents (77.6%) than middle school respondents (59.4%) agree. Many middle school respondents chose “do not know.”

Peer mediation programs have increased 10 positive behaviors and attitudes in mediated disputants, with the exception of academic achievement, according to the majority of respondents at both school levels. These included ability to resolve conflicts, attendance, attitude toward other ethnic groups, attitude toward other social groups, attitude toward other economic groups, communication skills, concern for other students,

cooperative spirit, problem solving, and self-esteem. However, a statistically significant difference was found where more middle school educators (62.5%) than high school educators (38.5%) thought academic achievement was an outcome for mediated disputants. Over 20 percent of respondents used “do not know” in over half of the categories.

High school respondents thought peer mediation reduced school-wide negative behaviors such as fighting, harassment, gossip/rumor, bullying, hate crimes, and reported suicide attempts. However, middle school respondents thought peer mediation reduced smoking, poor grades, and weapons brought to school. Over 50 percent of respondents chose “do not know” for seven of the 13 categories: gang-related activities, school vandalism, substance abuse, smoking, reported suicide attempts, truancy, and weapons brought to school. Over half of middle school respondents chose “do not know” about poor grades, while over half of high school respondents chose “do not know” about hate crimes.

Peer mediation programs reduced disciplinary actions such as suspension, expulsion, detention, and other disciplinary actions according to the majority of respondents at both school levels. However, about one-third of respondents chose “do not know.”

Conclusions and Recommendations: Although both school levels support mediation as contributing to safe school climate, middle school respondents are less sure about what type of conflicts it actually prevents, indicated by the “do not know” choice. Both school levels agree that peer mediation increases positive behaviors and attitudes, but fewer high

school respondents include academic achievement, for some unknown reason. The impact of peer mediation on reducing school-wide negative behaviors is clearly divided between the school levels, while a large percentage of respondents chose “do not know” for many categories. One third of respondents do not know the impact of peer mediation on reducing disciplinary actions at their school. However, mediation can be used in conjunction with disciplinary actions by resolving conflicts, and reduce the need for disciplinary actions in the future. The findings indicate the need to include these all of these items when evaluating the effectiveness of mediation to determine exactly what the impact is. Evaluation results would help administrators, teachers, and students become familiar with what their program can accomplish.

Research Sub-Question #4:

What resources do principals, assistant principals, and teachers use to implement their peer mediation programs?

Currently *available* resources that contribute to the success of respondents’ peer mediation programs were provided in open-ended replies.

Principals cited funding for program coordinators, mediator and staff training, program visibility, and stipends for advisors and students. Assistant principals mentioned funding, program coordinators, training, and support from administrators and PTOs. Teachers indicated funding, grants, training, space to mediate, conference and field trips for mediators, and support from the school community and police.

Currently *unavailable* resources that would make peer mediation programs more successful include funding, These include funding, time to mediate without interfering with classes, time to run the program properly, mediation training for students and staff, space for mediations, a coordinator or advisor to supervise the program who is not

dividing their time with other responsibilities, faculty support, and more promotion of the program.

Staff development topics that would help reduce student conflict and violence were suggested: (1) identifying normal stages of development, trauma sensitivity, crisis intervention, and intervention for students who lose control (2) conflict theory and skills training for staff (3) staff training in cultural competency, diversity, and gender equity (4) dealing with bullying and aggressive students (5) bystander education (6) understanding and improving peer mediation (7) understanding the connection between disciplinary actions and peer mediation.

Respondents were asked if their school needs help determining which violence prevention programs are needed and which are the best. A statistical difference was found between most administrators (85%) who do not need help, and teachers who want help (40.5%), do not want help (24.3%), and do not know (35.1%). More middle school (40%) than high school (26%) respondents chose “do not know” including over one-third (35.1%) of teachers.

Administrators and teachers were asked what other conflict management programs in their schools are effective in reducing student conflict. Administrators cited long-term commitment to training peer mediators, connecting restorative justice to discipline, students presenting anti-bullying to 6th graders annually, and student focused conflict prevention. Teachers described many after school prevention clubs, peer leaders, Gay Straight Alliance, wellness, SADD, anger management, ADL prejudice and discrimination education, and others. About one-third of respondents did not know of any programs.

Comments about success or lack of success of their peer mediation programs were provided by 36 respondents. Eight themes emerged: Success: Educate students and staff, provide a coordinator, have support of entire school community; be part of the school culture; keep moving forward in spite of setbacks. Lack of success: changes in funding priorities of government and local officials; poorly educated and uninformed faculty/staff; not addressing problems; lack of visibility and marketing; limiting conflict management to the school only rather than the entire community.

Conclusions and Recommendations: These open-ended responses provided a wealth of information and opinions. Teachers and administrators clearly recognize the importance of funding alternatives, staff development, improved mediation scheduling, time and space for mediating, program coordination and continuity, marketing, and keeping faculty and staff up to date and educated about conflict management. These are all priorities to be seriously considered, and can help build support and success for programs.

Research Sub-question #5:

What barriers do principals, assistant principals, and teachers perceive exist to their peer mediation programs?

The top three barriers cited by 91 respondents were funding (50.5%), training for faculty/staff (46.2%), and personnel (35.2%). Priorities were the same by school position and school level. Space and materials were higher priorities at the high school level. Superintendent and school committee supports were the least barrier, and 15.4 percent thought their program had no barriers. Open-ended replies revealed that teachers did not

think they had enough information to answer the questions. Teacher frustration and feeling ignorant due to lack of information was a persistent issue throughout the survey.

Five themes about barriers emerged: funding uncertainty that impacts training and personnel and can inhibit healthy program functioning, lack of time to schedule mediations without interfering with classes, the perception that peer mediation is not a good fit or is underutilized, students' lack of understanding as to how peer mediation works, and lack of visibility and marketing to inform faculty/staff about program goals and effectiveness.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Barriers can lead to ignorance, confusion, lack of support, and ultimately lack of referrals to the program. Understandably, there are limits to overcoming barriers and obstacles all at once, but schools can assess how they are impacted by these barriers, and develop a plan to overcome them. For example, with the help of an Advisory Board, it may be possible to locate new funding sources, create new ways to coordinate mediation sessions without disturbing classes, and update old materials.

CHAPTER V

STUDY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Peer-to peer conflict occurs all too often in the hallways and classrooms of our middle and high schools (Dinkes, Cataldi, & Lin-Kelly, 2007; Sprague, Smith, & Stieber, 2000). Schools can respond reactively to the events as they unfold by implementing discipline. A proactive approach that has been used in schools across the nation, including Massachusetts, is peer mediation programs. “When properly applied, mediation is a viable conflict resolution tool” (Kajs, Thomas, Wilson, & Zambron, 2000, p. 605).

The goal of this research study was to examine the central research question: “Do Massachusetts public middle and high school administrators and teachers think their peer mediation program is successfully working to reduce student conflicts?” In addition, the focus of the study was the five research sub-questions which were framed from the central question:

1. Are principals, assistant principals, and teachers concerned about student violence in their schools?
2. Do principals, assistant principals, and teachers perceive that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase positive student behavior?
3. Is there a difference between middle and high school perceptions that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase positive student behavior?
4. What resources do principals, assistant principals, and teachers use to implement their peer mediation programs?
5. What barriers do principals, assistant principals, and teachers perceive exist to their peer mediation programs?

Participation in the survey was developed by locating all middle and high schools in the state of Massachusetts through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education databases, and then contacting the appropriate schools to determine if they had a peer mediation program. Of these, 77 schools indicated they had a currently operating peer mediation program. All principals were sent an emailed invitation to participate in the study, and asked to send the invitation on to their assistant principals and teachers. Participation in the survey was voluntary, confidential, and anonymous. A total of 30 schools participated, including 22 high schools and eight middle schools. A total of 135 participants responded to the survey, including 16 principals, nine assistant principals, 103 teachers, and seven who did not indicate their school position. Of these, 99 respondents were from high schools, 35 from middle schools, and one did not indicate their school level. It is possible that there is uneven participation among the schools, as the name of the school was collected in the initial agreement to participate from principals, but not from individual survey participants.

The method of data collection was a mixed, hybrid methodology of 41 quantitative (closed-end) and quasi-quantitative (open-ended) survey questions. The survey questions were keyed to a specific research question. The survey instrument was a 10-page, self-administered, on-line questionnaire delivered through Survey Monkey. Survey questions were divided into sections: informed consent information and consent to participate, school demographic information, student conflict and violence in your school, peer mediation program characteristics, perception of peer mediation for conflict management, program resources and barriers, comments, and a debriefing sheet with option to keep or remove responses from the data file. In addition to the Likert style

check-off responses, the survey included eight open-ended questions that asked for respondents' concerns, reasons, opinions, thoughts, and comments. This collection of replies provided rich explanations and emotional content, which helped this researcher gain a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions.

Data collected through Survey Monkey was analyzed with SPSS, using descriptive statistics that utilized a comparison of numbers, percentages, and post hoc chi square to determine differences between the perceptions of administrators and teachers, and differences between their responses as educators in middle school or high school.

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether Massachusetts public middle and high school administrators and teachers think their peer mediation program is successfully working to reduce student conflicts. Data from the 41-item survey, keyed to the five sub-research questions, indicates that most responding administrators and teachers (n=135) think their peer mediation program is successfully working to reduce student conflicts. The following findings provide and support detailed information about each of the sub-research questions.

1. Principals, assistant principals, and teachers are concerned about student conflict and violence in their schools.

Almost three-quarters (74.4%) of the respondents reported that their concern for maintaining a safe school environment has increased over the past five years, and most (63.2%) are concerned about the possibility of student violence in their schools.

Administrators had a statistically significant different response ($p = .011$) from teachers with a higher concern about student violence in their school. While both administrators and teachers believe that students most often engage in the negative behaviors of gossip/rumors, verbal threats, bullying, and harassment, teachers believe that physical threats are a greater problem than administrators ($p = .041$).

The survey asked the teachers and administrators to rate the extent to which student conflict leads to a choice of 11 outcomes. Both groups agreed that the most frequent outcomes of student conflict are poor attendance, poor grades, fear of other students, depression, and truancy. Teachers additionally consider dropping out as an outcome of student conflict, and they also believe that vandalism is an outcome of conflict to a statistically greater degree ($p = .007$) than administrators.

Both administrators and teachers are concerned about student conflict and violence in their schools. Their major reasons for concern about maintaining a safe school environment include funding cuts that decrease resources; increased student aggression, fights, bullying, and gangs; lack of impulse control and student de-sensitization to violence; and an eroding sense of safety and security by school personnel.

- 2. All respondents perceive that *individual* negative behaviors are reduced while *individual* positive behaviors and attitudes are increased. However, only administrators perceive that peer mediation reduces *school-wide* negative behaviors.**

Most administrators and teachers support their peer mediation program because it provides a safe neutral place to resolve conflicts, de-escalates conflicts, enhances socio-

emotional growth, and provides life skills. Teaching students how to mediate conflict through their mediation program helps to provide a safe school climate. Furthermore, teaching students how to mediate conflicts prevents 12 conflictive individual negative behaviors, including gossip/rumor, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, cyberbullying, sexting, racial conflict, ethnic conflict, gender conflict, social class conflict, fighting in school, and fighting out of school. However, some teachers do not think it prevents gossip/rumor and sexting.

Administrators and teachers agree that their peer mediation program has reduced four out of 13 school-wide negative behaviors: incidents of fighting, harassment, gossip/rumor, and bullying. However, significant differences between administrators and teachers were found in nine of the behavior categories, all of which contained a greater percentage of administrators than teachers who perceived that peer mediation successfully reduced the negative behaviors. More administrators than teachers think peer mediation reduced gang-related activities ($p = .040$), school vandalism ($p = .014$), fighting ($p = .035$), harassment ($p = .036$), smoking ($p = .042$), poor grades ($p = .028$), suicide attempts ($p = .039$), truancy ($p = .044$), and weapons brought to school ($p = .004$).

Similarly, a statistically significant difference was found ($p = .003$) where more administrators than teachers think their peer mediation programs reduced disciplinary actions such as suspension, expulsion, detention, and other disciplinary actions.

Administrators and teachers agree that peer mediation programs increase 11 positive behaviors and attitudes in disputants who have gone through mediation, including their ability to resolve conflicts, academic achievement, attendance, attitude

toward other ethnic groups, attitude toward other social groups, attitude toward other economic groups, communication skills, concern for other students, cooperative spirit, problem solving, and self-esteem. However, some teachers do not think it positively affected academic achievement and attendance. Furthermore, there is a significant statistical difference where more administrators than teachers perceive a positive effect of peer mediation on student attitude toward other social groups ($p = .025$), and student attitude toward other economic groups ($p = .011$).

Both school administrators and teachers believe that their peer mediation programs have strengthened positive behaviors and improved negative individual and school-wide behaviors. However, school administrators' position was statistically significant from teachers on some positive and negative behaviors. Consequently, administrators had a more positive view of the outcomes of their peer mediation programs. It is unknown if the difference is a function of greater knowledge of the impact of peer mediation, through the school administrator's school-wide responsibilities, or greater commitment to the program, or some unknown factor or factors.

Less than positive views of program outcomes by teachers are reflected in open-ended comments reflecting frustration and anger, as well as many "I do not know" responses to survey questions. For example, some teachers state that they do not know enough about conflict and outcomes in their schools to answer some of the survey questions. Comments indicate that teachers are upset about lack of information about a program that sometimes interferes with their teaching, to which they are expected to refer students. They want more information about student conflict, the goals and effectiveness of their peer mediation program, and staff development for dealing with aggressive

students in and out of the classroom. Furthermore, teachers are upset at being left out of decision-making on ways to prevent and intervene in student conflict at their school (see Appendices for open-ended replies and comments).

3. Similarities and differences exist between middle school and high school perceptions that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase student behavior.

Most middle and high school respondents do support their peer mediation programs, and agree that teaching students how to mediate provides a safe school climate. Both middle and high school respondents agree that peer mediation has increased 10 out of 11 positive behaviors and attitudes in students who have gone through mediation (the disputants) including: ability to resolve conflicts, attendance, attitude toward other ethnic groups, attitude toward other social groups, attitude toward other economic groups, communication skills, concern for other students, cooperative spirit, problem solving, and self-esteem. However, a significant difference ($p = .034$) in the positive impact of peer mediation on academic achievement of mediated disputants exists between middle school respondents (62.5%) and high school respondents (38.5%).

Both middle and high school respondents agree that their peer mediation programs reduce disciplinary actions such as suspension, expulsion, detention, and other actions. However, more high school than middle school respondents thought teaching students how to mediate prevents 10 out of 12 negative behaviors, including gossip/rumor, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, cyberbullying, sexting, gender conflict, social class conflict, fighting in school, and fighting out of school. Furthermore,

there is a significant difference ($p = .025$) where more high school (77.6%) than middle school (59.4%) respondents perceive that mediation prevents fighting out of school.

While both middle and high school respondents agree that their peer mediation program reduces school-wide negative behaviors, they differ on *which* behaviors are reduced. High school respondents think that peer mediation reduces school-wide behaviors including fighting, harassment, gossip/rumor, bullying, hate crimes, and reported suicide attempts. However, middle school respondents think that peer mediation reduces smoking, poor grades, and weapons brought to school.

4. Haves and Have Nots: administrators and teachers may or may not have the resources to successfully implement their peer mediation programs.

Currently available and unavailable resources that contribute to peer mediation success

All survey respondents are from MA schools with successfully functioning peer mediation programs, but an unequal distribution of resources was found through 44 open-ended replies. Programs may be functioning, but with missing or stretched resources, their existence could be in jeopardy. Indeed, many programs that were functioning at the beginning of this research project no longer existed by the time the survey was implemented, due to lack of funding, personnel, training, or administrative support. This researcher spoke with program coordinators who receive no salary for running their program, but do it because they believe in it.

Many respondents report that they currently have enough funding and alternative financial support through grants and foundations to support full time program coordinators who can provide program continuity and stability. Furthermore, many have consistent training for mediators and staff, space in which to mediate, stipends, updated

materials, program marketing and visibility to inform the school community, and referrals to keep the program alive. However, other respondents state that these same resources are currently not available to them. Lack of funding results in teachers and counselors providing peer mediation coordination in their spare time, with a small stipend, or as volunteers. Also, lack of funding results in reduced training hours for mediators and school staff, limited or no mediation space, and limited marketing to make the program understood and utilized by the school community.

Time is another resource that is fundamental to success, but only respondents who lack time discussed its impact. Some respondents report there is not enough time to mediate without cutting into class time, which impacts both mediators and disputants, including failing students. Other respondents think that the school day does not provide enough time for a real mediation session to even occur, while others doubt that middle school students have lived long enough to possess the capacity to mediate at all. Inadequate time for mediator training hours (less than 16-20 hours) is another problem which can render an entire group of mediators unable to adequately mediate. Another concern is lack of time to educate faculty and staff about peer mediation, which limits their ability to comprehend and support the program.

Program support, both internal and external is another vital resource. While many respondents note strong internal support from administrators, staff, counselors, school psychologists, students, and the PTO (parents who often provide funding through fundraising and grant writing), others find faculty and staff support currently lacking. Although some schools have the ability to pay stipends to advisors and students, others do not or cannot.

Key external resources include support from local police and violence prevention programs, however not all schools have such relationships, particularly if they are in a rural or widespread regional area. Another valued external resource is field trips to yearly conferences where peer mediators and coordinators can attend workshops to upgrade their skills and make connections with their counterparts from other parts of the state. For example, the annual Peer Mediators Conference in Franklin/Hampshire counties has hosted several hundred mediators and coordinators for over 10 years, and the annual Peer Mediators Forum hosted by North Shore Community Mediation Center in Beverly attracts over 100 attendees from the northeast area (and Cape Cod). However, the survey found that while some schools have enough money, others cannot afford or will not appropriate the funds for conference registration. This means they either do not go, or the coordinator must spend time fundraising. For example, this author and several board members took up a collection for a bus and lunch money so that a program coordinator and her peer mediators could travel 36 miles to attend their local yearly conference because their high school would not or could not provide the funding.

Finally, a valued resource for successful programs is mediator enthusiasm and maintaining confidentiality by both mediators and disputants. They bring confidence and respect to student participants (mediators and disputants), faculty, and the entire school community. There were no respondents who thought that their programs lacked these resources.

Staff development

Through 43 open-ended replies, administrators and teachers suggested four areas of staff development that would help them prevent or reduce student conflict and violence in their schools.

First, they asked for further training in normal adolescent development and problematic student issues including adolescent psycho-social needs, health and social skill development, diversity issues, and gender equity.

Another area of interest is learning to identify and understand student aggression and control. This includes information about victimology prevention and intervention when it takes on different forms, such as student dating violence, bullying, bystanders, and trauma sensitivity.

The third area of interest is developing and maintaining effective curriculum and programs to deal with student problems and student aggression, including skills for conflict management in the classroom, anti-bullying programs, and connecting discipline actions to mediation programs.

The final area of suggested training is learning through presentations and demonstrations from the peer mediators and coordinators about the specifics of how the peer mediation process works and how the programs actually work.

Several teachers expressed hope that education in each of these four staff development areas will ameliorate their distress and annoyance (see Appendices) at “not being told anything” about program functioning, data, effectiveness, or even how to refer a case.

Violence prevention programs

While administrators and teachers agree their school needs help determining whether violence prevention programs are needed and which are best, a statistically significant difference was found between teachers' and administrators' responses ($p = .000$), where 40.5 percent of teachers and only 15 percent of administrators think they need help.

More respondents from high schools than middle schools think they need help. This is an area where further exploration could be of use, as the findings indicate that high school teachers would like additional information that administrators seem to already possess, or perhaps teachers have insights into the potential of violence in their schools that administrators do not perceive.

Other conflict management programs

Administrators and teachers provided rich descriptions, through 29 open-ended replies, of additional programs they currently have that they think effectively reduce student conflict in their schools. Along with a long-term commitment to training peer mediators, there is a commitment to student-focused conflict prevention and resolution through a wide spectrum of efforts such as wellness curriculum, annual anti-bullying presentations by middle and high school students to sixth graders, and anger management classes.

Connecting restorative justice to discipline is another additional program that provides students with the opportunity to think about and remediate their negative behaviors or actions, instead of or in conjunction with, detention, suspension, or other

disciplinary actions. This can be community service, restorative justice support groups, or working alongside the custodians.

Contacting parents was also suggested as a way to reduce student conflict. It can be used in conjunction with restorative justice and discipline when students have violated behavior policies, including bullying, harm to self or others, or property destruction.

Peer leaders are another program that seems to be broadly used, as they provide connections and services to reach out to student peers through tutoring, counseling, or leadership activities in ways that adults cannot.

School clubs are another type of program that can prevent and reduce student conflict, as they provide a mechanism for students to join together with others who have similar interests. These groups advocate for student rights, provide a haven for students who experience prejudice and discrimination, or take action for a particular cause. Some of the groups/clubs mentioned by respondents include Peace Clubs, Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD), and the Anti-Defamation League World of Difference. Ironically, while these groups do provide a haven for certain students, they sometimes draw negative attention and prejudice from other students, which must then be resolved by administrators, counselors, and teachers who oversee them.

Finally, a few respondents reported that their school does not have any additional conflict management programs, or they do not know of any. As previously discussed, these responses may reflect lack of awareness, lack of funding or personnel to provide prevention or intervention programs, or perhaps there has been little effort by those

directly involved with these programs to publicize what they can accomplish to the rest of the students, faculty, and staff.

Additional comments to help understand the success of peer mediation programs

At the end of the survey, administrators and teachers explained the success of their program through 36 open-ended comments. These provide a “super list” of seven things that all schools can do to keep their programs alive and healthy: (1) Educate students and staff about conflict theory and conflict prevention programs, (2) be part of the school culture, (3) provide system-wide training, (4) provide a coordinator, (5) have system-wide support, (6) start peer mediation with upper elementary students to provide skills and continuity as they move through upper grades, (7) keep programs functioning despite setbacks.

Perhaps the most surprising, yet crucial, comment is the last one. Peer mediation programs today are struggling to exist, and face many odds. To avoid extinction as funding and other resources become increasingly limited, there must be a dedicated agenda to keep the program functioning in spite of setbacks. By purposefully focusing on all seven of these recommendations, seeking participation from the entire school community, and promoting interaction between the school and external community, peer mediation and other student conflict prevention programs have a greater chance to stay relevant and vibrant.

5. Principals, assistant principals, and teachers perceive several barriers to successfully maintaining their peer mediation programs.

Both administrators and teachers agree that out of 12 possible barriers or obstacles that stand in the way of operating the most effective peer mediation program at their school, the top three are funding, training for faculty/staff, and personnel. While middle and high school respondents reported the same three priorities, high school respondents also think there is a lack of adequate space and materials for mediating. Furthermore, although administrators and teachers agree on most barriers, there are differences of opinion between them. For example, while most administrators think that lack of funding is a barrier, most teachers think lack of faculty/staff training is a barrier. Also, although almost one-third of teachers (27.8%) view lack of support from school faculty and staff as a barrier, no administrators think that is a problem.

Administrators and teachers outlined five types of barriers that can impede and threaten successful programs, through 23 open-ended comments. They include (1) funding uncertainty impacts mediator training and the coordinator position, (2) not enough time for proper mediations without interfering in classes, (3) peer mediation may not be a good fit for conflicts or is underutilized, (4) students lack understanding on how peer mediation works, and (5) lack of information/marketing for faculty and staff so they understand what peer mediation is, how to refer, and whether the program is effective.

Both administrators and teachers think that their program effectively reduces student conflicts, but there are mixed views on some aspects of how the program seems to be run. They think that students use it to get out of class (including failing students), it does not work in the long term, and does not inform faculty as to what it is and

accomplishes. Furthermore, respondents report their own lack of support, or perceive a lack of support among their colleagues due to poor information about the program, skewed mediation selection criteria, lack of training, undefined goals, unknown details about program implementation, unknown mediator and program evaluation criteria, unknown program effectiveness, and the perception that middle school students do not possess the capacity to properly mediate.

Administrators and teachers describe success and lack of success of their programs in 36 open-ended replies. Success is discussed in #4 above. Lack of success is linked to both internal and external barriers and obstacles.

Internal barriers pertain to problematic aspects of the program, limitations caused by lack of funding, and the perceptions held of the program by members of the immediate school community. For example, respondents point to lack space to mediate, lack of a full time coordinator, inadequate salary and hours per week for the coordinator, lack of program support among faculty/staff and students, outdated training materials, lack of information on program effectiveness for faculty/staff and students, poor program visibility and marketing, lack of money for training supplies and snacks, staff resentment when mediation sessions pull students out of class, and the feeling that the mediation program is a closed society. Respondents perceive that lack of program success leads to teacher resentment and student apathy, which creates a “domino effect” leading to lack of support, lack of referrals, lack of cases, and ultimately lack of a program.

External barriers pertain to issues that lie outside of the program or school, and are political or budgetary in nature. For example, administrators and teachers cite changes in the priorities of federal or state government initiatives, preferences of local

school officials, or the availability of funding. Such changes can impact how student conflict is defined and managed. For example, limiting conflict management to the confines of a school, rather than recognizing that student conflict often begins or is taken out into the community, limits the effectiveness of the program and can ultimately lead to a lack of success. Other examples include the mandated federal No Child Left Behind initiative that was unfunded, and the current state anti-bullying initiative that required all schools to file a plan and figure out how to address it.

CONCLUSIONS

There are five conclusions of this research study.

1. Concern about student violence

Administrators and teachers share a broad concern about the possibility of student violence in their schools, increased concern about maintaining a safe school environment, and eroding sense of safety and security by school personnel. These concerns are linked to budgetary funding cuts that have reduced schools' internal resources during a time when educators perceive increased student de-sensitization to violence, poor impulse control, and student aggression, bullying, and gangs.

2. Administrator and teacher views of peer mediation

There is broad agreement between administrators and teachers that peer mediation reduces conflicts, strengthens positive attitudes and behaviors in student disputants, and reduces negative individual and school-wide behaviors. Statistically significant differences reflect only the degree to which educators agree that specific attitudes or

behaviors are changed, not which have changed. Administrators indicate a more positive view of peer mediation than teachers, think that it plays a greater role in reducing disciplinary actions, and that peer mediation improves student attitudes toward other social groups and economic groups. This may be due to administrators' broad based responsibilities and activities that bring them in closer connection to student discipline situations, and greater investment in shepherding student violence prevention programs that include peer mediation. Also, teachers would like more data on the outcomes of their peer mediation program so they can better understand its effectiveness.

3. School views of peer mediation

At the school level, there is broad agreement between middle and high school educators on the impact of peer mediation on student attitudes and behaviors, similar to #2 above. It appears that peer mediation is not dependent on the special characteristics of a middle or high school. For example there could be some organizational congruence. Also developmentally, the students are not the same, but there may be a developmental threshold coupled with an organizational pattern that supports peer mediation. Both support their peer mediation programs, and agree that teaching students how to mediate provides a safe school climate. While both agree that peer mediation has increased positive attitudes and behaviors for disputants, more middle school educators think peer mediation has a positive impact on disputants' academic achievement. Also, there is also broad agreement that peer mediation has reduced disciplinary actions, as well as negative individual and school-wide behaviors. However, middle and high school respondents differ in their view of the impact of peer mediation on school-wide negative behaviors.

For example, more high school educators perceive a reduction in fighting, harassment, gossip/rumor, bullying, hate crimes, and reported suicide attempts. Conversely, more middle school educators perceive a reduction in poor grades, weapons brought to school, and smoking.

4. Challenges and Remedies of successful peer mediation programs

There is broad agreement between administrators and teachers at high schools and middle schools on the *challenges and remedies* of successful peer mediation programs. These include adequate funding, proper training of peer mediators and staff, and the proper amount of personnel to administer the program.

Challenges

Administrators and teachers agree that the top three barriers to success are lack of funding, training for faculty/staff, and personnel. More administrators are concerned about lack of funding, but more teachers are concerned about lack of faculty training. Also, more teachers are concerned about lack of support from school faculty/staff, yet administrators do not view this as a problem. While middle and high school educators agree on top barriers, high school educators are also concerned about lack of mediation space and materials.

Administrators and teachers agree there is an unequal distribution of resources. While some programs have access to funding, coordinators, mediator and staff training, space, or materials – others do not. These resources can be viewed as internal and external. While both administrators and teachers agree that peer mediation effectively reduces student conflicts, there are mixed views concerning internal barriers to program structure. These include mediator selection, middle school mediators, and program

effectiveness. Educators also are concerned with lack of mediator training, insufficient time for proper mediations that do not interfere with classes, peer mediation may not be a good fit or may be underutilized, students do not know how it works, and lack of visibility and explanation to faculty/staff. Teachers had more of a concern of students misusing the program or being pulled out of class to participate in mediation sessions. Also, they had more of a concern of not being included in program evaluation, when it is their students who are leaving to mediate or be mediated. Teachers are closer to these issues, as administrators may not be as aware of the impact on the classroom.

Internal barriers also include lack of support due to lack of information or negative perceptions, staff resentment, student apathy, and lack of referrals. Additional barriers include having only have seniors mediating with no one to replace them when they graduate because mediator training has ceased to exist, program coordination provided by teachers and counselors who are stretched and overloaded with their own regular jobs, or no place to mediate with privacy,

External barriers include changes in government educational and violence prevention priorities, and preferences of local school officials. These changes can knock the supports out from under healthy programs and decimate struggling ones.

Staff Development connected to student violence prevention is needed, according to administrators and teachers. Desired topics include adolescent development, student aggression, connecting disciplinary actions with conflict resolution, and bullying/bystander programs. More administrators are interested in victimology, trauma sensitivity, and diversity training, while more teachers have a concern for effectively managing aggressive students through curriculum and programs. Both administrators

and teachers agree that faculty/staff need to be educated about peer mediation philosophy, and peer mediators and program coordinators should show them how a mediation session works, and how they should refer students to the program.

Both administrators and teachers agree that their school needs assistance identifying violence prevention programs. However, more teachers than administrators, and more high school than middle school educators, had this concern. This is an area where further exploration could be of use, as the findings indicate that high school teachers would like additional information that administrators seem to already possess, and it is possible that teachers have insights into the potential of violence in their schools that administrators perceive in a different light.

Involvement in the decision making process for planning student conflict intervention is another barrier to success expressed by some teachers. These teachers expressed annoyance and anger at not being given information on their peer mediation programs, and resentment at being asked about their program when no one tells them anything. They may also be the same group who did not respond to several survey questions because they felt they did not have enough information to do so, or were upset.

Remedies for Success

Educators agree that program support is both internal and external, emanating from close connections between staff, students, and parents; student peer programs that provide opportunities for leadership and participation; and close working relationships with outside resources including the police, violence prevention programs, and other conflict resolution groups. Through 36 comments, educators agree that successful

student violence prevention requires a long-term commitment that should start in kindergarten, and be interconnected to restorative justice and disciplinary actions.

Successful student violence prevention is part of the school culture and has system-wide support, with an emphasis on system-wide training to educate students and staff about conflict theory and conflict prevention. There must be adequate funding, an adequately paid program coordinator who is not stretched in different directions by multiple jobs or roles, consistent training for mediators and staff, space, updated materials, program marketing and visibility, time to mediate without interfering in classes, time to train, and opportunities to upgrade skills through staff development trainings and field trips to conferences to network with other peer mediators and coordinators, and both the internal and external school community must be dedicated to keeping the program functioning in spite of intermittent or dwindling resources.

5. Support/Buy-in for the concept of student mediators

There is broad support, or buy-in, of the participating educators to the conceptual basis of involving students in conflict resolution, such as peer mediation. Both administrators and teachers assert that teaching students how to mediate provides a safe school climate, and a safe neutral place to resolve conflict. They agree that peers mediating peers is a valuable resource for violence prevention, and generally agree on the types of conflicts that are resolved by peer mediators. These perceptions are supported by both middle and high school educators.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

1. Concern about student violence

This study provides a comparison between administrators and teachers in middle and high schools in Massachusetts. Although most student violence perception studies are from the point of view of students and teachers, together with a small number of studies on principals and assistant principals, they shed some light on several major issues.

The results of this study confirm that administrators and teachers of middle and high schools in Massachusetts are concerned about student violence, maintaining a safe school environment, and an eroding sense of security by school personnel while dealing with on-going funding cuts, increased student aggression, bullying, gangs, student desensitization to violence, and lack of impulse control. Similarly, other studies have shown that bullying and cyberbullying are growing problems (MA DESE and MA DPH Survey, 2008; Roberts et al., NCES, 2010; Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor in David-Person & Hertz, 2009).

The literature indicates that little research exists on how to define when a school has a violence problem, but suggests that the way in which the school community defines whether its school are safe depends on the perceptions of principals, teachers, students, and the public (Astor et al., 2001). Noguera (2007, in Polakow, 2000) suggests that administrators and staff should look to student perceptions of school safety, as they are the perpetrators and victims. He also asserts that administrators are preoccupied with

controlling students by creating a prison-like atmosphere that does not respond to faculty and student fears, and therefore it weakens the school's ability to insure safety.

This research study found that administrators had a higher concern about student violence in general, while teachers were more concerned with physical threats, vandalism, and dropping out. Both administrators and teachers agreed on the negative student behaviors that lead to conflict (gossip/rumor, verbal threats, harassment, bullying), as well as the negative outcomes of those conflicts that affect students, both emotionally and academically (poor attendance, poor grades, depression, truancy, fear of other students). In a similar vein, Robinson's (2000) study of middle and high school principals' perceptions of conflicts experienced by new Canadian immigrant students found a continuing increase in covert and overt discrimination against racial, ethnic, religious, class, and cultural minorities. Although Whitted & Dupper (2005) studied the consequences of bullying, rather than student conflict in general, their findings on the psychological and academic effects on students were somewhat similar to this study: dislike of school, dropping out, emotional disorders, lower self-esteem, and long term problems. Furthermore, respondents' perceptions in this study concerning negative student behaviors and outcomes of student conflict are consistent with Henry's finding (cited by Dinkes, Cataldi, & Lin-Kelly, 2007) that crime and violence impacts the individuals, educational process, bystanders, school, and surrounding community. High school respondents to this survey indicated that their peer mediation program reduces negative school wide behaviors including fighting, harassment, gossip/rumor, bullying, hate crimes, and reported suicide attempts. Middle school respondents reported that their peer mediation program reduces poor grades, weapons brought to school, and smoking.

2. Administrator/teacher and school views of peer mediation

Peer mediation is the oldest, most common form of violence prevention program used by schools that is both preventive and interventive (Cohen, 2003). Peer mediation in high schools reduces fighting, suspensions, and expulsions (Prothrow-Stith, 1991). In their survey of principals on risk and protective factors affecting safety concerns and intervention programs, Sprague, Smith, and Stieber (2000) found that changing the culture of harassment and bullying benefits the attainment of violence free schools. While peer mediation has been found to be appropriate in bullying prevention, some researchers find it to be an inappropriate method of intervention, as bullying episodes are defined by an imbalance of power (Olweus, 1991) with students who have stable aggressive tendencies and may not take mediation seriously or may seek retribution later (Englander, 2005). Dealing with student conflict to create a safe school climate can be accomplished through conflict resolution strategies that include proactive violence reduction and intervention programs, framed as a systemic collaboration between school and community (Crawford & Bodine, 2001). Jones (2004) asserts that conflict resolution education is related to violence prevention and positive school climate, helps maximize teaching and learning. Furthermore, conflict resolution education (CRE) teaches social and emotional competencies, negotiation skills, empathy, skills, and bullying remediation. Bickmore's (2011) study found that current anti-violence, anti-bullying practices in public schools can focus resources on security at the expense of helping diverse student develop autonomy and mutual responsibility.

This research study found that peer mediation reduces conflicts, strengthens positive student attitudes and behaviors, prevents negative individual behaviors, reduces

negative school-wide behaviors, reduces disciplinary actions, and helps negative student attitudes toward peers who are from other social and economic groups. Administrators and teachers in middle and high schools who participated in this study indicate that teaching students to mediate provides a safe school climate, and peer mediation programs are a safe and neutral place to resolve and de-escalate conflicts. Administrators have a more positive view of peer mediation than teachers, and think peer mediation reduces disciplinary actions to a greater extent than teachers. High school educators think teaching students to mediate prevents 10 out of 12 negative behaviors, as well as fighting out of school. On the other hand, middle school educators think it positively impacts academic achievement of mediated disputants. Cole (2001) found that teachers provide insights to principals for long range violence reduction plans. She contends that violence-free communities can be created with well-designed, comprehensive, school based prevention plans that contain conflict resolution and peer mediation programs.

3. Challenges and Remedies of successful peer mediation programs

Challenges to success

The study found that funding cuts and lack of internal/external supports lead to an unequal distribution of resources that create barriers within functioning peer mediation programs in MA. These barriers wreak havoc on the availability of training for mediators and staff, personnel, and marketing. Lack of materials and space in which to mediate are barriers at both school levels, but particularly in high schools. More administrators than teachers view lack of funding as a problem. More teachers think lack of support from faculty and staff is a barrier, while administrators do not see this as a problem.

Developing internal support from the school community involves engaging everyone in learning and participating in violence prevention practices, but is a time-consuming, complex process. This approach to conflict resolution was supported by Lieber (1994) as a student centered, comprehensive, classroom-oriented program at three levels of instruction: classroom management, direct instruction and practice of conflict resolution skills, and curriculum infusion that includes the entire school community.

External support from community members, leaders, and stakeholders also helps to overcome challenges, including changes in preferences of school officials and government policies. For example, respondents cited the importance of working relationships with the police, violence prevention organizations, and the community at large. Leinhardt and Willert (2002) recommend community-based support systems where school safety is a shared responsibility involving everyone. They view the *whole student*, beyond academics, to include necessary resources such as peer mediation and anger management. They suggest a comprehensive environment where teachers demonstrate caring of students, the definition of school violence go beyond physical assault, staff development is an investment, and discipline policies and procedures are an investment. For example, if a group of advocates or an advisory board exists to maintain support for a peer mediation program, it will be more difficult to change or do away with that program as principals, superintendents, school committee members, or department of education employees come and go over time.

Structural problems take a toll, and survey respondents are concerned with lack of time to mediate without taking students out of class, not providing the standard length of time for mediator training (16-20 hours), poor mediator selection, lack of program

evaluation, and lack of transparency with the school community regarding program effectiveness.

Respondents to the study indicate that more teachers than administrators view lack of training and staff development as a barrier. Guttman (2005) indicated that conflict management is leadership competency and [all] employees must be educated in negotiations and depersonalizing conflict. In addition, it was recommended that school staff need to learn to deescalate student difficulties to keep them from worsening. Similarly, Jenson & Howard (2001) asserted that principals must know common elements of successful prevention programs that help students get along with others, and manage their differences. However, both indicated great interest in staff development topics.

Batton (2002, p. 480) indicates:

adult professional development as ESSENTIAL to integrate conflict resolution education (CRE) as a life skill into curriculum, mission statements, discussion procedures, and team building efforts, or institutionalizing conflict resolution education in a comprehensive approach with in-school capacity for curriculum, disciplinary procedures, and team building efforts, as well as program development, implementation, and evaluation.

Everett & Price (1997) conducted the Met Life Study of teacher perceptions found that teachers are concerned about the escalation of non-fatal student violence into fatal violence. They asked for information about causes of violence and successful educational interventions including conflict resolution. Teachers also indicated knowledge gaps, assumptions, and stereotypes (ex minority students and crime, and security) as well as a fine awareness of urban violence. In this study, administrators and teachers provided 43 replies concerning their own training needs pertaining to student violence prevention in their schools. These included adolescent development, student aggression, bullying education, trauma sensitivity, connecting discipline to mediation,

and developing ways of dealing with student conflict in the classroom. They also asked for demonstrations on how peer mediation works, and how to refer students.

Help in determining which violence prevention programs are most effective is another important area for schools. This study found that both administrators and teachers think that they could benefit from getting help to determine which violence prevention programs are best for their school, and more high school than middle school educators think they need help. Choosing a program that fits a school and community involves engagement of representatives who have knowledge and experience. Leinhardt and Willert (2002) found that nonfatal aggression between students occurs routinely and is often unseen by administrators and school personnel; therefore it is essential to seek input from community members, leaders, and stakeholders.

Program evaluation is another important area. This study found that only 23 percent of administrators and teachers, about evenly distributed between middle and high schools, knew if their programs had been evaluated as a violence prevention strategy, and 61.1 percent did not know. Heerboth (2000) found that principals do not know how to evaluate or assess their own violence prevention programs. A national study by Price & Everett (1997) found that principals may underreport because they do not understand where violence emanates from, the risk and protective factors, and risk factors for future violent behavior. Also, there may be confusion over terminology between violence prevention programs and responses to specific interventions. Peer mediation programs have been notorious for not bothering with research-based evaluation protocols, which creates obstacles to proving effectiveness and funding eligibility. Astor, et al. (2009)

have researched evidenced-based violence prevention programs, and suggest how to best implement them.

Lack of communication and inclusion of teachers in violence prevention programs is a serious barrier. Fortunately, just as Stone & Isaacs (2002) found that anonymous reporting of potential student violence helps students feel safe from retaliation, this study showed that anonymous and confidential responses helped teachers feel safe in reporting their perceptions of student conflict, commenting on how conflict resolution programs work in their school, and asserting their inability to answer survey questions because they felt uninformed and angry about being left out of program assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Remedies for success

Ford (2002) contended that peer mediation is part of community-based CRE effort which includes training for everyone, curriculum inclusions, and after school programs. Early findings include community involvement, sustained programs, and reduced juvenile crime. She recommended that training should include staff, parents, and police. In addition, she found that curriculum should start in middle school. For example, Kaveney & Drewery (2011) found that professional development for teachers in an urban high school can be found in restorative practice that includes classroom meetings and peer mediation.

This survey found that respondents' descriptions of successful programs include many of the same recommendations that Ford has made, with the exception of parent and police training. They cite adequate funding, a paid coordinator, space, materials, and

time to train and mediate. They have system-wide training, make a long-term commitment to system-wide training, educate students and staff about conflict theory and conflict prevention curriculum, provide a coordinator, and start with upper elementary students to provide skills and continuity as they move through the upper grades, and keep programs functioning despite setbacks. In addition, they develop internal and external program support, working relationships with outside resources, connect to restorative justice and disciplinary actions, and provide on-going staff development.

4. Support buy-in for concept of student mediators

Many studies cite longtime recognition and use of conflict resolution programs and curriculum, including peer mediation, to prevent and manage disputes (Bartsch & Cheurprakobit, 2002; Burrell, Zirbel, & Allen, 2003; Gerwerz, 2003; Pascopella, 2004). This study found that administrators and teachers agree that teaching students to mediate provides a valuable resource for violence prevention, and that their program successfully reduces conflicts and violence. Over 96 percent support their peer mediation program, and over 68 percent of respondents refer students with conflicts to their program. Peer-led programs improve diversity, student health, and safe/productive school environment. They reduce student violence, prevent substance use, increase school attendance and academic performance, and are cost effective (Forouzes, Grant, & Donnelly, 2001). In terms of school-based peer mediation programs, Johnson and Johnson (2004) have devoted many years to conflict resolution research, and found that four school-based models are effective. They are peer mediation, process curriculum, peaceable classrooms, and peaceable schools. Their research is based on 16 studies in two countries, in which they train the entire student body to negotiate and mediate, and this is integrated

into the curriculum. They also train using the cadre model, a more common method of selecting a group of students and training them to become peer mediators, rather than the entire school. Johnson and Johnson regard CRE as a nonviolent tool to deal with daily conflicts.

Myrick (2002) asserts that peer programs empower students because they encourage students to problem solve without adult assistance. This concept is supported by the survey as 30.6 percent of the respondents indicate that their school's peer mediations are facilitated by students only, and 59 percent indicate that their peer mediations are facilitated by students and staff.

However, Batton (2002) maintains that peer mediation is not a comprehensive, broad structural community-based program, but rather is issue specific, narrow in focus, and limited to student to student conflicts. She contends that peer mediation should only be a small part of an overall CRE program.

This study also found support for these concepts. Respondents who provided comments describing successful program indicated the need for peer mediation programs to be a part of a community-based comprehensive program that provides a multi-pronged approach to youth violence prevention and intervention, not limited to school settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Alternative funding for programs must be a priority to continue providing high quality programs that include personnel and training. Funding for peer mediator training, personnel, and staff development is on the wane. Therefore, it is vital that schools seek other sources of financial support for effective and successful programs.
2. Training for peer mediators to provide enough mediators with current skills. Training should be 16-20 hours to cover all subjects and provide enough time for multiple role plays that emphasize all aspects of the mediation process. Teachers should also be trained in what peer mediation is, how it works, and what it accomplishes in their school.
3. Staff development should be provided for administrators, staff, and teachers in subject areas related to student conflict, conflict resolution, dealing with aggressive students, crisis intervention, distinctions between normal adolescent development and disorders, and others.
4. In-service training and case debriefing should be provided to on a routine basis, weekly or monthly, in a group format for all peer mediators to ensure opportunities to discuss difficult cases (while maintaining confidentiality) and learn new conflict resolution skills.
5. An Advisory Committee should be developed for every peer mediation program so as to provide assistance and advocacy for program needs. This committee should meet on a monthly basis to discuss barriers to program success and help provide necessary resources.

6. Evaluations should be provided for (1) individual student mediator performance, including self evaluations (2) pre and post evaluation of disputants' perceptions of the mediation process (3) changes in school-wide negative behaviors and attitudes (4) the impact of peer mediation on disciplinary actions. Evaluative data should be routinely collected and utilized for grant applications. Evaluative data should be actively provided to the entire school community on an annual basis so that students, staff, faculty, and parents are made aware of program effectiveness.
7. Program marketing for visibility should be provided on a regular basis so that all members of the school community (administrators, faculty, counselors and guidance, students, parents, custodians, cafeteria workers, and bus drivers) are made aware of the peer mediation program, goals, accomplishments, and contact information. Peer mediators and former disputants should arrange to make presentations, including roleplays and handouts, for the school community, other schools in the district, and community organizations.

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<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/cft/resources/teachingresources/interactions/crisis.htm>.

Guidance for UM Instructors Leading Class Discussion on the tragedy of 9/11.

<http://www.crit.umich.edu/publinks/tragedydiscussion.html>

Teaching and learning in a time of crisis.

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APPENDIX A

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Aggressor: [used instead of “perpetrator”] is a student who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, MA DESE).

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR): Commonly used to refer to a variety of alternatives to litigation, wherein a neutral party assists the disputing parties, includes a full range of dispute resolution processes between direct negotiation and litigation (ADR Glossary, JAMS – The Resolution Experts (formerly Judicial, Arbitration, & Mediation Services) <http://www.jamsadr.com>).

Arbitration:

Intervention into a dispute by an independent third party who is given authority to collect information, listen to both sides, and make a decision as to how the conflict should be settled. (Crawford, D. & Bodine, R. (1996). *Conflict resolution education: A guide to implementing programs in schools, youth-serving organizations, and community and juvenile justice settings. Program Report.* Washington, D.C.: Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, U.S. Department of Education and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, p. D-1).

Long used as an alternative to litigation in commercial and labor dispute, this dispute resolution process offers less formal procedures, abbreviated presentations, and the undivided attention of the neutral(s). The arbitrator rules on discovery requests and disputes. The process can be binding or non-binding. (ADR Glossary, JAMS – The Resolution Experts (formerly Judicial, Arbitration, & Mediation Services) <http://www.jamsadr.com>).

Bullying: the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- i. Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target’s property;
 - ii. Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
 - iii. Creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
 - iv. Infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
 - v. Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.
- (M.G.L. c. 71, § 370)

Compromise: Seeking an expedient settlement that only partially satisfies both people. Compromising does not dig into the underlying problem, but rather seeks a more superficial arrangement, e.g., “splitting the difference.” It is based on partial concessions – giving up something to get something- and may have an underlying competitive

attitude. (Crawford, D. & Bodine, R. (1996). *Conflict resolution education: A guide to implementing programs in schools, youth-serving organizations, and community and juvenile justice settings. Program Report*. Washington, D.C.: Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, U.S. Department of Education and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, p. D-1)

Conflict: An expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive themselves as having incompatible goals, view resources as being scarce, and regard each other as interfering with the achievement of their own goals; a controversy or disagreement; coming into opposition with another individual or group. (Crawford, D. & Bodine, R. (1996). *Conflict resolution education: A guide to implementing programs in schools, youth-serving organizations, and community and juvenile justice settings. Program Report*. Washington, D.C.: Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, U.S. Department of Education and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, p. D-1)

Conflict Resolution: A spectrum of processes that all utilize communication skills and creative thinking to develop voluntary solutions that are acceptable to those concerned in a dispute. Conflict resolution processes include negotiation (between two parties), mediation (involving a third-party process facilitator), and consensus decisionmaking (facilitated group problem solving). (Crawford, D. & Bodine, R. (1996). *Conflict resolution education: A guide to implementing programs in schools, youth-serving organizations, and community and juvenile justice settings. Program Report*. Washington, D.C.: Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, U.S. Department of Education and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, p. D-2)

Conflict Resolution Education: A learning process that helps individuals understand conflict dynamics and empowers them to use communication and creative thinking to manage and resolve conflicts fairly and peacefully. Students are taught to use assertive communication, rather than passive or aggressive communication. Both parties assume responsibility for the conflict, and work toward the goal of reaching mutually acceptable compromises. (Massachusetts Department of Education. *Updated Guidelines for Schools on Addressing Teen Dating Violence, Interventions for Adolescent School-Based Violence*, p. 1). [wysiwyg://68/http://www.doe.mass.edu/hssss/tdv/sbv.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/hssss/tdv/sbv.html). Retrieved 10/31/05.

Cyberbullying: bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings (MA DESE. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 370 for the legal definition of cyberbullying).

Deescalate: To engage in actions that decrease the intensity of a conflict. (Crawford, D. & Bodine, R. (1996). *Conflict resolution education: A guide to implementing programs in schools, youth-serving organizations, and community and juvenile justice settings. Program Report*. Washington, D.C.: Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, U.S.

Department of Education and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, D-2)

Disputant: An individual who is involved in an argument, dispute, disagreement, fight, or conflict (Harvard Mediation Program, Program handout. Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA).

Escalate: To engage in actions that increase the intensity of a conflict. (Crawford, D. & Bodine, R. (1996). *Conflict resolution education: A guide to implementing programs in schools, youth-serving organizations, and community and juvenile justice settings. Program Report*. Washington, D.C.: Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, U.S. Department of Education and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, p. D-2)

Facilitation: The use of a third party or parties to provide procedural assistance to a group attempting to reach consensus about a problem. (Crawford, D. & Bodine, R. (1996). *Conflict resolution education: A guide to implementing programs in schools, youth-serving organizations, and community and juvenile justice settings. Program Report*. Washington, D.C.: Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, U.S. Department of Education and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, p. D-2)

Hostile environment: a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education (M.G.L. c. 71, § 370).

Mediation: Mediation is a form of dispute resolution designed to help people work out mutually acceptable solutions to their differences. It is a confidential and voluntary process. Mediators are not judges, nor do they act as lawyers. This means that mediators cannot and will not give legal advice, nor do they decide who is right or wrong, or take sides. The parties craft the resolution to the dispute, based on their own needs, interests and preferences. No one is forced to commit a resolution unless they choose to do so. (Harvard Mediation Program, Program handout. Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA).

Mediator: A neutral professional who facilitates negotiations between disputing parties and may evaluate the relative merits of the claims and defenses. The mediator does not have power to impose a solution or decision – the parties retain ultimate control over the outcome. He/she sets the ground rules and may profoundly affect the order of the proceedings, the parties' collective and individual analyses, and the general dynamic of the settlement discussion. A mediator can be a private judge, facilitator, special master (or referee), neutral advisor or anyone selected by mutual agreement of the parties to the dispute. (ADR Glossary, JAMS – The Resolution Experts (formerly Judicial, Arbitration, & Mediation Services) <http://www.jamsadr.com>).

Mediators help the parties in conflict identify ways to solve the conflict. A key component to any mediation process is letting each person tell his or her own story and then to feel as if someone understands his/her perspective. (Massachusetts Department of

Education. *Updated Guidelines for Schools on Addressing Teen Dating Violence, Interventions for Adolescent School-Based Violence*, p. 1.
wysiwyg://68/http://www.doe.mass.edu/hssss/tdv/sbv.html. Retrieved 10/31/05.

Negotiation: A form of conflict behavior; seeking to resolve divergence of interest by means of some form of interaction (typically the verbal exchange of offers) between the parties. (Rubin, J.Z., Pruitt, D.G., & Kim, S.H. (1994). *Social conflict: escalation, stalemate, and settlement*. U.S.A.: McGraw-Hill, Inc., p. 256).

Neutral: An individual who facilitates the ADR process, including mediators, arbitrators, private judges, facilitators, and special masters (or referees). (ADR Glossary, JAMS – The Resolution Experts (formerly Judicial, Arbitration, & Mediation Services)
<http://www.jamsadr.com>

Peer Mediation: is a negotiation-based strategy, in which students help to resolve conflicts among their peers. Students apply peer mediation strategies to help keep minor school conflicts from escalating into more serious incidents. Over time, effective peer mediation programs teach students alternatives to violence for solving personal problems or resolving interpersonal conflict. In any mediation process, an impartial third party helps two or more disputants come to a win:win, rather than a win-lose, resolution of conflict. In peer mediation, student mediators use an interest-based negotiation procedure, along with communication and problem-solving strategies, to help their peers settle conflicts without confrontation or violence. (Skiba, Russ (undated). *Fast Facts About Peer Mediation*. Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology, Indiana University, Bloomington. Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa International, p. 1).

Problem Solving: A strategy that involves seeking a mutually satisfactory alternative. (Rubin, J.Z., Pruitt, D.G., & Kim, S.H. (1994). *Social conflict: escalation, stalemate, and settlement*. U.S.A.: McGraw-Hill, Inc., p. 257).

Problem Solving Intervention: A form of third party intervention in which scholar/practitioners use their stature and conflict expertise to educate the parties to change their perceptions so that they can come to regard conflict as a problem to be solved together. (Rubin, J.Z., Pruitt, D.G., & Kim, S.H. (1994). *Social conflict: escalation, stalemate, and settlement*. U.S.A.: McGraw-Hill, Inc., p. 257).

Resolution: A course of action agreed upon to solve a problem. (Crawford, D. & Bodine, R. (1996). *Conflict resolution education: A guide to implementing programs in schools, youth-serving organizations, and community and juvenile justice settings. Program Report*. Washington, D.C.: Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, U.S. Department of Education and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, p.D-3)

Retaliation: any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying. (Massachusetts Department of

Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (May, 2008). *Health and Risk Behaviors of Massachusetts Youth, 2007: The Report*. Boston, MA: The Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/hprograms/yrbs and www.mass.gov/dph Retrieved 10/10.

School Crime: physical attack or fight without a weapon, threats of physical attack without a weapon, vandalism, theft or larceny, possession of a knife or sharp object, sexual harassment, possession or use of alcohol or illegal drugs, distribution of illegal drugs, threat of physical attack with a weapon, possession of a firearm or explosive device, robbery without a weapon, physical attack or fight with a weapon, sexual battery other than rape, robbery with a weapon. (U.S. Department of Education (2004). National Center for Education Statistics, *Crime and Safety in America's Public Schools: Selected Findings From the School Survey on Crime and Safety, NCES 2004-370*. Project Officer: Kathryn Chandler. Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, pp.2-3).

School Discipline problems: school disorder that distracts the ability of teachers to teach and students to learn: student racial tensions, student bullying, student verbal abuse of teachers, widespread disorder in classrooms, student acts of disrespect for teachers, undesirable gang activities, and undesirable cult or extremist group activities. (U.S. Department of Education (2004). National Center for Education Statistics, *Crime and Safety in America's Public Schools: Selected Findings From the School Survey on Crime and Safety, NCES 2004-370*. Project Officer: Kathryn Chandler. Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, p.5).

Serious School Discipline problems: all of the above, if daily or weekly. Also, gang and cult extremist group activities if they occur at all during the school year. (U.S. Department of Education (2004). National Center for Education Statistics, *Crime and Safety in America's Public Schools: Selected Findings From the School Survey on Crime and Safety, NCES 2004-370*. Project Officer: Kathryn Chandler. Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, p.5).

School Disciplinary Action: methods of restoring order to the classroom or school so that teaching and learning can continue. The most common include time-outs, detention-in school, and detention- out of school. (U.S. Department of Education (2004). National Center for Education Statistics, *Crime and Safety in America's Public Schools: Selected Findings From the School Survey on Crime and Safety, NCES 2004-370*. Project Officer: Kathryn Chandler. Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, p.6).

Serious School Disciplinary Action: suspensions lasting 5 days or more, removals from school with no continuing services (i.e. expulsions), and transfers to specialized schools. (U.S. Department of Education (2004). National Center for Education Statistics, *Crime and Safety in America's Public Schools: Selected Findings From the School Survey on Crime and Safety, NCES 2004-370*. Project Officer: Kathryn Chandler. Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, p.6).

School Violence/violent incidents: rape, sexual battery other than rape, physical attacks or fights with and without a weapon, threats of physical attack with and without a weapon, and robberies with and without a weapon. (U.S. Department of Education (2004). National Center for Education Statistics, *Crime and Safety in America's Public Schools: Selected Findings From the School Survey on Crime and Safety, NCES 2004-370*. Project Officer: Kathryn Chandler. Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, pp. 2-4).

School Violence/serious violent incidents: Those crimes that would be considered aggravated assaults: rape, sexual battery other than rape, physical attacks or fights with a weapon, threats of physical attack with a weapon, and robberies either with or without a weapon. (U.S. Department of Education (2004). National Center for Education Statistics, *Crime and Safety in America's Public Schools: Selected Findings From the School Survey on Crime and Safety, NCES 2004-370*. Project Officer: Kathryn Chandler. Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, pp. 2-4).

Staff: includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals. (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (May, 2008). *Health and Risk Behaviors of Massachusetts Youth, 2007: The Report*. Boston, MA: The Commonwealth of Massachusetts. www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/hprograms/yrbs and www.mass.gov/dph Retrieved 10/10.

Target: [used instead of “victim”] a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated. (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (May, 2008). *Health and Risk Behaviors of Massachusetts Youth, 2007: The Report*. Boston, MA: The Commonwealth of Massachusetts. www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/hprograms/yrbs and www.mass.gov/dph Retrieved 10/10.

Violence: Psychological or physical force exerted for the purpose of injuring, damaging, or abusing people or property. (Crawford, D. & Bodine, R. (1996). *Conflict resolution education: A guide to implementing programs in schools, youth-serving organizations, and community and juvenile justice settings. Program Report*. Washington, D.C.: Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, U.S. Department of Education and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, p. D-3).

Violence Prevention: To provide students with training intended to prevent certain behaviors. The most frequently reported program components [in 1999-2000 principals survey] were counseling/social work/psychological/therapeutic activity (66%); behavioral or behavior modification intervention (66%); prevention curriculum (65%); individual attention/mentoring/tutoring/coaching (63%); programs to promote a sense of community or social integration among students (57%); recreational/enrichment/leisure activities (53%); student involvement in resolving conduct problems, e.g. conflict resolution, peer mediation, or student court (53%); hotline to report problems (22%). (Crawford, D. & Bodine, R. (1996). *Conflict resolution education: A guide to implementing programs in*

schools, youth-serving organizations, and community and juvenile justice settings.
Program Report. Washington, D.C.: Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, U.S.
Department of Education and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention,
U.S. Department of Justice, p. 7).

APPENDIX B

IRB Approval for Study Letter

University of New Hampshire

Research Integrity Services, Service Building
51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585
Fax: 603-862-3564

23-May-2011

Noss, Eve
Education, Morrill Hall

IRB #: 5186

Study: Peer Mediation in Massachusetts Public Middle & High schools: Perceptions of Educators

Approval Date: 17-May-2011

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Exempt as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 101(b). Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the attached document, *Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects*. (This document is also available at <http://unh.edu/research/irb-application-resources>.) Please read this document carefully before commencing your work involving human subjects.

Upon completion of your study, please complete the enclosed Exempt Study Final Report form and return it to this office along with a report of your findings.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or julie.simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,



Julie F. Simpson
Director

cc: File
DeMitchell, Todd

APPENDIX C

Survey Letter of Introduction to Principals

Survey recruitment materials: invitation to participate in study

Email message to principals with peer mediation programs

Dear (Name of Principal),

Thank you for helping me locate peer mediation programs for my doctoral dissertation. With your assistance, I was able to find 77 middle and high schools in MA with programs.

This message is to ask if you will participate in my survey of principal, assistant principal, and teacher perceptions of peer mediation and student violence prevention.

The survey uses Survey Monkey and will take 5-10 minutes. This survey is anonymous for all individual respondents and schools. The data will be tabulated as an aggregate using totals, percentages, and post chi square. There is a minimal risk of breach of confidentiality when transferring information via the Internet, as the study is an on-line survey of adult educator respondents. The study has been approved by the UNH Institutional Review Board.

I ask that you forward the survey to your assistant principals and teachers so they can participate as well, using the link below.

I look forward to sharing the results with you and your staff.

Thank you very much,

Sincerely,

Eve Noss, Ph.D. Candidate

University of New Hampshire

Education Department

APPENDIX D

Peer Mediation in MA public middle and high schools: Perceptions of

1. Informed Consent Information

You have been invited to participate in a research project that will study the perceptions of Massachusetts public middle and high school principals, assistant principals, and teachers regarding the effectiveness of their peer mediation programs to prevent or reduce student violence. It considers your views of student conflict, your peer mediation program, and resources or barriers to successful programs. This project is being conducted by Eve Noss, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Education at the University of New Hampshire (UNH). The use of human subjects in this project has been approved by the UNH Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research. Please read the following statements. If you understand them and agree to participate, please click on the link at the bottom to indicate your consent and go to the first screen of the survey.

- There are anticipated to be approximately 5,000 participants in this research project.
- Participation in this project requires you to respond to survey questions, via Survey Monkey.
- Participation in this research project also requires you to send the survey link to the assistant principals and teachers in your school so they may participate.
- The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes. You should understand that some questions in the survey will ask you about student conflict and peer mediation program causes and effects in your school that may cause you discomfort.
- The results of this research will be published in my doctoral dissertation, and may be published or reported to scientific bodies, and that any such reports or publications will be reported in a group format. Thus, no individual or school participants' identity will be determinable through demographic variables such as age or gender, or any other response.
- Your participation is purely voluntary, you are free to refuse to answer any question, and you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Participation in this project is not expected to present any greater risk of your loss of personal privacy than you would encounter in everyday life when sending and/or receiving information over the Internet. While it is not possible to identify all risks in such research, all reasonable efforts have been undertaken to minimize any such potential risks.
- Any form of communication over the Internet does carry a minimal risk of loss of confidentiality. The responses that you provide will not be encrypted but the following steps have been taken to minimize any risk to confidentiality: ALL of the information provided will be stored in a password protected environment and that password is known only to the principal investigator, named above.
- You are not expected to receive any direct benefits from your participation other than a summary of the findings, and the investigator hopes that the information gained may benefit schools and society.
- If at any time you have questions or concerns about any procedure in this project, you may e-mail Eve Noss at enoss@wildcats.unh.edu or by calling her at 978-578-0887. You should also understand that you will be able to request a summary of the findings. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Julie Simpson in UNH Research Integrity Services, 603-862-2003 or at julie.simpson@unh.edu

CLICK NEXT if you have read these statements, understand them, and consent to participate.

CLICK EXIT THIS SURVEY (top right) if you do not want to participate.

2. SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

My school is a

- high school
 middle school

My position or job title is:

- Principal
 Assistant or Vice Principal
 Teacher

Gender

- Female
 Male

Number of years I have held my current position at this school:

- Less than 1 year
 1-5 years
 6-10 years
 11-15 years
 16-20 years
 21-25 years
 Over 25 years

Number of years I have worked in public education systems:

- Less than 1 year
 1-5 years
 6-10 years
 11-15 years
 16-20 years
 21-25 years
 Over 25 years

Peer Mediation in MA public middle and high schools: Perceptions of

My school's location is:

- Rural
- Suburban
- Urban

Total number of student enrollment of my school:

Percentage of students at your school by Gender:

% Female students

% Male students

Student Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Percentage of students on Reduced Lunch

Percentage of students on Free Lunch

3. STUDENT CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE IN YOUR SCHOOL

Please check the response that most closely reflects your opinion.

My concern for maintaining a safe school environment has increased over the past five years.

- Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

I am concerned about the possibility of student violence in my school.

- Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

List any concerns about the possibility of student violence in your school:

How often do you think students at your school engage in these behaviors?

	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Do not know
Gossip/Rumors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Verbal threats	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bullying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cyberbullying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sexting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Harassment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assaults	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical threats	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fighting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threats on staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vandalism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weapons carrying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gang activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Peer Mediation in MA public middle and high schools: Perceptions of

To what extent do you think student conflict leads to these outcomes in your school?

	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Do not know
Poor attendance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poor grades	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fear of other students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Depression	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Truancy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dropping out	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weapon carrying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gang involvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stealing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In-school substance use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vandalism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Peer Mediation in MA public middle and high schools: Perceptions of

4. PEER MEDIATION PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

Please fill in the following questions to the best of your ability.

Our peer mediation program has been operating for ___ years. (please fill in the amount)

Our peer mediation program is run by:

- Coordinator
- Counselor
- Teacher
- Vice/Assistant Principal
- Principal
- I do not know

Other (please specify)

Our peer mediations are facilitated by:

- Students only
- Staff only
- Students & Staff
- I do not know

Other (please specify)

Our peer mediators receive ___ hours of peer mediation training.

- 1-5 hours
- 6-10 hours
- 11-15 hours
- 16-20 hours
- I do not know

I have been trained in mediation or peer mediation.

- Yes
- No

Peer Mediation in MA public middle and high schools: Perceptions of

Our program currently has ___ trained peer mediators. (Please fill in the number below).

Our peer mediation has an Advisory Committee (educators, students, and/or parents) that meets on a regular basis to plan and advocate for the program.

- Yes No I do not know

Our program is part of a community-wide violence and bullying prevention program.

- Yes No I do not know

Our peer mediators meet regularly for case debriefing and in-service training.

- Yes No I do not know

I refer students with conflicts to our peer mediation program.

- Often Sometimes Rarely Never

Our peer mediation program successfully reduces conflicts and violence.

- Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Our peer mediation program has been evaluated as a violence prevention strategy.

- Yes No I do not know

5. PERCEPTION OF PEER MEDIATION FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

I understand the concepts that support our Peer Mediation Program.

- Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Please select only ONE prompt.

- I support our Peer Mediation program. I Do Not support our Peer Mediation program.

Explain your reason for the previous question. Why do you Support or Do Not Support your school's Peer Mediation Program?

Teaching students how to mediate conflicts helps to provide a safe school climate.

- Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Teaching students how to mediate conflicts prevents the following. (Indicate the response that best corresponds to your perception)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
Gossip & Rumor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Harassment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sexual harassment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bullying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cyberbullying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sexting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Racial conflict	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ethnic conflict	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gender conflict	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social class conflict	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fighting in school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fighting out of school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Peer Mediation in MA public middle and high schools: Perceptions of

Our peer mediation program has increased positive behaviors and attitudes in students who have gone through peer mediation (the disputants). (Indicate the response that best corresponds to your perception)

	Strong Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
Ability to resolve conflicts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic achievement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attendance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attitude toward other ethnic groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attitude toward other social groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attitude toward other economic groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communication skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Concern for other students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cooperative spirit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Problem solving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-esteem	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our Peer Mediation program has reduced School-Wide negative behaviors. (Indicate the response that best corresponds to your perception)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
Gang related activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incidents of school vandalism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incidents of substance abuse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incidents of fighting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incidents of harassment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incidents of gossip/rumor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incidents of bullying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incidents of hate crimes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incidents of smoking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poor grades	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reported suicide attempts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Truancy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weapons brought to school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Peer Mediation in MA public middle and high schools: Perceptions of

Our Peer Mediation program has reduced disciplinary actions such as suspension, expulsion, detention, and other disciplinary actions.

Strongly Agree

Agree

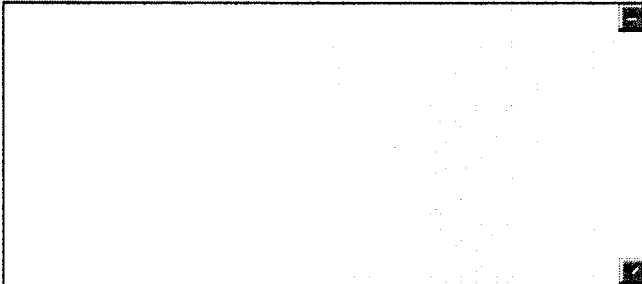
Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Do Not Know

6. PROGRAM RESOURCES & BARRIERS

What currently available resources contribute to the success of your Peer Mediation program?



What barriers or obstacles stand in the way of operating the most effective Peer Mediation program at your school? (Please check all the apply)

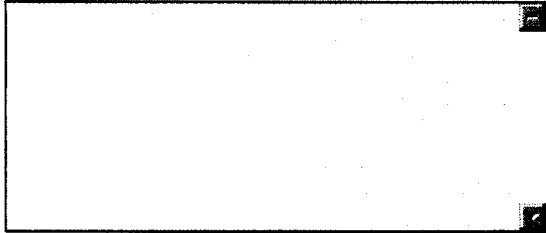
- We have no barriers
- Funding
- Personnel
- Space
- Materials
- Training for peer mediators
- Training for faculty/staff
- Support from the school committee
- Support from the superintendent
- Support from school faculty & staff
- Support from students
- Support from parents

Other (please specify)

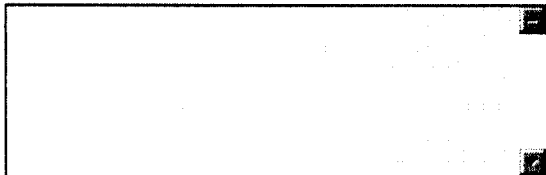


Peer Mediation in MA public middle and high schools: Perceptions of

What staff development topics would you find useful to better prevent or reduce student conflict and violence?



What resources which are currently not available would make your Peer Mediation program more successful?



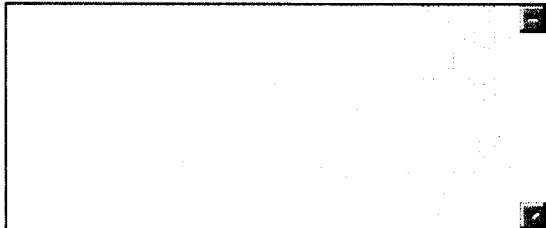
Do you think your school needs help determining which violence prevention programs are needed, and which are the best?

Yes

No

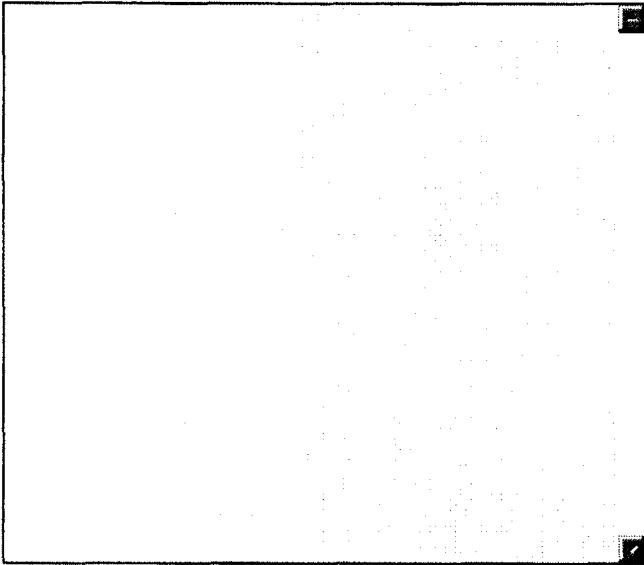
I do not know

What other conflict management programs in your school are effective in reducing student conflict?



7. COMMENTS

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD THAT WOULD HELP TO UNDERSTAND THE SUCCESS OR LACK OF SUCCESS OF YOUR PEER MEDIATION PROGRAM?



Peer Mediation in MA public middle and high schools: Perceptions of

8. Debriefing Sheet

Thank you for completing the survey!! This page will further explain the purpose of the survey research you have just participated in. After you are finished viewing this page and have submitted your answers by clicking on the button at the bottom of the page, it is recommended you exit or quit your Web browser to eliminate the possibility (which varies depending on your computer and browser) that your responses could be viewed by hitting the "back" button.

Please do not discuss or show the information on this page with any of your friends/colleagues who might complete the survey or speak with someone else who might. This is to avoid invalidating the results of the study. We would like to remind you that all the data you just provided will be kept in a confidential and anonymous manner and that any identifying information you provided will be used ONLY to provide the appropriate data for the study.

Because you have invested time in this study, you may have an interest in what we hope to find from your results. The purpose of this study is: Do Massachusetts public middle and high school administrators and teachers think their peer mediation program is successfully working to reduce student conflicts?

The related research sub-questions are:

1. Are principals, assistant principals, and teachers concerned about student violence in their schools?
2. Do principals, assistant principals, and teachers perceive that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase positive student behavior?
3. Is there a difference between middle and high school perceptions that peer mediation programs successfully reduce conflict and increase positive student behavior?
4. What resources do principals, assistant principals, and teachers use to implement their peer mediation programs?
5. What barriers do principals, assistant principals, and teachers perceive exist to their peer mediation programs?

If you have questions about this survey or would like a copy of the results please email or call me at the number below. Thank you again for your interest and participation. Now, it's time to submit your answers.

CLICK DONE if you have read this information and want to keep your responses to the survey.

CLICK EXIT THIS SURVEY (top right) if you have read this information and want to remove your responses from the data file.

Principal Investigator: Eve Noss
University of New Hampshire
Department of Education
62 College Road, Morrill Hall
Durham, NH 03824-3595
Phone: cell 978-578-0887
Fax: not necessary
Email: enoss@wildcats.unh.edu

APPENDIX E

Survey Question 12. List any concerns about the possibility of student violence in your school.

This was an open-ended question with 33 replies.

High School: 19 replies

Principals: no replies

Assistant Principals:

Fights weapons fear

Always concerned about having 360 or more adolescents from 30 different communities sharing one space with each other as well as 50 staff members.

Nothing specific but no school is immune to the possibility of student violence.

Nothing specific. No school is immune to the possibility and having programs in place to prevent it is important.

Nothing specific. However, in our current societal culture, no school is immune to possible student violence.

Teachers:

Concern for kids who have been hospitalized and the increasing numbers of kids who are in this position.

We have a changing population of students - many of them coming from very dysfunctional families.

Lots of fights in our school. Many inner city students with very poor academic and social skills have moved into the district in the past 5- 7 years. Biggest problem is administration fails to refer these students to our peer mediation program!

I think it is more rare in our school; I do, however, think that the possibility is always there in any High School.

I am more concerned about violence on a small scale - two students fighting. I have seen some of the fights in the school and they can be extremely violent. I also know that we have had issues with former students entering the school with malicious intent.

Students have become decensortized (sic) to violence. It is everywhere. Conflict management skills have declined. Social skills have declined.

Student fights, although they have decreased, have become more violent.

There simply exists a lot of anger in our society, and it seems to pop out once in a while in violent ways.

Language barriers on the teachers' behalf, we do not know what is being said in the classroom, if students are not speaking English!

Gangs, fights, bullying

Fights Teacher/Student conflict

With budget cuts, the police liaison position within the school has been eliminated which leaves us vulnerable.

We've had a steady increase in the student:adult ratio, over the past 10 years teachers teach more students, class sizes are larger, counselors work with more students (counselor load is up almost 50 students to 235 students per counselor). Three years ago we shut down one house making housemasters responsible for 140 more students. Many students are falling through the cracks because there's not enough time to have one on one conversations to get to the root of their conflicts. Many students who would benefit from mediation are not being sent and do not know it's a useful option for them.

I do not have any concerns that are specific to our school.

Middle School: 14 Replies

Principals:

The concerns for violence in the school mirror those of our larger society.

Assistant Principals:

Assaults.

Teachers:

Group fights angry students

Access to handguns

I believe intervening early on in conflicts make the environment safer.

My concern is more on the impulsivity side, students become impatient and they punch each other, etc.

These students have little impulse control.

My main concern revolves around consequences. Being an RTI school has its advantages, but there are times I feel consequences need to be much harsher from smaller offenses in

order to send a clear message of zero tolerance for disrespect, insubordinance (sic), or violence.

Student violence is very rare in my school, but I see the potential. There have been more physical acts of aggression this year and our staff numbers are low due to budget cuts. The district is positive but tense as a whole.

Too much bullying

Bullying Weapons in school

Incidents of student violence at our school are few and far in between.

There is much more accessibility for students to get things they need for school-wide violence these days like guns etc.... I am not specifically concerned with any specific student or group of students, but as a teacher with all that has happened in the past in other schools I am concerned that this could happen in my district or nearby.

Bullying and the resulting fights concern me.

APPENDIX F

Question 29: Explain your reason for the previous question (#28).
Why do you Support or Do Not Support your school's peer mediation program?

This was an open-ended question with 72 replies.

Why Do You Support Your School's Peer Mediation Program?

High School Replies:

4 Principal Replies:

Provides a needed service.

Students get a chance for their voice [to be] heard and understood without judgment being passed.

Peer mediation has successfully diffused a number of situations that would have otherwise risen to the level of school administration discipline and consequences.

It is proven to be effective

4 Assistant Principal Replies:

I have been a peer mediation advisor and trainer in middle and high schools over the past 21 years and can attest to the value of such programs.

I strongly support the program and would encourage the district to expand it to upper elementary grades as well. It provides valuable skills and increases student understanding of individual differences. It also increases empathy.

Prevention - early intervention prevents serious situations from occurring. Student leadership/mentor training benefits the practitioner and all students and staff

It assists in solving student to student conflict, student to teacher conflict and teacher to teacher conflict. It is a way to teach our students different social skills and give them the ability to solve problems. It is another RESOURCE for students to be able to access before they make a bad decision

32 Teacher Replies:

I feel all students deserve the right to resolve conflict with dignity. Some may need this modeled for them as they may not have experienced healthy strategies for resolving conflict. Our mediation program guides this process.

Peer Mediation is a program that not only reduces student conflict by helping students come to agreements. It also serves as a preventative program that encourages positive interactions between students and focuses on bullying prevention.

Students can benefit from the experience of peer mediation to deal with conflicts throughout their lives. It teaches students (whether involved directly or not) that there are alternatives to resolving disputes.

I support our peer mediation program because I have witnessed many successes both for disputants (students and adults) and mediators (students and adults). I believe that mediation is a long term violence prevention strategy because it empowers individuals to talk about their feelings and problem solve in a realistic way.

Students helping peers work out issues they can relate to.

I think it is important for students to be able to find an appropriate way to resolve conflict. I also feel that having students run the mediation will lead to a better outcome for all involved and helps to promote better decision making among all involved.

The program promotes a positive message and demonstrates valuable skills for "real life" experiences.

Because it is an effective method for conflict resolution and teaches valuable skills

It's a great program that teaches kids coping skills and how to learn to work with others.

It has been a valuable tool for many students to have a safe place to resolve conflict.

I think it is a great program.

It has worked to reduce conflicts in the school.

In the instances that I've used it or referred to the program, I believe it had a positive outcome for the students.

The results are observable.

It is necessary given our school's demographics.

I support the program because really prevent future conflicts. Also our mediator is an excellent person, which act immediately to resolve the problems. After mediation our students change their attitude for better.

I have used it in the past and I believe the students are more apt to listen to other students than they are to adults.

It is good to defuse the problems before they escalate.

Because of its success rate

I think students often have more impact on students in these situations than staff can.

It is an important step in conflict resolution.

I think it can be an effective method for resolving conflicts.

Students need to learn the skills to deal with conflict resolutions.

It was a good program to have students become involved in the decision making process.

I support it because I believe that it is effective.

It is well run, and I believe it is essential to the well being of all.

It's an effective way of reducing violence amongst students

I started the program at our school 21 years ago and 7 years ago a part time coordinator was hired since the program was too busy for me to handle along with my teaching duties. Our program is very active!

Teaches students how to appropriately process and talk through a problem

I believe the program provides another avenue for students to address conflicts. Our peer leaders have done a wonderful job over the past few years.

I think it teaches our student population valuable interpersonal skills and reduces potential violent and harmful situations

It's been very helpful in mediating some issues between small and large groups of students

3 Replies - Educator position not indicated:

Because I think that teaching students mediation skills is a powerful tool for conflict resolution that most adults do not possess.

Resolving conflicts is important to the healthy climate at school.

I think it has been very beneficial in enabling students to work out minor conflicts and it is excellent training for the mediators.

Why do you NOT SUPPORT your school's Peer Mediation Program?

High School Replies:

0 Principal Replies

0 Assistant Principal Replies

3 Teacher Replies:

Too much time for peer mediators away from the classroom for training, etc. Rarely utilized program, unsure of any real results.

Ineffective at achieving goals stated.

It attracts the same type of student-female, typically high-achieving. In many instances, I do not think the students chosen are the ones that others would feel the most comfortable sharing their problems with. I honestly believe the pull for most students is that it gets them out of class.

Mixed Support

High School Replies

2 Teacher Replies:

At times, it has reduced the escalation of issues and resolved them before physical violence has broken out. At times, students use it as a scapegoat to get out of class.

I support student-student mediation but not student-teacher mediation.

Why do you SUPPORT your school's Peer Mediation Program?

Middle School Replies:

3 Principal Replies:

It has been a pro-active intervention and also served to deescalate problems that have already surfaced.

I have been actively involved in my district's program for 18 years. I have been the district coordinator and adviser until now because I have recently been appointed as Principal. I know how effective peer mediation has been for our district and have numbers to back that statement.

PM teaches everyone involved important social skills. Conflict is a normal part of life that everyone encounters, and the PM program teaches young people how to appropriately navigate the challenges that conflicts present.

1 Assistant Principal Reply:

It provides Intervention and is a proactive approach to conflict.

15 Teacher Replies:

I believe that any attempt at mediation is better than none.

I think that is an important avenue for working with student conflicts as part of a total program of violence prevention.

I believe in mediation as a process at any age. I've seen it work first-hand with the middle school population for the past 10 years.

It helps enough kids that it's worth it, and I think the training that some of the students receive is a great skill.

I think Peer mediation is important because it takes students outside of the situation and allows them to sit down and talk about it in a safe place with someone acting as the neutral.

The students involved in the program are there because they want to be a part of the solution. I'll support any child that believes they are doing the right thing.

I believe it works, as I have seen its successes personally.

I support it in the fact that we have one, but I am not involved in the program.

I have seen it succeed. I have seen that bit helps the disputing students and teaches the mediators wonderful lessons as well.

It sounds like a good and worthwhile program though I am not involved and do not know much about it.

I think the program is a valuable tool that gives students a space to talk through issues as well as give opportunities to get involved in school leadership as mediators.

Students need to be held to a degree of responsibility and accountability and understand that there's not always a magical answer by an adult to fix every problem. I think children need to know how to work things out between themselves and their peers.

it is important for students to learn peaceful ways to solve problems

It teaches students valuable skill that can be transferred later in life.

I support the program because I am the one who oversees it. If I did not support it, I would not be the advisor. It teaches good strategies and is user friendly.

1 Reply - position/job title not indicated:

I believe the students learn a set of skills that help them interact and support other students in a positive manner

Why do you NOT SUPPORT your school's Peer Mediation Program?

Middle Schools Replies:

0 Principal Replies

0 Assistant Principal Replies

1 Teacher Reply:

I feel that it is not helpful to all students. I have been told by many students that they did not find it helpful at all and was very awkward. I understand that the mediators are to be confidential but

I still do not think that having students opening up to others is always judgment free. I also feel that the conflicts are never truly resolved. Peer mediators at a high school level could be effective but at a middle school I do not feel that they have enough life experiences to draw from to help approach conflicts with different views.

Mixed Support

Middle School Replies

3 Teacher Replies:

I support it, though it does take students out of class for a significant amount of time. Sometimes these students are failing classes. While I certainly support the program and its efforts, if a student is failing classes, they should not be excused from class for a mediation- especially when the state then comes back to me asking why the student is failing the course and/or MCAS.

I do support the program, but I also feel that it often exacerbates problems or empowers students to engage in behaviors that they previously did not.

The program seems to ameliorate conflictive behavior. However there are certain students who thrive on the attention and seek out mediation with the same group of peers. They do not seem to have any permanent solutions and for these kids I do not find it effective.

APPENDIX G

Question 35: What currently available resources contribute to the success of your peer mediation program?

This was an open-ended question with 44 replies.

High School Responses

2 Principal responses

We pay for the students to be trained in Peer Mediation.

The Advisor for Peer Mediators receives a stipend.

Training. visibility of the program.

4 Assistant Principals responses

We have a large number of trained mediators so someone is available during study or free blocks any time during the school day to mediate quickly without disrupting student learning if a referral is made to the counselor or school psychologist.

The program is strongly supported by the administration and the PTO.

Funds to pay for an outside coordinator to run the program

Funds to pay for outside group to train our mediators

Resources have been completely cut.

19 HS Teachers responses

Supportive administration, access to funding

Support of administration

some monies have been available through Health grants though that source was unavailable this year

enthusiasm of student mediators and their willingness to give more

Trained staff, my mentor the former mediation coordinator, and director of school with in a school program.

On going training, dedication of students involved and their ability to maintain confidentiality.

Conferences, training

Stability in who the coordinator is; over the last 8 years it has been two people in charge; the first

four years, it was [KM] and the last 4 years it has been [HB]. They have each done a great job and the transition from K to H was seamless.

The presence of the Mediation co-ordinator and trainer in our school.
I am unsure.

Accessibility. SADD, GSA and other programs that discuss these issues.

don't know

I do not know.

??????

I don't know.

Some space in the school and the dedication of the coordinator.

The coordinator and the trained mediators are dedicated to the program.

Field trips, school advisorship

Other than the fact that we have a room for our coordinator and a training each year for new mediators, none. We have a bulletin board available for our use and we have to do candy fundraisers to support the extras at a training such as snacks for trainees!!! Our coordinator is grossly underpaid for her efforts and has been for the past 7 years. She needs a better salary and more hours than the present 20/week.

Our administrators support this program and allow for meetings and mediations to take place during the school day.

Our local police dept, guidance dept, and school psychologist also support our program.

group counseling, adjustment counselors and the guidance team

voluntary support from guidance counselor

dedicated teacher

verbal support from teachers/counselors/vice principals

incentive for peer mediators to earn credit for participating

3 HS- Position not identified

The ADL Youth Congress training and actual day of programs.

Having an experienced peer mediation coordinator on staff is key. The coordinator is able to address student conflicts in a timely fashion, train new peer mediators each year and provide program outreach.

Local violence prevention center

A designated room for mediation
Excellent training program
Very responsible program moderator who follows up usually the same day on referrals

Middle School Responses

4 Principal responses

Supported by local United Way as well as district revenue, but we could use more time and money.

In the past our mediation program has been funded by the Safe and Drug Free Schools grant.

That grant is no longer available, so our district has generously continued to fund this important program.

Our Foundation provides \$10,000 a year to partner with a community-based mediation program which provides our program director. The Student Services Team actively supports the program and provides supplementary leadership training. All teachers and students are trained on how to access the program.

Coordinator
Trained students

1 Assistant Principal responses

Training

10 Teachers responses

Administration support and faculty involvement

We meet once per schedule (every six days) for an hour to discuss mediations, strategies....

We have that one hour period available for mediations so students don't have to be removed from classes to mediate.

Our mediators are visible to their peers and will offer their services when they see the need.

Our administration fully supports peer mediation.

Teachers that run it and students that participate in it.

I believe the only resource available is the adjustment counselor that runs the program.

He does try to work with the teachers about when it is best to take a student out of class when I feel I have to say that I can't let a student leave because we are taking a test/studying for a test.

I do not know.

We rely on our past training and knowledge, old books and videos.

Supportive and flexible administration and staff.

Involved instructor, flexible teachers, motivated students

Teacher support and student participation.

APPENDIX H

Question 36: What barriers or obstacles stand in the way of operating the most effective Peer Mediation program in your school?

This question was the Other (please provide) item following 12 check off responses. .

High School Responses: barriers and obstacles

Principals

No responses

Assistant Principals

We have strong support from our administration and from our PTO.

A lot of issues are not appropriate for mediation or disputants are not interested in participating in mediation. We also have such a small school population ... with bigger numbers maybe we would have more cases to mediate.

Teachers

Time- Many teachers do not want students out of class to participate in the Peer Mediation program. This creates an obstacle. Also, the time of the staff running the program is divided. Their full time jobs interfere with their ability to dedicate more time to the program.

I think that this service is under utilized. While I feel that people support the program, it is not used as often as it could be.

Funding is always a concern, but so far it appears to be under control, although there are never any guarantees that [H] will return since he gets laid-off every summer and we hope he gets re-called to return every September for another school year. So far so good!

don't know about other barriers because I don't know how involved we've become as teachers with any training etc.

TIME. My peer mediators are extremely over scheduled and finding a time for them to meet is almost impossible. Also, many conflicts that would be great referrals to peer mediation don't go through b/c the students in conflict don't feel comfortable discussing their private issues in front of peers.

The students. I believe we have an apathetic student body. They simply do not care about much of anything. I find that they use Peer Mediation as something they do AFTER a problem has affected them, instead of using it PROACTIVELY.

I don't have enough information to answer the barrier question.

Administrators need to be educated on mediation so that have an understanding of what mediation is and how and why it works.

They need to be more out in the open and introduced to faculty and the students. Also some information should be given to staff and students describing what they do and what the group is used for.

Time for mediation to happen where students are not pulled from classes which makes faculty oppose the program.

Not sure

We get lots of lip service from the central administration. They hail the program before the press or when the state or others evaluate us and then fail to properly fund us to do ongoing training on an advanced level.

Getting all of the students to buy into the program.

For students to feel they are not being "snitches" when asking for help

High School Position not indicated:

Limited referrals for the actual mediation process.

Perhaps just more publicity and promotion of the program. Not sure how many faculty or students know much about the program or its success. Publication of data (anonymous of course) would be very useful. How many sessions conducted, student ratings of success, etc.

Middle School Responses about barriers and obstacles

Principal

No responses

Assistant Principal

time

Teachers

Faculty really knows very little about this program if they are not involved in it, as far as I can tell.

Communication

I do not know. Our school program does not share with the staff any data about the effectiveness of the program. I do not know many details about the program.

I said school faculty, but they mostly value us, I really meant administration, but you did not list them as a choice.

I do not know enough so therefore as a teacher I chose "training for faculty/staff"

Due to scheduling, peer mediation often takes kids out of class. While I understand the value of mediation, many of our students who struggle with schoolwork miss important classroom learning time and do not make up their work/come for extra help afterward. I see some staff members even more frustrated with this than me, and I think it reflects badly on the mediation program, even if unnecessarily.

Middle School Position not indicated

Time on Learning reduces the time available to plan frequent peer mediations. A Less formal process is utilized to meet our needs.

APPENDIX I

Question 37: What Staff Development topics would you find useful to better prevent or reduce student conflict and violence?

This was an open-ended question with 43 replies.

High School Responses

2 Principal

gender equity

gender equity and diversity training

5 Assistant Principal

Student demonstrations of typical peer mediation referrals so that the staff learns how the process works.

Student mediator presentations so that staff can see how the process works.

N/A

identifying and responding to peer aggression and/or bullying

Importance of teacher involvement

25 Teacher

training in the area of bystander education general sensitivity training to human relationships and communication

Bullying

more understanding by faculty as to how to identify and refer peer mediation disputes

The staff is sometimes hesitant to suggest mediations and instead offer discipline such as detentions...

Mediation trainings connected to anti-bullying initiatives coming from state.

not sure

-training on how to intervene and NOT be a bystander (this goes for students as well-- they need specific STRATEGIES that can be used when they see conflict or bullying)

Communication

More training for staff would be helpful.

Get teachers involved in the trainings and in the outreach. Ensure that staff continue buying into the importance of making peer mediation referrals.

Training or early recognition/intervention by staff.

Exactly the procedure and what happens Possible ways for staff to approach these various issues Maybe some statistics about the numbers of fights, bullying reports, etc. We do not know the effect if the numbers are not shared...Is anyone even keeping data?

I'd like to see more parental involvement in preventing and reducing conflict.

Having some influential people come in and promote the program

Bullying, dating violence, control issues within couples

Role play/Skits/Assemblies

De-escalation

Conflict resolution training for everyone

Informing teachers about the Peer Mediation process, giving them some hard data and success of the program

professional development signs of conflict, conflict resolution skills

Not sure

Something presented by the peer mediators themselves to faculty

The staff isn't really cohesive in their desires to support mediation. Many prefer a punitive approach. I would think more mediation education and some minimal training might help but the school won't make time for it. I have tried as has the present coordinator.

We should encourage periodic training to the staff about diversity issues, stress among the students, and new populations of students entering the school.

Getting in fights/legal trouble is not worth it Not being "snitches" but talking to a trusted adult

2 High school positions not indicated
bullying prevention training.

Crisis intervention How to talk down a student who's escalating or chronically on edge
More use of the school psychologist for referrals when a student is agitated

Middle School Responses

2 Principal

The importance of referrals.

Ongoing training on trauma sensitivity and how to support healthy social skill development

2 Assistant Principal

Addressing psycho-social needs of students

Conflict mediation skills to use as a teacher in a classroom

5 Teacher

teaching staff how to use the peer mediation program more effectively

I think all teachers should be trained in peer mediation and anti-bullying techniques.

Just having an awareness of the ways in which student conflict can arise should be enough. This way, if an adult sees the behavior or suspects the behavior, they can address it.

tell us what the kids get for training tape a mediation and let us watch

I think general tips on how to respond to certain situations (such as gossip/rumors) would be helpful.

APPENDIX J

Question 38: What resources, which are currently not available, would make your Peer Mediation program more successful?

This was an open-ended question with 43 replies.

High School Responses

1 Principals

more training for staff more funding for training

4 Assistant Principals

Not sure.

Not sure.

more funding to make the program a full time position not just 10 hours a week

funding

23 Teachers

Time

Time

money dedicated space time for advisor (not as an addition to full time teaching responsibilities)

comprehensive health education program

time

time!

More information to let students know that the program is available would be helpful (advertising).

Increased funding to support an annual field trip to the Peacemaker conferences; increased funding for Bystander training.

In-service training

???

funding for training new mediators

?
??????

A mediator in the high school and space dedicated to this program. Training for staff about referrals. Time for mediation that is not class time.

Funding

More time for the coordinator

more promotion

Not sure

MONEY!!!!!!!!!!!!

A better room/location for the program which would be more visible and yet private for confidentiality purposes.

Meeting times with faculty

We have many resources around us.

A full time peer mediator/conflict resolution staff person

2 Position not indicated

We have lots of resources- it's staff buy in that makes it most difficult to sustain the program!

Time

Middle School Responses

2 Principals

More money for additional training and staff participation.

More funding would allow the program to become even more impactful

2 Assistant Principals

Peacebuilders program

Time and funding

9 Teachers

a day to teach all students how to use peer mediation-- model it, etc.

Time and funding to hold more trainings

Not all teachers are trained. Only a small amount of students are trained.
Communication

I don't know what resources are out there.

Your punctuation on this question needs adjustment.

None

More staff to help.

same as above

A group of faculty to oversee the mediators.

APPENDIX K

Question 40: What other conflict management programs in your school are effective in reducing student conflict?

This was an open-ended question with 32 replies.

High School Responses

Principals

No responses

4 Assistant Principals

Our peer mediators present an anti-bullying training to the middle school 6th graders every fall, sponsored by the town Family and Youth Services Program.

Our anti-bullying training by the peer mediators to the 6th graders in the middle school.

TAB (Training Active Bystanders) Student Ambassadors MIRA (Make it Right Approach)

formal student leadership program

16 Teachers

ADL [Anti-Defamation League]

Peer leader programs and wellness curriculum

Standard disciplinary measures Overall attitude of students and parents

I don't know of any.

Antibullying education as well as conflict resolution; the peer mediation coordinator does a great job at helping to understand the difference between conflict and true bullying.

SADD, GSA [Students Against Drunk Driving, Gay Straight Alliance]

IDK [I don't know]

Resource Officer

I do not believe there are other programs.

N/A

None

Rachel's Promise – assemblies
There are no other programs.

We do not have any

We have great teachers who have bonded well with our students. We also have an adopt a freshmen program where upper classmen adopt a freshmen for the entire year. This has been very helpful to the freshmen.

We don't have any others but we could benefit from substance abuse prevention and intervention as well as more programs

3 replies from Positions Not Indicated

Guidance Counselors

Adjustment counselors run a program for students dealing with anger issues.

One of our AP's is very good at reducing conflict and making referrals, contacting parents, etc.

Middle School Responses

3 Principals

We have been using the School Mediation Associates Program for the past 18 years.
(Richard Cohen)

Our whole disciplinary process is based in restorative practices which support students' skill development.

Training Active Bystanders Advisory Life Skills Curriculum Social Skills group for identified students

0 Assistant Principals - No responses

6 Teachers

We have a Peace club, Goodwill club and Spirit club that help with school atmosphere

do not know

NONE

We have no others

We keep students engaged by offering incentive activities. We don't have them fill out somewhat laborious online surveys. Good luck with your cause :)

Preventative measures. After-school clubs to increase awareness and involve students.

APPENDIX L

Question 41: Is there anything you would like to add that would help to understand the success or lack of success of your peer mediation program?

This was an open-ended question with 36 replies.

High School responses

2 Principal responses

I think when the staff knows the students well, students will be more likely to seek help when issues arise. If staff is aware of peer mediation as a tool, they can help point students who may be reluctant towards mediation.

No

4 Assistant Principal responses

My experience has been that upper elementary students can learn the mediation process and they are eager to resolve issue such as playground disputes. When kids are trained early on they carry that skill into middle school which is where the peer mediation program is generally most used. It's hard to get high school students to agree to mediation because their lives and emotions are so much more complex. When they do agree to mediate, the success rate for effectively resolving problems is high.

We have many trained peer mediators who never get to use their skills in actual sessions since the referral rate is low. I tell them at the training session that mediating is a service that is great to provide to their peers and if we don't need to use them, that's fine too.

If the program exists throughout the system, it becomes an accepted part of the culture and is therefore more supported by staff, students and parents.

Having been a trainer of peer mediators for many years, I am an advocate for creating a system-wide program that helps to train students at all levels how to deal with conflict in appropriate ways.

This is believed in here...it is a part of our school culture and has been counted on to assist with conflict from all sides

The lack of federal and state funding represents more than a loss of funds, it signals to schools that this type of program is "nice to have" but not necessary.

19 Teacher responses

Lack of success is related to academics. Teachers do not support students missing class time.

Teachers never get an indication of whether or not the program is utilized or working. It's a behind the scenes thing where the impact we feel is the peer mediators seemingly always at training or missing classes.

Program is seen by participants as "a way to get out of classes regularly for free lunches".
Enough said.

I believe our program is successful in handling conflicts that arise between/among students in our school.

Teachers are sometimes frustrated by the time missed by peer mediators for training. It might be helpful to make the "successes" or mediations available to teachers. This can be tricky because of confidentiality, but if there were a way to publicize to teachers the success of the program, perhaps it would be smoother!

Keep what we already have going and fully funded! Get teachers more involved in the annual recruiting and training of new peer mediators!

Referrals to our mediation co-ordinator provides the school with a valuable resource in working with our "at risk" population

No one shares the data. How can anyone answer these questions if the facts are not shared? We do not know the details of the program. I am sorry I could not give more information on this survey but I do not know the information to share with you. So, maybe the first step would be to share the information with the faculty and staff. I truly believe in data driven decision making and this would be an ideal place for it. best of luck on your doctorate.

I think many teachers do not use it because they don't think about it. I think the program needs more visibility, and support/acknowledgement from administration and peer mediators.

We have amazing, trained peer mediators, but very few referrals. We have only done 3 this year. That is the hardest part.

Statistical data

The mediation program is limited to only acts that occur on school grounds. A typical student spends less than 12% of their time on school grounds, a typical student with problems requiring mediation, less. Resolving any real problems must be spearheaded by the community, not schools.

The amount of time that a true mediation takes is a detriment to students (mediators and those experiencing conflict).

I really have not been involved, so I don't feel that I can answer most of the questions from the survey.

I don't think every teacher or student knows about the program. It is like a closed society.

Although I feel as though conflict leads to substance abuse and truancy, I do not think our peer mediation program addresses the necessary population to help those issues. I do feel that peer mediation is successful for the students that are targeted by the mediation sessions, but I do not think that it reaches all of the students that would possibly benefit

NO

Time, space, and support are the biggest thing that we lack. Support would be the most important and thinking of ways to promote it more to faculty is difficult.

No

3 Replies - Positions not indicated

The Peer Mediation Center is a successful program to help students to resolve problems before they escalate to major conflicts. Students at this school realize that they can access the the center for various types of issues and know that there are always options to help.

Having the support of administrators, teachers and guidance counselors is an important factor. The program is well received by the students as well. Each year we have seen an increase in the number of students who request mediation, or want to refer a friend who is having a dispute with someone.

This was a very thorough questionnaire!! Can't imagine anything else not covered.

Middle School responses

1 Principal response

Mediation programs can be organically grown, without outside resources, if necessary. Students are eager to learn these skills and to then help others. Even if one class period is allocated for the training, a school can make it happen.

1 Assistant Principal response

Funding

6 Teacher responses

N/A

NO

Staff /student issues are not communicated to the populations therefore the only information that we receive is hearsay

State demands on the school, district and staff do not meet up with your goals. It puts teachers in a very difficult situation.

We have a fantastic coordinator!

I'd like to see more statistical evidence of what the success rate is for peer mediation so I can be more informed about its usefulness in school.