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## Implementation and Effects of a Conflict Resolution Program in a Urban Middle School

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IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTS  
OF A  
CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAM  
IN AN  
URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

by

Deborah A. Frison

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Educational Administration

Under the Supervision of  
Dr. Daniel U. Levine and Dr. M. Martha Bruckner

Omaha, Nebraska

September, 2000

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DISSERTATION TITLE

Implementation and Effects of a Conflict Resolution  
Program in an Urban Middle School

BY

Deborah A. Frison

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## Abstract

IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTS OF A CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAM  
IN AN URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Deborah A. Frison,

University of Nebraska, 2000

Advisors: Dr. Daniel U. Levine and Dr. M. Martha Bruckner

Conflict is the most crucial issue jeopardizing school safety in middle schools today. With escalating violence, a school-based program teaching conflict resolution skills may reduce disruption to an orderly environment and provide a peaceful alternative to violence.

The primary purpose of this study was to identify and investigate possible effects of a conflict resolution program in an urban middle school. The secondary purpose was to examine the program's impact on students selected as conflict resolution managers. Data were collected from the total student body, and teachers, as well as conflict resolution managers.

In this study, there was no decrease in the proportion and rate of suspensions from baseline to project year; instead an increase was seen. When the data was disaggregated into violent and nonviolent categories, there remained no statistically significant differences. Conversely, there was a statistically significant decrease in the proportion of students receiving referrals. Effect size estimates indicated meaningful change. However, there was no evidence of a change in rate of referrals per student. This finding held true when the referral data was disaggregated into violent and nonviolent categories.

In examining teacher perceptions after program implementation, teachers perceived improvement in general discipline, albeit limited to fighting and conflict resolution. Additionally, more teachers felt that students take part in solving their own problems in school. While reality indicated an increase in the proportion and rate of behavior incidents, teachers perceived improvement. Several reasons were offered for this dichotomy.

In examining all students' feelings related to disagreements or conflicts and their relationships with others, no significant differences were found. Furthermore, for conflict resolution managers, no significant positive differences were found in attendance rate, GPA, referral rate, and self-esteem. Effect size estimates did indicate a somewhat meaningful improvement in self-esteem.

As a result of these findings, it is recommended that the cadre approach be supplemented with a total student body model, integrating conflict resolution skills into the total school curriculum.



## Acknowledgements

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Appreciation is extended to the Omaha Public Schools, in particular, Dr. James E. Vincent, principal of Monroe Middle School at the time of this study, for allowing me to conduct surveys of both the staff and students. Special appreciation is also expressed to all of Monroe Middle School staff and students for their participation.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and colleagues. It is with pleasure that I extend warm and sincere appreciation to those individuals who served as companion and helper throughout the years with their support, encouragement, understanding, and patience. I am blessed to have you all in my life. You made me persevere.

## Dedication

The publication of my dissertation is dedicated to my family. I would like to thank my husband, Lend, and my children, Lend Slay III, Deborah Ashley, and Langston Shay. Over the past eight years, they selflessly gave to my pursuit and oftentimes sacrificed more than they had to give. My love for each of you is as deep and abiding as your patience for me has been throughout the years.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Evelyn Jones. You stressed the importance of education in my upbringing and paved the way for my success. I know that you pray for me steadfastly, and I know that God answers your petitions. This achievement is recognition that God has looked favorably on me.

And to my father, James Jones, and my aunt, Sarah McBride, I miss you.

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”

(2 Timothy 4:7).

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Sadalla, Henriquez, and Holmberg (1987) defined conflict as “a disagreement between two or more people” (pp. 1-2). Conflict is featured daily in the news – from international disputes, political battles, and border skirmishes, to personal struggles that have intensified into assaults or even murders. The recent events in Littleton, Colorado and Jonesboro, Arkansas illustrate graphically the pervasiveness of conflict among adolescents and the destructive ways in which conflict is often managed.

For adults, it is tempting to intervene and resolve youthful conflicts before they reach the violent level. Such intervention, however, fosters dependency on ongoing adult monitoring and does not encourage or empower young people to learn more constructive, independent strategies for dealing with their conflicts. In fact, such interference may be met with resentment and resistance (Opatow, 1991).

Conflict is the most critical issue jeopardizing a safe, productive, and orderly environment in middle schools today. The interpersonal disputes that arise in schools are a natural part of the human condition (Opatow, 1991; Prothrow-Stith, Spivak, & Hausman, 1987; Sweeney & Carruthers, 1996). However, violence in all its forms – verbal abuse, fights, threats, sexual harassment, bullying, physical harm – is learned behavior and should not be considered an inevitable response to resolving conflict.

Unfortunately, now more than ever, children enter schools without the necessary skills to resolve conflict in constructive versus destructive ways. As a result, some children believe that physical force is an appropriate procedure for resolving conflict.



Others engage in verbal confrontations or hold their conflict within, retreating within passive-aggressive shells. And most alarmingly for some others, conflict may eventually erupt in unexplainable episodes of outbursts and inappropriate behaviors.

What, then, is the answer to the escalating problem of violence in the schools? Schools have added intermediary measures, such as comprehensive discipline plans, stricter dress codes, and additional counseling staff to combat the disruptive effects of conflict on the learning environment. An increasing number of schools, however, have sought more comprehensive, proactive programs to address and counteract the impact of conflict in the lives of their students. The practices of conflict resolution and peer mediation provide peaceful alternatives and solutions to discord and violence.

Whether labeled conflict resolution, conflict management, peer mediation, or conflict training, the common fibers that connect these programs are the acknowledgement of conflict as a natural phenomenon, an inevitable part of the human condition and the need for instruction in how to constructively handle it (Sweeney & Carruthers, 1996). These practices have gained exposure and acceptance as a means to eliminate the threat of violence in schools (DeJong, 1994).

Many educators find themselves simply reacting to an ongoing series of crises in the school. Of concern is the amount of valuable instructional time lost in dealing with conflict and behavioral problems. In spite of this, most educators seem to know little or receive little in the way of specific training in conflict resolution and peer mediation training.

In general, conflict management programs are based on the assumption that students have the capabilities to solve their own problems. Students are expected to share the responsibility of maintaining a safe and secure learning environment. Theoretically, this appears to make sense. Conflict resolution programs train students to develop these capabilities; however, little systematic evaluation of such programs and their effects exists.

The philosophy behind training students to resolve conflict through peaceful means is based on the premise that the most basic responsibility of an educational system is to provide a safe and secure environment. This environment must foster academic growth, build self-esteem, and offer the skills necessary to be productive members of society. Conflict resolution training shifts power from the adults to students by giving students the necessary skills to deal with conflicts more constructively; the power that previously rested only with teachers and administrators is now given to trained students. By doing so, two things are accomplished: (a) Students trained in conflict management are empowered, and (b) the overall student body comes to recognize its responsibility to participate in its own moral governing. Peer mediation training improves students' conflict management skills and alters students' attitudes about conflict.

The benefits of conflict management programs are evaluated on many levels. Some evaluations indicate that conflict management and peer mediation improve school climate while helping to resolve disputes between students. These programs also positively affect the conflict resolution managers' attitudes toward conflicts and positively influence their self-esteem, problem-solving skills, sensitivity to others, grades,

and leadership experience. Additionally, conflict resolution managers gain confidence in their ability to help themselves, while learning to get along better at school. These programs have also been found to positively impact the general school climate and teachers' attitudes toward conflict in the building, and to reduce the frequency of fights and violent incidents at school, as well as reduce the amount of instructional time lost in the classroom. When time spent on conflict decreases, time spent on learning activities can increase (Benson & Benson, 1993; Cutrona & Guerin, 1994; Horowitz & Boardman, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Johnson, Johnson, & Dudley, 1992; Sadalla, Henriquez, & Holmberg, 1987).

Establishment of the National Association for Mediation in Education (NAME) in 1984 offers credibility to the development of school-based conflict resolution programs. The members of this organization include teachers, school administrators, community members, university and law school professors, and others who are committed to working with conflict resolution programs. Through their assistance, schools are developing conflict resolution programs, developing curriculum, and training staff in conflict resolution skills. Conflict resolution is not only an organizational practice, but also is fast becoming a paradigm that responds to needs within the school environment.

### Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to identify and investigate possible effects produced by the implementation of a conflict resolution program in a middle school. The variables that were examined included proportion and rate of suspensions, proportion and rate of student referrals related to incidents of violence in the school, staff perceptions of

general discipline and overall/general school climate, and student perceptions of general discipline and conflict resolution. Process evaluation, assessing whether and how services are provided, and outcome evaluation, determining whether effects resulting from program implementation appear to be present, were employed. This was accomplished through staff and student surveys both before and after implementation of the program.

The secondary purpose of this study was to examine the developmental changes resulting from the program's impact on conflict resolution managers. The variables that were examined for this purpose included attendance rate, grade point average (GPA), referral rate, and scores on a measure of self-esteem for students selected as conflict resolution managers. Data were collected through administrative records and a survey completed by students selected as conflict resolution managers.

### Research Questions

The underlying questions in this quantitative research study are whether a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School in the Omaha Public Schools was effective and how this change affected students, teachers, and the school climate. The following research questions were designed to focus the study and provide some possible answers.

1. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with a reduction in the proportion and rate of suspensions in the school?
2. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with a reduction in the proportion and rate of student referrals related to incidents of violence in the school?

3. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with perceived improvement in general discipline as measured by staff survey responses?

4. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with perceived improvement of the overall/general school climate as measured by staff survey responses?

5. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with perceived improvement in general discipline and conflict resolution as measured by student survey responses?

6. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with positive effects on student Conflict Resolution Managers as measured by an increase in attendance rate, improved grade point average (GPA), a reduction in the rate of student referrals, and enhanced self-esteem?

### Definition of Terms

Terms were selected for definition in order to clarify the meaning and background these concepts are assumed to have in terms of this work. The researcher developed definitions without citations a priori.

Conflict: A natural part of life, conflict is an inevitable aspect of interpersonal relations – opposition of ideas, interests, or actions that result in a struggle over status, power, and resources (American Association of School Administrators, 1995; Sweeney & Carruthers, 1996). Defined broadly, conflict includes disagreements, verbal disputes, emotional quarrels, and physical fights.

Conflict Resolution Manager (Peer Mediator): Conflict resolution managers are specially chosen and trained students who act as “go-betweens” and help students with differences work out their problems by looking for peaceful solutions. Students who are involved in nonphysical disputes can choose the services of a trained conflict manager to help them clarify the nature of the dispute, resolve minor incidents such as name calling and rumor, and to reach a solution satisfactory to both disputants (Sadalla, Henriquez, & Holmberg, 1987).

Conflict Resolution: Conflict Resolution is education for all students that focuses on constructive, win-win solutions to deal with interpersonal conflict one-on-one. Most of the developed and produced curricula focus on helping students, teachers, and administrators understand the nature of conflict, winning outcomes for all involved, and building self-esteem and communication skills (Cutrona & Guerin, 1994; Prutzman, 1994; Thompson, 1996).

Conflict Resolution Training: Using the San Francisco Community Board Program, four Monroe Middle School staff members were identified and trained to serve as program coordinators. The Program Coordination Team instructed students selected as conflict resolution managers in managing anger, controlling aggressive responses, understanding conflict, and avoiding and diffusing potential violent confrontations.

Grade Point Average (GPA): A measure of the student’s academic performance; the average of the grade points received by a student for each class taken during a given year of the student’s middle school career.

Negotiation: The neutral, fair, nonjudgmental, and nondisciplinary process used by conflict resolution managers who have no authoritative power and who help disputants work through peaceful solutions to conflict (Cameron & Dupuis, 1991).

Peer Mediation: A structured method of dispute resolution with defined roles for the participants: two mediators selected from a group of students trained as conflict resolution managers assist other students in peaceably resolving interpersonal disagreements by using negotiation techniques (Cameron & Dupuis, 1991; Prutzman, 1994).

R.A.P.P. (Reaching All People Personally): The advisor/advisee (homeroom) period at Monroe Middle School. Each school day begins with a 20-minute advisor/advisee session in which attendance is taken, the daily bulletin is read, and school related information is shared. Teachers and students also discuss academic and social issues that face students.

Suspension: Temporary removal and exclusion from school and school-related functions. The range of possible suspensions includes short-term suspension (1-5 days), long-term suspension (6-19 days), emergency exclusion, expulsion, in-school suspension, overnight suspension, and mandatory reassignment.

### Delimitations

The data source for this study was delimited to seventh and eighth grade male and female students enrolled at Monroe Middle School, a two-year middle school operated by the Omaha Public School District in Omaha, Nebraska. This study examined, compared, and contrasted objective statistical data related to proportion and rate of suspensions and

referrals from the baseline year prior to implementation of a Conflict Resolution Program (fourth quarter, 1992-1993 to third quarter, 1993-1994), and the project year after such implementation (fourth quarter, 1993-1994 to third quarter, 1994-1995).

Next, this study analyzed objective statistical data related to perceived improvement in general discipline and overall/general school climate as measured by staff survey responses. Additionally, it examined student survey responses related to perceived improvement in general discipline and conflict resolution. Finally, this study examined, compared, and contrasted objective statistical data related to positive effects on students selected as conflict resolution managers as measured by an increase in attendance rate, improved grade point average (GPA), a decrease in the rate of student referrals, and enhanced self-esteem. Because of the unique population used in the study, generalizations beyond the specific population from which the data was drawn may be limited.

At the time of this study, the researcher served as a music teacher at Monroe Middle School. The collection of data was not related to her assigned duties. It is assumed that there is no bias in the collection of data.

#### Significance of the Study

The researcher maintains that with escalating incidences of violence among today's youth, a school-based program that teaches students practical strategies for managing their conflicts has merit. School safety is becoming an area of concern for administrators, teachers, and parents; math, reading, science, and social studies lose their importance when students are worried about their safety. Providing students with an



orderly learning environment as well as assuring student safety suggests a programmatic approach that reduces the incidence of disruption through conflict resolution training.

This study has significance for building administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Unresolved conflicts at school can jeopardize students' opportunity for success. Evaluating the effects of implementing a conflict resolution program in an urban middle school is a primary consideration. This study provides schools with statistical data related to the effect of implementing a conflict resolution program on several parameters: reduction in proportion and rate of suspensions and student referrals, perceived improvement in general discipline and overall/general school climate, and positive effects on attendance rates, grade point average, referral rates, and self-esteem of conflict resolution managers. Thus, obtaining information that will assist in evaluating whether or not conflict resolution programs yield positive effects is crucial. Beyond these findings, educators may utilize the results of this study to evaluate whether or not a conflict resolution program might be effective in another school setting.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of Related Literature

Every day, students, parents, educators, and communities voice their concerns about the violence that plagues our society. School violence, once limited to playground fights and petty arguments, has now escalated to include use of weapons and serious physical violence. Tragically, it has come to include even homicide.

All adolescents are at high risk of becoming victims of violent crime (U.S. Department of Justice, 1988). Over half of all the serious crime in the United States is committed by youth between the ages of 10 and 17 (Lantieri & Patti, 1996). One out of nine young people will appear in court before his/her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday (Cutrona & Guerin, 1994). Every four minutes a young person is arrested for a violent crime. Every 98 seconds, a gun kills a young person. Black male youths, living in the inner city, are over-represented as victims and perpetrators of violent crime (Prothrow-Stith, Spivak, & Hausman, 1987). On a typical school day, more than 135,000 students bring weapons of some sort to school because they do not feel safe (Lantieri & Patti, 1996).

Numerous surveys and studies conducted over the years paint a dismal picture of violence in our schools. The Principal/School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence 1996-97 found that over 50% of schools surveyed had been affected by some act of violence during the 1996-97 school year. Serious crimes, such as rape, robbery or fights involving a weapon were reported in 10% of the schools. Fortunately, 43% of the schools surveyed reported no crime during the year (Safe Schools, Safe Students, 1998). Because

school is the center of the younger population's social life, many of the crimes committed by individuals under the age of 25 occur within the school environment (Opotow, 1991).

It was estimated that over the course of a year, approximately 16% of all high school students in the United States have been involved in one or more physical fights on school property (Centers for Disease Control, 1992). Students are not the only ones affected. From 1991 to 1996, threats and injuries to teachers increased by 50%; 10% of teachers found their safety jeopardized in 1991 as compared to 15% in 1996 according to the National Education Goals Panel (Safe Schools, Safe Students, 1998).

Data distributed by the National League of Cities cited by Johnson and Johnson (1995) suggest that between 1990 and 1994, violence in schools increased 33%. In a survey of high school seniors, 42% of the respondents reported having had property stolen at school, 14% reported being injured with no weapon involved, and 6% said they were injured with a weapon (Ostertag, 1996). Johnson and Johnson (1995) indicate that physical aggression and efforts to obtain other students' valuables are the most prevalent types of violence in schools (American Association of School Administrators, 1995).

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the National Center for Education Statistics, the number of students personally victimized increased nearly 20% from 1989 to 1995. Violent crime at schools increased from 3.4% in 1989 to 4.2% in 1995. Violent crime was defined in the study as physical attacks or robberies by force, weapon, or threat. This increase represents a population of about 270,000 students (Safe Schools, Safe Students, 1998). Of major concern is the fact that homicides frequently

result from spontaneous arguments among acquaintances, similar to the types of adolescent conflicts occurring in school (Prothrow-Stith, Spivak, & Hausman, 1987).

Acts of violence affect not only those directly involved, but also those who witness the events. According to a 1994 Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 44% of students surveyed said they had witnessed angry scenes or confrontations during the previous month; 24% indicated that they had engaged in physical fights. The survey further indicated that most students believe these hostile situations are inevitable. Fifty-two percent of students responded "it's almost impossible to walk away from an angry scene or confrontation without fighting" (American Association of School Administrators, 1995). What once was a haven of safety and a few hours of respite from turmoil – the school – is no longer so (Cutrona & Guerin, 1994).

In spite of the dismal picture painted by some researchers, another view is that the frequency of violence in schools is overemphasized. Indeed, schools may represent somewhat safe havens from the violence in the community (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Opatow (1991) interviewed 40 seventh graders from the inner city. Half the participants were male, 52% were Hispanic American, 43% were African American, and 5% were Caucasian American. While more than 26 of the 40 respondents described their conflicts as violent and occurring in school, Opatow found the group's incidents of conflict to be infrequent scuffles that caused no or little injury. The fights that occurred were neither frequent nor routine occurrences.

In a similar study, the National Crime Survey, Garofalo, Siegel, and Laub (1987) analyzed the data regarding school-related acts of violence and found scuffles, threats,

and arguments rather than deliberate assaults or violence. In incidents where weapons were used, 40% of the weapons were “available items grabbed on the spur of the moment” (p. 333) such as “rocks, baseball bats, metal bars, spray-paint cans, scissors, screwdrivers, and a (presumably large) lollipop” (p. 331). The injuries sustained by 72% of the respondents included cuts, black eyes, abrasions, scrapes, scratches, and swellings. What these researchers suggest is that violence in schools may be overestimated and overstated because conflicts that involve anger and violence are more likely to be remembered (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). However, of particular concern in this study, remains those 28% of the respondents who sustained major injuries.

Aggression in American schools manifests itself in verbal and physical attacks on teachers and students, vandalism, and property damage. In a survey by the 1994 Association of California School Administrators, other hostile acts were identified as cussing, put-downs, verbal threats of physical harm and being grabbed or shoved by someone “being mean” (American Association of School Administrators, 1995). When violence is broadly defined to include intimidation and coercion, not just physical violence, violence prevention becomes immediately relevant to all schools. The overall picture of school violence may be of teasing, bullying, and horseplay that gets out of hand.

Whether categorized as serious violence or crime, physical violence, intimidation or coercion, teasing, bullying, or horseplay that gets out of hand, these and many other incidents have called increased attention to the problem of violence facing young people. Regardless of the perspective, the threat of violence weighs heavy on students’ minds and

distracts them from getting the best education possible (American Association of School Administrators, 1995; Safe Schools, Safe Students, 1998). As the violence has escalated and entered schools, parents and educators have become alarmed. Preventing violence among adolescents is of great concern and educators desperately find themselves in need of solutions and increasingly under fire to identify prevention strategies to violent acts.

While the issues of conflict and violence cannot be blamed on schools, schools are one of the most logical places to tackle problems associated with conflict. Schools are "uniquely qualified" to educate students; teachers are trained how to educate students (American Association of School Administrators, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 1995). As the last bastion crumbles, the question arises: "How do educational institutions combat the escalating student violence to provide safe learning environments for children?" A safer environment could be offered to these students by providing them with constructive skills to manage the natural conflicts that will inevitably arise (Prothrow-Stith, Spivak, & Hausman, 1987).

### Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation

Part of the response to the problem of escalated violence in schools has been an explosion of training and curricula focused on anger management, problem-solving, violence prevention, conflict resolution, peer mediation, multicultural awareness, self-esteem, and more. The inception of these programs has caused debate among school personnel (Powell, Muir-McClain, & Halasyamani, 1995). On the one side, people argue that such training takes up valuable instruction time and encroaches in areas that belong to parents. The opposing view counters that because turmoil is happening in schools, it is

the school's responsibility to provide such training. In fact, according to the latter view, the increase in conflict and the resulting violence make it not only appropriate but also imperative that some level of skills be taught to students that will enable them to manage conflict situations before they become violent (Cutrona & Guerin, 1994; Opatow, 1991).

The practices of conflict resolution and peer mediation provide potentially peaceful alternatives and solutions to destructive behavior and violence and allow students to settle disagreements peacefully among themselves without the interference of adults. These practices have gained exposure and acceptance as a means to eliminate the threat of violence in the schools (Close & Lechman, 1997; DeJong, 1994; George, Dagnese, Halpin, Halpin, & Keiter, 1996; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Lane & McWhirter, 1992).

Conflict resolution training is provided for entire classes, grades, or student bodies; it teaches students to manage anger, control aggressive responses, understand conflict, and avoid or diffuse potentially violent confrontations. Peer mediation is taught to a select group of students; it trains the student conflict resolution managers to use negotiation techniques to help disputants to peaceably resolve conflicts (Cameron & Dupuis, 1991; Powell, Muir-McClain, & Halasyamani, 1995).

#### Nature and Role of Adolescent Conflict

The basic premise of any conflict resolution or peer mediation program is that conflict touches all of us; it is a normal part of the human condition and plays a unique role in adolescents' lives. Adolescents are in a stage of dramatic cognitive and physical change and are facing new social perplexities as their peers take on increased importance

in their lives (Berndt, 1982). Opatow (1991) states that adolescents' conflict experiences represent a "compelling moral education" as adult supervision is reduced (p. 417).

Adolescents actively explore interpersonal influences, negotiate power balances, and deal with threats to their emerging adulthood.

Adolescent peer conflict plays an important role in adolescents' social development and has significant implications in their lives (Opatow, 1991). The role of adults regarding adolescent conflict is to optimize constructive ways of handling conflict and to minimize destructive conflict outcomes (Morse & Andrea, 1994). Rather than denying the existence of conflict and interpersonal disputes, people are encouraged to acknowledge the presence of conflict, learn how to effectively and nonviolently resolve conflict, and use conflict as a catalyst for positive change (Cutrona & Guerin, 1994).

Johnson and Johnson (1995) found in their research that prior to the implementation of conflict resolution and peer mediation programs, elementary students reported most day-to-day conflict situations to their teachers, used destructive strategies, and lacked problem-solving knowledge. According to Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, and Acikgoz (1994), elementary students specifically used telling the teacher as a conflict resolution strategy 51% of the time. If the students chose not to inform the teacher, the students withdrew from the situation 15% of the time or repeated the request (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

Although adolescent conflicts are purposeful and normal, it is imperative that adults ensure that young people learn productive skills for managing conflicts. Adults fear for their safety as conflict can escalate into violence, causing personal injury.



Surprisingly, adolescents surveyed by Opatow (1991) view physical harm from conflict as insignificant as compared to the social ramifications of disagreements; the loss of status, humiliation, social isolation, and the threat of widespread rejection are of a greater concern than physical harm. Unless resolved, these conflicts can create self-doubt, anger, helplessness, and even depression emotions, which can permeate all areas of an adolescent's life and can be more damaging than physical harm (Martin & Holder, 1994-1995). Even school attendance and achievement are often adversely affected (Opatow, 1991).

### Adolescents' Responses to Conflict

McKinney, Lorion, and Zak (1976) found that individual differences in approaching conflict are a "function of the person's environment, development, and learned skills" (p. 41). According to Opatow (1991), the manner in which adolescents respond to conflict ranges on a continuum from "conflict seekers" to "conflict avoiders" (p. 421). Opatow (1991) suggests that conflicts that arise are unexpected, and disputants seldom ponder their reactions. Disputants' responses are intuitive and habitual, regardless of previous or present success or failure in handling conflict situations. As adolescents mature, their ability to consider risks and future consequences increases; however, students lack the skills to appropriately and adequately handle conflict without practice (Lewis, 1981; Opatow, 1991).

### Need for Conflict Resolution Training

In general, it is believed that students have the capabilities to solve their own problems; however, the nature of adolescent conflict points to the need for instruction in

managing conflict in constructive ways. Conflict resolution programs are based on the assumption that peace-oriented strategies can be successfully used with students to resolve interpersonal disputes (Terry & Gerber, 1997). Students must share with school staff the responsibility of maintaining a safe and secure learning environment.

Conflict resolution training helps students acquire skills in understanding the causes of conflict, the behaviors that escalate or de-escalate conflict, and the effect of conflict on behavior. Adams, Pardo, and Schneidewind (1991-1992) stated that with training, students come to view conflict as problems to be solved, rather than matters of right versus wrong. Students learn that when each party owns responsibility for the conflict and listens to the other, creative resolution is possible (Adams, Pardo, & Schneidewind, 1991-1992). With creative solutions comes increased empowerment to solve their own problems; thus, there is less likelihood of the same conflict recurring than if teachers impose a solution for students (Close & Lechman, 1997). Opatow (1991) cautioned that conflict skills alone do not automatically prevent further conflict; conflict resolution skills must be learned and practiced until they become part of a new ritual for dealing with conflict.

Conflict resolution programs train students to develop these capabilities. By using direct communication, students are trained as peer mediators to address the concerns, thoughts, and beliefs of fellow students involved in conflicts; to reach a compromise that is mutually acceptable to all parties involved (Cutrona & Guerin, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Meek, 1992; Sadalla, Henriquez, & Holmberg, 1987).

The goals of conflict resolution and peer mediation programs may be semantically different, but their content is generally similar. The National Association for Mediation in Education in 1995 delineated the central goals of school-based mediation programs as follows (Kort, 1990): “to teach students how to deal with anger constructively, how to communicate feelings or concerns without using violence and abusive language, how to think critically about alternative solutions, and how to agree to solutions in which all parties win” (p. 15, 26).

Without conflict resolution or peer mediation programs, schools find themselves using more traditional practices for deterring violence and dealing with conflicts (Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, & Burnett, 1992). As conflict intensity increases, so do the reactions of school authorities or staff. School administrators becomes more impersonal and bureaucratic when presented with a conflict situation. They act as judge rather than view conflict situations among students as opportunities to improve communication and help students learn necessary skills. When school administrators enforce rigid rules, they risk making decisions that others may perceive as unjust (Opatow, 1991; Ury, Brett, & Goldberg, 1988).

This role of power broker is contrary to the usual, empathetic selves that school adults portray to students. When school adults try to resolve conflicts by exercising their power over students, the concept of conflict resolution as a power struggle in which there must be a winner and a loser is reinforced (Ury, Brett, & Goldberg; 1988). This contradicts the notion of working out conflicts in ways that are fair to both parties.

The traditional practice of suspending students sometimes may be a deterrent to effective resolution of student conflict. Although suspensions are intended to hinder students from fighting (in particular), some empirical data indicate negative findings. Opotow (1991) interviewed 40 students; only one indicated that the threat of being suspended would keep her from fighting.

In fact, Opotow found that “most students would risk suspension to assert their autonomy and champion their beliefs about justice” (p. 427). Opotow (1991) suggests that suspension merely encourages adolescents to take their fighting underground “to bathrooms, hallways, and the street which further decreased the opportunity to use fight incidents to teach about effective conflict resolution” (p. 427). Thus, without adult catalysts for discussion or modeling, students are denied the opportunity to use their conflicts as starting points for growth (Opotow, 1991). Conflict resolution skills can offer effective alternatives to the only two choices often available to students – to fight or to flee (Morse & Andrea, 1994; Opotow, 1991).

Davis and Porter (1985) offered the following 10 reasons to support the need for conflict resolution and peer mediation programs as an alternative to more traditional methods of dealing with disciplinary issues:

- Conflict is a natural human state often accompanying changes in our institutions or personal growth. It is better approached with skills than avoidance. Thus, students’ interpersonal growth is promoted when conflict is resolved productively.

- More appropriate and effective systems are needed to deal with conflict in the school setting than expulsion, suspension, court intervention, and detention. Mediation eliminates punishment as the sole means of responding to conflict and offers alternatives to the school community at-large.
- The use of mediation to resolve school-based disputes can result in improved communication between and among students, teachers, administrators, and parents and can, in general, improve the school climate as well as provide a forum for addressing common concerns. Students learn resolution and problem-solving skills that lead to positive rather than negative outcomes.
- The use of mediation as a conflict resolution method can result in a reduction of violence, vandalism, chronic school absence, and suspension.
- Mediation training helps both young people and teachers to deepen their understanding about themselves and others, and provides them with lifetime dispute resolution skills. Mediators trained in conflict management grow in self-esteem, citizenship, have better grades and attendance, fewer referrals and learn life skills in problem-solving through improved communication and increased listening skills.
- Mediation training increases students' interest in conflict resolution, justice, and the American legal system while encouraging a higher level of citizenship activity.
- Shifting the responsibility for solving appropriate school conflicts from adults to young adults and children frees both teachers and administrators to

concentrate more on teaching than on discipline. Thus, a decrease in time spent on dealing with student conflict supports the classroom teacher's focus on teaching.

- Recognizing that young people are competent to participate in the resolution of their own disputes encourages student growth and skills – such as listening, critical thinking and problem solving – that are basic to all learning.
- Mediation training, with its emphasis upon listening to others' points of view, increases acceptance of diverse viewpoints. Mediation training better prepares students to live in a multicultural world.
- Mediation provides a system of problem solving that is uniquely suited to the personal nature of young people's problems and is frequently used by students for problems they would not take to parents, teachers or principals (p. 27).

Conflict resolution programs are gaining support in schools. Several studies indicate that these programs may be effective in teaching students to deal with anger constructively, communicate their feelings and concerns, think critically about solutions and strive for win-win solutions. Conflicts between students are also decreasing in number as evidenced by the declining number of fights and suspensions (Burrell & Vogl, 1990; Crary, 1992; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Meek, 1992).

### Benefits of Conflict Resolution Training

The benefits of conflict resolution and peer mediation programs are numerous and evaluated on many levels including a positive impact on school staff, student conflict resolution managers, and the student body at large. Such benefits seem to include: fewer

disciplinary referrals to administrators; less time spent by educators on dealing with student discord and more time spent on educating students; reduction in escalating school violence; and, the promotion of a safer and less tense school climate (Cutrona & Guerin, 1994; Woo, 1996).

Conflict resolution managers seem to develop enhanced interpersonal skills and are empowered to resolve their own disputes (Cutrona & Guerin, 1994; Johnson, Johnson, & Dudley, 1992). Parents of students trained in conflict resolution and peer mediation seem to believe that their children benefit from being a peer mediator. Sweeney and Carruthers (1996) surveyed elementary, middle, and high school parents of peer mediators and found that over 90% of respondents agreed with the statement, "I believe my child has benefited from being a peer mediator" (p. 339). Asked to note if they had seen improvements in: (a) school attendance; (b) behavior at school; (c) class work or grades; and (d) attitude about school since starting in the peer mediation program, the parents most frequently noted improvements in attitudes and grades.

Students directly connected with conflict resolution programs appear to learn valuable lifelong skills, and leadership skills such as public speaking, communicating, and problem-solving. Often students trained in conflict management and peer mediation techniques report learning other valuable skills such as organizing, analyzing, evaluating, and making decisions. Mediators develop an understanding of self and others, learn how to relate to difficult people, and have a greater understanding of one's own culture and acceptance of cultural differences.

Students become active and committed in the problem-solving process and develop confidence in their abilities to solve their own problems. Peer mediation programs seem to increase the understanding of the need for cooperation rather than competition for academic and psychological growth (Cutrona & Guerin, 1994; Horowitz & Boardman, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Sadalla, Henriquez, & Holmberg, 1987).

Close and Lechman (1994) determined that through peer mediation, “students are empowered to provide a service to their school and their peers. This experience often results in increased leadership, self-discipline, and the ability to problem-solve and make decisions” (p. 12). Educators interviewed by Glass (1994) claimed that students who have been trained in conflict resolution have improved rapport with school adults and with one another. Teachers responding to a study of New York City’s Resolving Conflicts Creatively Program (RCCP) stated that students involved in the program showed more cooperation with other students and that there was less name-calling (Glass, 1994).

Other findings indicated that students learned responsible behavior from participating in conflict resolution programs (Benson & Benson, 1993). Martin and Holder (1994-1995) conducted a descriptive study of teacher and student perceptions of the use of a conflict resolution program in an elementary school and found that such programs helped to reduce the number of discipline events, specifically fights, at a school (Lane & McWhirter, 1992; Martin & Holder, 1994-1995).

Students seem to learn responsible behavior and retain that knowledge over time. Researchers suggest that retaining such knowledge can improve attitudes toward conflict and the school climate. As students grow academically and psychologically, their self-



esteem tends to increase, and as a result, discipline problems and suspensions tend to decrease (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

Other researchers have made similar findings when evaluating conflict resolution programs in secondary schools. Wolowiec (1994) found a decrease in suspension rates. Cheatham (1989) found a 46% to 70% reduction in suspension rates for fighting. Araki (1990), however, studied three Hawaii schools and found unchanged rates of retention, suspension, student absences, and discipline problems.

### Implementation of Conflict Resolution Training

Conflict resolution programs are becoming more and more prevalent in schools. According to the National Association for Mediation in Education (NAME), conflict resolution programs within schools increased 40% between 1991 and 1994 (Shepherd, 1994). In 1995, approximately 5,000 elementary and secondary schools had programs devoted to conflict resolution, with peer mediation programs topping the list (American Association of School Administrators, 1995). The number of incidents of violence and acts of crime seems to be declining in schools where conflict resolution programs have been implemented Program (Sadalla, Henriquez, & Holmberg, 1987; Cutrona & Guerin, 1994).

Peer mediation is based on applied conflict resolution and is one of the intervention strategies used during conflict resolution training (George, Dagnese, Halpin, Halpin, & Keiter, 1996; Kmita & Berlowitz, 1993). Designed specifically for elementary, middle, and high school students, the goal is to utilize trained student "peer mediators" to resolve conflicts that arise between two other students who have

voluntarily agreed to participate in the process. The peer mediation program empowers students and staff to share the responsibility for creating and maintaining a safe, secure school environment (Kmitta & Berlowitz, 1993; Morse & Andrea, 1994; Shepherd, 1994).

Peer mediators or conflict resolution managers are students selected by their peers and faculty, and then trained in negotiation skills. Students who are involved in nonphysical disputes can choose the services of trained peer mediators at any stage of their dispute. Disputants may also be referred to peer mediation by peers, teachers, counselors, or administrators. Ideally, mediation will be suggested by one of the disputants (Kmitta & Berlowitz, 1993).

The trained peer mediators act as "go-betweens" to help disputants clarify the nature of the conflict, summarize the main points of the dispute, resolve minor incidents such as name calling and rumor, and reach a solution satisfactory to both disputants. While most mediation models have only one mediator facilitating the dispute, a co-mediator model seems to work most effectively in the conflict resolution process (Araki & Takeshita, 1991). As a result, school personnel still deal with fights or violence, however, they spend less time guiding students to a resolution.

#### Lack of Empirical Evidence

The assertions made by proponents of conflict resolution and peer mediation are encouraging; however, some researchers caution about making claims on the basis of what they consider weak empirical evidence. Lam (1989) noted there had been little statistical research on the impact of conflict resolution and peer mediation programs.

While the results were commonly positive, Lam felt that any conclusions from studies to date would be premature because few of the programs examined used exactly the same indicators or investigated the effectiveness of such programs. Researchers caution that while conflict resolution and peer mediation programs are numerous, there exists a gap between practice and evaluation (Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Powell, Muir-McClain, & Halasyamani, 1995). Maxwell (1989) agreed, adding that there were differences among researchers about appropriate ways to measure the success or failure of such programs.

### Conflict Resolution Training Models

The theoretical framework of conflict resolution models is centered around the theory of Morton Deutsch (1976) that conflict is a natural occurrence and can be resolved using either creative and constructive or destructive processes depending upon the environment in which such conflicts occur. When selecting a conflict resolution and peer mediation model, Horowitz and Boardman (1994) recommended that school officials adopt a developmental perspective; a conflict curriculum should be consistent with the needs and abilities of students at different ages.

The conflict resolution curriculum may be delivered in a variety of ways: (a) teachers or counselors trained in conflict resolution and peer mediation may teach the precepts to the entire student body, each of whom then may serve as peer mediators; (b) all teachers may be trained in conflict resolution and peer mediation with materials infused daily into areas of the curriculum, again with all students being peer mediators; (c) select students may be trained as peer mediators who assist other students in resolving

conflicts as they arise in the school day; or, (d) elective mini-courses on peer mediation may be taught as part of another class.

The diversity of peer mediation programs are generally categorized into two types of training models: (a) the cadre approach, in which a small number of students are trained to serve as peer mediators for the whole school; and (b) the total student body approach, which emphasizes training every student in the school to manage conflict constructively. The School Mediators' Alternative Resolution Team (SMART) in New York City and the Conflict Resolution Program developed by the staff of the San Francisco Community Board are examples of the cadre approach (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Johnson et al., 1996). The San Francisco Community Board is considered developmentally appropriate for middle-high school students (Safe Schools, Safe Students, 1998).

The cadre model, also known as the student club model, selects students from the entire student population and trains them in peer mediation procedures. The strengths of this model are two-fold: it allows selection of mediators from the total school population who will represent the entire student body; and, it provides a unique opportunity to include students who are not in the mainstream. The conflict resolution program may then be of increased benefit to others in the program by providing diverse perspectives and experiences (Day-Vines, Day-Hairston, Carruthers, Wall, & Lupton-Smith, 1996; Lupton-Smith, Carruthers, Flythe, Goettee, & Modest, 1996). The weakness of this approach is that only a few students participate in the process that limits its impact on the entire student body (Carruthers, Sweeney, Kmitta, & Harris, 1996).

One important note regarding the cadre model: the student body should have a voice in the selection of the peer mediators. In addition, the peer mediator team must reflect the diversity of the student body in terms of sex, race, and academic achievement level or other students will not see the group as viable (Benson & Benson, 1993; Day-Vines et al., 1996; Glass, 1994; Lupton-Smith et al., 1996).

The Children's Creative Response to Conflict (CCRC), the Peacemaker Program developed by faculty at the University of Minnesota Cooperative Learning Center, and the Teaching Students to Be Peacemakers Program implemented in several countries are examples of the total student body approach (Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Johnson et al., 1996). The total student body approach, also known as the concentrated curriculum model, is one in which all students are taught the principles and procedures of conflict resolution and peer mediation and all have the opportunity to serve as mediators. Being a mediator reinforces conflict resolution ideas and skills and there is a greater likelihood that conflicts may be decreased in schools where all students are trained.

A few, trained, staff members in a relatively short amount of time teach this concentrated curriculum model (Lupton-Smith et al., 1996). This approach seems to be better suited for elementary schools which tend to be smaller, allowing teachers more frequent contact with students (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

The total student body model is preferred because it integrates the curriculum into a core curriculum rather than creating a new, add-on course. The total student body approach, with its concentrated, short-term curriculum, establishes the basic knowledge and common vocabulary of conflict resolution, but by itself it is not sufficient to sustain

conflict resolution and peer mediation practices (Carruthers, Sweeney, Kmita, & Harris, 1996; Horowitz & Boardman, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 1995).

According to Johnson and Johnson (1995), it is important to supplement the traditional compact conflict resolution curriculum with a more distributed and continuous method of curriculum delivery. DeJong (1994) also believed in a more integrative method for teaching conflict resolution concepts and methods; teachers are encouraged to use “teachable moments” that arise daily because of what is happening in the classroom or in the world to infuse conflict resolution lessons into the regular academic agenda.

The total student body model, however, does not allow adequate time for the information to become internalized, and, therefore, a part of students’ behavior. It takes time to overcome training one has received all of one’s life (Carruthers, Sweeney, Kmita, & Harris, 1996). Finally, and most importantly, because there are only a few adult trainers who must teach the conflict resolution curriculum to an entire school, there is little opportunity for follow-up and residual training to strengthen learned skills, as well as introduce new, more sophisticated ones (Johnson & Johnson, 1995).

Graham and Cline (1989) recognize another model of peer mediation training, the elective course model. This model provides a consistent setting for training mediators and conducting mediations; the training is more in-depth; it is more convenient to schedule mediation sessions; and, the length of the class allows students to assimilate the conflict resolution information. This, in turn, increases the chance that such behavior will become part of their behavioral repertoire. Like the total student body model, the weakness of this model is the time involved, time spent away from the main course content; and, that the

training only reaches the students who are enrolled in these classes (Lupton-Smith et al., 1996).

The time usually varies between 10 and 20 contact hours in training peer mediators. Araki (1990) described a 20-hour training program. Johnson and Johnson (1995) envisioned all students receiving instruction in conflict resolution principles and practices; they suggested a K-12 spiraled curriculum in which students learn increasingly sophisticated skills each year in negotiation and mediation procedures. The negotiation procedure included six steps and the mediation procedure consisted of four steps. Johnson and Johnson (1996) supported an initial training of 15 hours; 30 minutes of training per day for 30 days to cover the philosophy and premises of conflict resolution and then infusion of remaining materials into the regular curriculum throughout the school year.

The main obstacle of such a comprehensive approach is the necessary training for all teachers; this is an expensive and time-consuming approach to conflict resolution training and calls for the extraordinary and ongoing commitment of administration, especially the principal (Davis & Porter, 1985). Schrupf, Crawford, and Usadel (1991) suggested a 15-hour training program and Eisler, Lane, and Mei (1995) outlined a 2-day training program. Developmental factors are an important consideration in training programs. As a result, high school students may need more time than elementary school students may need (Lupton-Smith et al., 1996).

Most models of peer mediation programs describe a sequence of steps or stages for students to follow when mediating a conflict with disputants. Examples include: (a)

Fisher and Ury's (1991) four elements of negotiation; (b) Schrumpf, Crawford, and Usadel's (1991) 6-stage mediation process; (c) Sadalla, Holmberg, and Halligan's (1990) 5-stages for negotiating conflicts; (d) Schmidt, Friedman, and Marvel (1992) six steps for mediation; and (e) the San Francisco Community Board Conflict Managers Program (Sadalla, Henriquez, & Holmberg, 1987) which outlined a sequence of 16 steps clustered in 3-stages with two days of training focused on the role of mediator and basic communication skills.

### Summary

It is evident from the literature on conflict resolution and peer mediation that if implemented well, such training has the potential to transform the culture of school communities. The peer mediation process uses the same basic tenets necessary for achieving excellence in education – listening, problem-solving, verbal language expression, and critical thinking. Because these needs parallel the skills enhanced by the mediation process, the acceptance and adoption of this program may be more compelling. The most effective peer mediation programs seek to do more than change individual students; instead, they attempt to evolve the total school environment into a learning community in which students and adults live by a credo of nonviolence.



## CHAPTER III

### Methodology and Procedures

The primary purpose of this study was to identify and investigate possible effects produced by the implementation of a conflict resolution program in a middle school. The secondary purpose of this study was to examine the developmental changes resulting from the program's impact on conflict resolution managers. This chapter includes descriptions of the program setting, population, program description, instrumentation, program implementation, data collection, data analysis, and a summary, which led to the findings in Chapter Four.

#### Program Setting

Monroe Middle School is a racially diverse, urban middle school in a large mid-western city. The school was established in 1926 as Monroe Elementary School. In 1956, Monroe Elementary School was reopened as the first junior high school serving seventh and eighth graders in the Omaha Public Schools. Due to population growth and space limitations, ninth graders were moved from the building in 1987. In 1989, Monroe Junior High School became a middle school, adopting middle school concepts, features, and philosophies, and serving grades 8 and 9. As part of the transition to middle school, the Monroe Middle School staff decided to implement a conflict resolution program through peer mediation training and implementation.

#### Population

The population for this study was comprised of students from Monroe Middle School. In 1993-94, the Monroe Middle School student body consisted of 715 students of

whom 44.2% were African American, 51.7% were Caucasian, 1.0% were Asian American, 2.2% were Hispanic Americans, and .8% were Native American students. Little change in racial percentages was seen in 1994-95 with an overall school population of 735 constituted by 48.0% African Americans, 47.1% Caucasians, and 4.8% other races and ethnic groups.

For all surveys, the entire population was used, rather than a sample of the population, since all were available and a return on surveys was ensured. For the Pupil Survey, the entire population of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students was surveyed to determine perceptions of general discipline and the ways students deal with conflict. For the Teacher Survey, all teachers were surveyed to determine the perceptions of general discipline and overall/general school climate. For the Conflict Managers Survey/Measure of Self-Esteem (The Coopersmith Inventory-SEI), students selected as conflict resolution managers were surveyed to determine various relationships within a self-esteem score.

#### Program Description

The Conflict Resolution Program at Monroe Middle School was implemented in the spring of 1994. Prior to program implementation, four staff members were identified and trained to serve as the Program Coordination Team of the Conflict Resolution Program. The total student body nominated 87 students (46 seventh graders, 41 eighth graders). From the list of students nominated, the Program Coordination Team selected 30 conflict resolution managers – 20 seventh graders and 10 eighth graders. The Program Coordination Team maintained the integrity of the student body's election but ensured

that the cadre of student conflict resolution managers was balanced according to race and gender, representative of the Monroe Middle School total student body.

The Program Coordination Team trained the 30 conflict resolution managers during a two-day session. Training was completed in the first semester and the Conflict Resolution Program began during the second semester. Following a rotation schedule, paired student conflict resolution managers were called from their scheduled classes to mediate conflict situations as they arose during the school day.

### Instrumentation

The Conflict Resolution Pupil Survey and the Teacher Survey instruments used in this study were adapted from a Detroit study on reducing physical confrontation in public schools (Brown, 1992). Both instruments were adapted from Lam's (1989) "School Mediation Program Evaluation Kit." Lam adapted her survey instruments from "Mediation in the Schools 1986-87 Program Evaluation" developed by the New Mexico Center for Dispute Resolution and the "Conflict Resolution in the Schools: Final Evaluation Report," Social Science Education Consortium, Inc., Boulder, Colorado (1987). Item analysis and revisions followed field-testing on 1,200 students. Item-total correlations were used to determine item discrimination, resulting in a final version of 32 items. Factor analysis was employed to establish construct validity, resulting in item clusters that were divided into subscales.

The Conflict Resolution Pupil Survey (see Appendix A) is a 36-question survey divided into three subscales with a Likert scale response format. This survey was

administered twice to the total student body of Monroe Middle School – once for baseline year statistics and once for project year statistics.

The pupil survey is divided as follows:

Subscale 1: How pupils feel about disagreements or conflicts (questions 1-8, questions 19-22).

Subscale 2: How teachers and other students assess pupils (questions 9-18).

Subscale 3: How pupils deal with others (questions 23-36).

The computer analysis yielded mean scores for each question – one score for baseline year statistics and one score for project year statistics. From these mean scores, the mean of each subscale was calculated. Examined were those subscales that indicated significant differences between years.

The Teacher Survey instrument (see Appendix B) included no subscales and the survey instrument generally measured the attitudes of staff toward their own school climate. The statements were formulated to gain information about staff perceptions related to general discipline and overall/general school climate.

The Conflict Managers Survey/Measure of Self-Esteem (The Coopersmith Inventory-SEI) was administered to conflict resolution managers as a pre-test/post-test measure. This SEI survey instrument has been used with children and adolescents eight through fifteen years of age. The SEI survey instrument has 57 questions and is divided into four subscale areas: general self, social self-peers, home-parents, school-academic. The SEI also includes eight questions that constitute the Lie Scale that is scored separately. A high Lie Scale indicates that the respondent may have believed that he or

she understood the intention of the instrument and tried to answer positively or defensively to all items.

To arrive at the Total Self Score, the correct response in each of the subscale areas is added and the totaled raw score of the subscale areas is multiplied by two. The maximum Total Self Score is 100. A score was obtained for baseline year statistics and one for project year statistics. Examined were those scores that indicated significant differences between years.

The nonviolent categories for disciplinary referrals were: alcohol/drugs, cumulative misconduct, disruption of learning, failure to serve detentions, indecent exposure, refusal to cooperate with school personnel, smoking/tobacco possession, truancy, excessive tardies, failure to follow in-school suspension rules, gang paraphernalia, trespassing, vulgarity/profanity, lack of effort, threatening to harm self, bus violation, cheating/forgery, offensive social behavior, and gambling.

The violent categories for disciplinary referrals included: assault with and without injury, assault of school employee, destruction of property, extortion, fighting, harassment, inciting a disturbance, peer conflict, name-calling, obscene gestures, possession and/or use of weapons, theft, threatening physical violence, hitting/horseplay, verbal abuse to staff, and inappropriate behavior on the way to and from school.

#### Program Implementation

The manual, "Starting A Conflict Manager Program," and rights to use it were purchased from the San Francisco Community Board Program, Inc. for use by Monroe Middle School. The manual describes the necessary steps for implementation of a

Conflict Resolution Program. Monroe Middle School's training was a three-fold process (inform the faculty, total student body, and parents, and select and train conflict resolution managers) conducted by the Program Coordination Team. The Program Coordination Team consisted of four Monroe Middle School staff members trained in the San Francisco Community Board Program, one who was a school counselor, two of whom were certified teachers, and one who was security personnel. The Program Coordination Team met several times each week beginning in September 1993, to implement a conflict resolution program, planned an initial presentation to the Monroe faculty, and formulated a tentative timeline for implementation of the program.

In October 1993, the Monroe faculty was introduced to the conflict resolution program through a video presentation (Robbins, Simmons, & Farber, 1993) and small group discussion. In February 1994, the total student body was presented information regarding the conflict resolution program, its benefits, and the conflict manager selection process. In March, similar information as presented to the total student body was presented to parents.

The Program Coordination Team met in April 1994 to select a cadre of 30 conflict resolution managers – 20 seventh graders and 10 eighth graders. The Program Coordination Team maintained the integrity of the student body's election but ensured that the conflict resolution program team was balanced according to race and gender, respective of the Monroe Middle School total student body. The Program Coordination Team trained the cadre during a two-day session to mediate student conflict while working in pairs.

The content of the conflict resolution managers' training was outlined in a sequence of 16 steps clustered in 3-stages. The training focused on the role of the mediator and basic communication skills that encompassed active listening, reflection of feeling, message clarification, body language, giving "I messages," brainstorming, types of questioning, and effective problem solving. These same skills were taught and reviewed in the Program Coordination Team's training.

### Data Collection

On April 25, 1994 prior to implementation of the Conflict Resolution Program at Monroe Middle School, the Teacher Survey was distributed to the teachers and responses were collected the following day. On May 1, 1995 the teaching staff was again administered the Teacher Survey and responses were collected the following day. The teachers submitted survey responses to the main office of the school, and signed a checklist to verify return of the survey instrument. This survey addressed the issues of school climate, ways of dealing with conflict, and how a middle school staff feels about violence. The cover letter included a brief explanation of the purpose of the study and assurance of confidentiality of responses.

On April 25, 1994 prior to implementation of the Conflict Resolution Program at Monroe Middle School, the Pupil Survey was administered to the total student body of Monroe Middle School during the language arts class period. On May 1, 1995 the total student body was again administered the Pupil Survey and responses were collected during the language arts class period. This survey addressed students' perception of general discipline and the ways students deal with conflict.

The Conflict Managers Survey/Measure of Self-Esteem (The Coopersmith Inventory-SEI) was administered as a pretest measure on March 14, 1994 to 87 seventh and eighth grade students. These students were nominated as conflict resolution managers by the total student body of Monroe Middle School. The students met in the cafeteria of the school and were administered the survey by the Program Implementation Team.

The survey instrument had 57 questions and was divided into four subscale areas: general self, social self-peers, home-parents, school-academic. On May 8, 1995, current seventh graders nominated by the total student body and eighth graders then serving as conflict resolution managers were administered the Conflict Managers Survey/Measure of Self-Esteem.

#### Data Analysis

Responses to survey items were analyzed with respect to the research questions identified in Chapter One:

- Research Question One: Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with a reduction in the proportion and rate of suspensions in the school? The research question was analyzed using crosstabulations to determine frequencies and percentages. All suspension data were categorized as violent or nonviolent. Chi-Square procedures were conducted to determine if a reduction in the rate and proportion of students receiving suspensions was evident. A *t* test was conducted to examine differences in the suspension rate from baseline to project year.

- Research Question Two: Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with reduction in the proportion and rate of



student referrals related to incidents of violence in the school? The research question was analyzed using crosstabulations to determine frequencies and percentages. All referral data and behavior incidents were categorized as violent or nonviolent. Chi-Square procedures were conducted to determine if a reduction in the proportion and rate of student referrals related to incidents of violence in the school was evident. A *t* test was conducted to examine differences in the referral rate from baseline to project year.

- Research Question Three: Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with perceived improvement in general discipline as measured by staff survey responses? The research question was analyzed using crosstabulations to determine observed and expected frequencies of staff's perceptions of general discipline. The Pearson Chi-Square statistic was computed on these frequencies to determine the independence of the variables, when the observed results differed from the expected. Further testing, using *t* tests, was conducted to determine significant differences in the staff's perception of general discipline as measured by staff survey responses from baseline to project year.

- Research Question Four: Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with perceived improvement of the overall/general school climate as measured by staff survey responses? The research question was analyzed using crosstabulations to determine observed and expected frequencies of perceptions of overall/general school climate. The Pearson Chi-Square statistic was computed on these frequencies to determine the independence of the variables, when the observed results differed from the expected. Further testing, using

*t* tests, was conducted to determine significant differences between the staff's perception of overall/general school climate as measured by staff survey responses from baseline to project year.

- Research Question Five: Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with perceived improvement in general discipline and conflict resolution as measured by student survey responses? The research question was analyzed using factor analysis and tests of reliability to achieve data reduction through subscales. Factor loadings were used to compute new variables. Means tests for subscales of the Pupil Survey and *t* tests to compare baseline to project year were conducted.

- Research Question Six: Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with positive effects on student conflict resolution managers as measured by an increase in attendance rate, improved grade point average (GPA), a reduction in the rate of student referrals, and enhanced self-esteem? The research question was analyzed using paired *t* tests on the data. Absences from both years were obtained from historical attendance files. Grade point average was calculated for both years. Self-esteem was measured using the Coopersmith Inventory-SEI and discipline records were tallied to determine changes between the years.

## Summary

The primary purpose of this study was to identify and investigate possible effects produced by the implementation of a conflict resolution program in a middle school. The secondary purpose of this study was to examine the developmental changes resulting from the program's impact on conflict resolution managers. To determine the possible effects produced by the implementation of the conflict resolution program and the developmental changes resulting from the program's impact on conflict resolution managers, data were collected from the total student body and teachers of Monroe Middle School, as well as students selected as conflict resolution managers. The findings from the analysis are discussed in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER IV

### Presentation and Analysis of Data

The primary purpose of this study was to identify and investigate possible effects produced by the implementation of a conflict resolution program in a middle school. The secondary purpose of this study was to examine the developmental changes resulting from the program's impact on conflict resolution managers. A summary of quantitative results is presented in this chapter for each of the six questions that guided the investigation.

#### Research Questions

The questions posed by this study include:

1. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with a reduction in the proportion and rate of suspensions in the school?
2. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with a reduction in the proportion and rate of student referrals related to incidents of violence in the school?
3. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with perceived improvement in general discipline as measured by staff survey responses?
4. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with perceived improvement of the overall/general school climate as measured by staff survey responses?

5. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with perceived improvement in general discipline and conflict resolution as measured by student survey responses?

6. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with positive effects on student Conflict Resolution Managers as measured by an increase in attendance rate, improved grade point average (GPA), a reduction in the rate of student referrals, and enhanced self-esteem?

The findings for this study were obtained from various sources. Referral and suspension data related to general discipline and incidents of violence were collected from the total student body of Monroe Middle School to obtain baseline and project year statistics. This data included teacher referrals, overnight suspension letters, in-school suspension forms, short- and long-term suspension letters, and recommendations for mandatory reassignment and expulsion. Information regarding change in general discipline and overall school climate could be delineated from this data.

In order to ascertain teacher perceptions of general discipline and school climate, surveys were completed on April 25, 1994 by the total teaching staff prior to implementation of the conflict resolution program. The Teacher Survey was completed again at the end of the project year.

Both years, the Teacher Survey was distributed during a general staff meeting. Teachers returned the surveys the following day to the main office and signed a checklist to verify return of the survey instrument. One hundred percent of the teaching staff participated each year; 49 teachers in 1993-94 and 48 teachers in 1994-95.

Likewise, to determine students' perceptions of general discipline and school climate, the total student body of Monroe Middle School was surveyed on April 25, 1994 prior to implementation of the Conflict Resolution Program. This initial survey was completed by 325 seventh grade students and 300 eighth grade students.

On May 1, 1995 the total student body, 300 seventh grade students and 280 eighth grade students, was again administered the Pupil Survey. In all, 1,032 different students were surveyed. Due to the large percentage of students transitioning in and out of the school and high retention rates, only 234 students completed the survey both years.

On March 14, 1994, 87 students (46 seventh graders and 41 eighth graders) nominated to be conflict resolution managers by the total student body of Monroe Middle School were administered the Conflict Managers Survey/Measure of Self-Esteem (The Coopersmith Inventory) as a pretest measure. This cohort of students met in the cafeteria of the school and was administered the survey by the Program Implementation Team. Of this group, 20 students on the 7<sup>th</sup> grade level and 10 students on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level were trained as conflict resolution managers.

On May 8, 1995, 33 seventh graders newly nominated by the total student body and those 14 eighth graders who had served as conflict resolution managers during the project year were administered the Conflict Managers Survey/Measure of Self-Esteem. During the project year, six of the original 20 conflict resolution managers chose not to participate in the program or did not return to Monroe Middle School.

The 1993-94 and 1994-95 year attendance records, grade point averages, and discipline records of student Conflict Resolution Managers were examined to identify

any increase or reduction in attendance rates, grade point average, or referral rates. A Total Self Score obtained for baseline year statistics and one for project year statistics using the Conflict Managers Survey/Measure of Self-Esteem (The Coopersmith Inventory–SEI) was examined to determine if there were any significant differences between years.

### Suspensions and Referrals

When examining behavior data, more than one statistic can be analyzed: the actual number of incidents within the school setting and the number of students involved in those incidents. The two numbers are used to produce a rate and proportion. The actual number of incidents is used to produce the rate; that is, the number of incidents per student. The number of students is used to calculate a proportion; that is, the percentage of students involved compared to the percentage of students not involved in an incident.

The first research question looks at both the proportion and rate of suspensions. First, in order to examine proportions, the percentage of students who were suspended is compared to the percentage of students who were not suspended. This proportion is examined from baseline to project year to determine if there is a change.

Next, the suspension rate is calculated by dividing the number of suspensions by the total number of students. This rate is examined from baseline to project year to determine if the number of suspensions per student has changed.

Similarly, the second research question addresses both the proportion and rate of referrals. The proportion of students referred or not referred during the baseline year is compared to the proportion of students referred or not referred during the project year.

Additionally, the referral rate, the number of referrals per student, is compared from baseline to project year.

### Question 1

Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with a reduction in the proportion and rate of suspensions in the school?

The null hypothesis is that there is no difference in the proportion and rate of suspensions from baseline to project year. The research hypothesis is that there is a reduction in the proportion and rate of suspensions. Seven types of suspensions were aggregated in the data to determine if a reduction in the proportion and rate of suspensions occurred. The types of suspension include temporary removal and exclusion from school and school-related functions. The range of possible suspensions includes short-term suspension (1-5 days), long-term suspension (6-19 days), emergency exclusion, expulsion, in-school suspension, overnight suspension, and mandatory reassignment.

Table 1 shows both the proportion and rate of suspensions for the overall student population of Monroe Middle School. In conducting a crosstabulation, it was found that the percentage of students who were suspended one or more times increased from 50.3% to 67.8% from baseline to project year. Conversely, the percentage of students not suspended decreased from 49.7% to 32.2%. The change in proportions produced a Pearson Chi-Square value of 63.87 with a significance level of .000. Using the effect size index of proportions, a small to medium effect size of approximately .38 was found



indicating a somewhat meaningful change in the proportions from baseline to project year.

Table 1

Proportions and Rates of Suspensions for Baseline and Project Years

	Proportion of Suspensions*		Rate of Suspensions**	
	N of Students	%	N of Suspensions	Rate
Baseline Year (N = 715)				
Suspended	360	50.3%	961	1.34
Not Suspended	355	49.7%		
Project Year (N = 735)				
Suspended	498	67.8%	1380	1.88
Not Suspended	237	32.2%		

\* Chi-Square value = 63.87;  $p = .000$

\*\*  $t$  value = -4.683;  $p = .000$

Additionally, Table 1 shows the rates of suspension in the baseline and project years. A  $t$  test was conducted to assess the difference in the rates. The mean difference of .53 was statistically significant at the .000 level. An effect size of .24 indicates that the observed difference in rate is small in magnitude.

In both cases, looking at the proportion of suspensions and the rate of suspensions, a statistically significant increase was found. Unfortunately, this is in direct contrast to the research hypothesis that there would be a reduction in proportion and rate of suspensions in the school associated with the implementation of a conflict resolution program.

To further examine suspensions, all offenses were categorized as violent and nonviolent. Behaviors that were categorized as nonviolent incidents included: alcohol/drugs, cumulative misconduct, disruption of learning, failure to serve detentions, indecent exposure, refusal to cooperate with school personnel, smoking/tobacco possession, truancy, excessive tardies, failure to follow in-school suspension rules, gang paraphernalia, trespassing, vulgarity/profanity, lack of effort, threatening to harm self, bus violation, cheating/forgery, offensive social behavior, and gambling.

The categories of violent incidents included: assault with and without injury, assault of school employee, destruction of property, extortion, fighting, harassment, inciting a disturbance, peer conflict, name-calling, obscene gestures, possession and/or use of weapons, theft, threatening physical violence, hitting/horseplay, verbal abuse to staff, and inappropriate behavior on the way to and from school. Violent incidents that were not necessarily of a physical nature were included because of the potential to create a hostile and/or intimidating school environment.

Because the number of suspensions for the students ranged from 1 to 12 per suspended student, the variable of suspension was collapsed into four groups: no suspensions, one suspension, two or three suspensions, and four or more suspensions. Table 2 shows a crosstabulation of the proportion of students receiving suspensions (overnight suspension, in-school suspension, short-term suspension, long-term suspension, or more severe sanction) for violent and nonviolent incidents during baseline and project years.

Table 2

Proportions of Suspensions for Violent and Nonviolent Incidents for Baseline and Project Years

	Baseline Year		Project Year	
	N	(%)	N	(%)
<b>Students Receiving Suspensions for Violent Incidents*</b>				
No Suspensions	498	(69.7%)	459	(62.4%)
1 Suspension	139	(19.4%)	181	(24.6%)
2 or 3 Suspensions	65	(9.1%)	79	(10.7%)
4 or more Suspensions	13	(1.8%)	16	(2.2%)
Total Students	715	(100.0%)	735	(100.0%)
<b>Students Receiving Suspensions for Nonviolent Incidents**</b>				
No Suspensions	434	(60.7%)	354	(48.2%)
1 Suspension	140	(19.6%)	160	(21.8%)
2 or 3 Suspensions	97	(13.6%)	136	(18.5%)
4 or more Suspensions	44	(6.2%)	85	(11.6%)
Total Students	715	(100.0%)	735	(100.0%)

\* Chi-Square value = 8.50;  $p = .037$

\*\* Chi-Square value = 28.74;  $p = .000$

The percentage of students receiving suspensions for violent incidents (one or more) increased in each group: the percentage of students suspended once increased from 19.4% to 24.6%; the percentage of students suspended two or three times increased from 9.1% to 10.7%; and, the percentage of students suspended four or more times increased from 1.8% to 2.2%. On the other hand, the percentage of students not receiving a suspension decreased over the two-year period from 69.7% to 62.4% for violent incidents. Overall, the top half of Table 2 shows that the change in the proportion of

students receiving suspensions for violent incidents produced a Pearson Chi-Square value of 8.50 in a two-by-four table. This was statistically significant at the .037 level.

For crosstabulation tables larger than two-by-two, the Contingency Coefficient is used to produce a  $w$  value. The effect size for  $w$  values is usually considered small for .10, medium for .30, and large for .50. The crosstabulation shown in Table 2 produced a Contingency Coefficient of .139 with a  $w$  value of .076. The effect size for this  $w$  value is less than small indicating very little meaningful difference in the proportion of students suspended for violent incidents from baseline to project year.

Another transformation of the suspension variable related to violent incidents that grouped all students in a two-by-two table. The two groups were those students who had received one or more suspensions related to violent incidents and those students who had not received a suspension related to a violent incident. A two-by-two crosstabulation again confirmed a significant increase in the proportions of students suspended, from 30.3% to 37.6% over the two-year period. The Pearson Chi-Square value of 8.38 was statistically significant at the .004 level. Using the effect size index of proportions, a very small effect size of approximately .15 was found indicating little meaningful difference in the proportion of students suspended for violent incidents from baseline to project year.

Also in Table 2, suspensions related to nonviolent incidents were disaggregated. The percentage of students suspended once increased from 19.6% to 21.8%. The percentage of students suspended two or three times increased from 13.6% to 18.5%. The percentage of students suspended four or more times increased from 6.2% to 11.6%. While the percentage of students receiving suspensions increased in these three groups,

the percentage of students not receiving a suspension decreased from 60.7% to 48.2%. Overall, the change in proportions of students receiving suspensions for nonviolent incidents produced a Pearson Chi-Square value of 28.74 that is statistically significant at the .000 level. Using the Contingency Coefficient, the  $w$  value was calculated at .14. This small effect size indicates a small meaningful increase in the proportion of students receiving suspensions for nonviolent incidents.

To further compare students receiving a suspension for nonviolent incidents to those students not receiving a suspension for nonviolent incidents, another two-by-two crosstabulation was produced. This crosstabulation showed that the percentage of students receiving a suspension increased from 39.3% to 51.8% from baseline to project year. This confirmed the statistically significant increase in the previous analysis. The Pearson Chi-Square value of 22.96 was statistically significant at the .000 level. Using the effect size index of proportions, a small effect size of approximately .22 was found indicating that there is little meaningful difference in the proportion of students suspended for nonviolent incidents from baseline to project year.

It appears that in spite of the implementation of a conflict resolution program, there was not a reduction in the proportion of students suspended at the school overall or suspended for violent or nonviolent incidents. Another way to examine suspensions over the two-year period is to look at the rate of suspensions, that is, the number of suspensions per student, as opposed to the proportion of students receiving suspensions. For this purpose,  $t$  tests were conducted.

The rate of suspensions for violent incidents shown in Table 3 indicates that on the average there were .49 suspensions per student during the baseline year and .59 suspensions per student during the project year. Table 3 further indicates that the change in the mean difference in the rate of suspensions for violent incidents from baseline to project year was -.10. This mean difference in the rate of suspensions per student was statistically significant at a .045 level. The effect size for this change in the rate of suspensions was .11. This indicates that the difference in the suspension rate from baseline to project year is not meaningful.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Mean Differences for Suspension Rates for Violent and Nonviolent Incidents from Baseline to Project Year

	x	(sd)	Mean Diff.	t	p	ES*
<b>Suspension Rates for Violent Incidents</b>						
Baseline Year	.49	(.92)	-.10	-2.01	.045	.11
Project Year	.59	(.96)				
<b>Suspension Rates for Nonviolent Incidents</b>						
Baseline Year	.86	(1.56)	-.43	-4.83	.000	.25
Project Year	1.29	(1.89)				

\* For Effect Size, .20 = small, .50 = medium, and .80 = large

As shown in Table 3, the average rate of suspensions for nonviolent incidents during the baseline year was .86 incidents per student. In the project year, the rate of suspensions was 1.29 nonviolent incidents per student. This -.43 mean difference in the rate of suspensions for nonviolent incidents also indicated an increase that was

statistically significant at the .000 level. This produced an effect size of .25. Thus, there is little meaningful difference in the suspension rate of nonviolent incidents from baseline to project year.

Overall, there is no evidence of a reduction in the proportion or rate of suspensions from baseline to project year. Not only did the proportion of students suspended increase from baseline to project year, but also both the proportion of students suspended for violent incidents and the proportion of students suspended for nonviolent incidents increased.

In addition, the rate of suspensions showed an increase rather than a decrease. As with proportions, the rate of suspensions for violent incidents increased, as well as for nonviolent incidents. All of these increases were statistically significant with effect sizes ranging from less than small to medium. As a result, it appears the conflict resolution program at Monroe Middle School was not associated with a reduction in the proportion or rate of suspensions in the school.

### Question 2

Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with a reduction in the proportion and rate of student referrals related to incidents of violence in the school?

The null hypothesis is that there is no difference in the proportion and rate of referrals related to violence from baseline to project year. The research hypothesis is that there is a reduction in the proportion and rate of referrals related to violence. Incidents occurring within the school setting requiring disciplinary action or administrative

notification are reported to the school administration by way of written teacher referrals. These referrals document the present situation, as well as past actions taken by the teacher to resolve recurring problems.

Referrals may result in administrative action ranging from conference with student and/or parent to expulsion from school. It is assumed that not all incidents occurring within the school are documented on a referral. Indeed, there are more incidents occurring than are actually reported on referrals. Oftentimes, the teacher handles many incidents without involving an administrator. Other times, incidents may occur outside the classroom and receive immediate administrative attention without the benefit of a written referral.

While referrals represent only a portion of the total general discipline of the school, there is justification in examining only those incidents. Analysis of student referrals may provide insight into the possibility that students and teachers may have benefited from the use of conflict resolution techniques within the school setting to handle conflict situations. In addition, examination of referral data allows both analysis of incidents not requiring suspension from school, as well as analysis of incidents warranting suspension.

In order to examine the proportions related to referrals, the percentage of students who were referred to the office is compared to the percentage of students who were not referred. This proportion is examined from baseline to project year to determine if there is a decrease. Additionally, the referral rate is calculated by dividing the number of



referrals by the total number of students. This rate is examined from baseline to project year to determine if the number of referrals per student has changed.

Table 4 shows both the proportion and rate of referrals for the baseline and project year. A crosstabulation showed that the percentage of students receiving referrals decreased from 51.3% to 32.7%. Conversely, the percentage of students not receiving a referral increased from 48.7% to 67.3%. This change in proportions produced a Pearson Chi-Square value of 87.22 with a significance level of .000. In using the effect size index of proportions to analyze the difference in proportions from baseline to project year, a value of nearly .40 indicates a small to medium effect size. This effect size means that the observed change in proportions is meaningful.

Table 4

Proportions and Rates of Referrals for Baseline and Project Years

	Proportion of Referrals*		Rate of Referrals**	
	N of Students	(%)	N of Referrals	Rate
<b>Baseline Year (N = 715)</b>				
Referred	367	(51.3%)	951	1.33
Not Referred	348	(48.7%)		
<b>Project Year (N = 735)</b>				
Referred	240	(32.7%)	939	1.28
Not Referred	495	(67.3%)		

\* Chi-Square value = 87.22;  $p = .000$

\*\*  $t$  value = .42;  $p = .679$

In addition, Table 4 shows the number of referrals per student in the form of a referral rate. A  $t$  test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant change

in referral rates from baseline to project year. The mean difference of .05, with a  $t$  value of .413, was not found to be statistically significant. Thus, the rate of referrals did not show a significant difference.

Overall, during the project year, the rate of referrals remained relatively constant when compared to the baseline year. At the same time, a smaller percentage of students received referrals. This would indicate that those students receiving referrals during the project year actually received a larger number of referrals than during the baseline year.

Table 5

Proportions of Referrals for Violent and Nonviolent Incidents for Baseline and Project Years

	Baseline Year		Project Year	
	N	(%)	N	(%)
<b>Students Receiving Referrals for Violent Incidents*</b>				
No Referrals	514	(71.9%)	596	(81.1%)
1 Referral	142	(19.9%)	74	(10.1%)
2 or 3 Referrals	49	(6.9%)	54	(7.3%)
4 or more Referrals	10	(1.4%)	11	(1.5%)
Total Students	715	(100.0%)	735	(100.0%)
<b>Students Receiving Referrals for Nonviolent Incidents**</b>				
No Referrals	430	(60.1%)	532	(72.4%)
1 Referral	134	(18.7%)	66	(9.0%)
2 or 3 Referrals	103	(14.4%)	71	(9.7%)
4 or more Referrals	48	(6.7%)	66	(9.0%)
Total Students	715	(100.0%)	735	(100.0%)

\* Chi-Square value = 27.49;  $p = .000$

\*\* Chi-Square value = 42.39;  $p = .000$

As with the analysis of suspensions, the variable of referrals was collapsed into four categories: no referrals, one referral, two or three referrals, and four or more referrals. In addition, the referral data was disaggregated using the same categories of violent and nonviolent incidents used for the suspension data. Two different two-by-four crosstabulations are shown in Table 5; one for violent incidents and one for nonviolent incidents of referrals.

In Table 5, the category of violent incidents indicates a decrease of 19.9% to 10.1% in the percentage of students who received one referral. On the other hand, the percentage of students receiving two or three referrals increased minimally from 6.9% to 7.3% as did the percentage of students receiving four or more referrals, 1.4% to 1.5%. Overall, the percentage of students who did not receive any referrals increased from 71.9% to 81.1% from baseline to project year. The Pearson Chi-Square value of 27.49 indicated a statistically significant reduction at the .000 level in the proportion of students receiving referrals.

The Contingency Coefficient was used to produce a  $w$  value to determine effect size. The  $w$  value of .14 is a small to medium effect size indicating a somewhat meaningful reduction in the proportion of students receiving referrals from baseline to project year.

When collapsed further into a two-by-two table of students receiving a referral compared to students not receiving a referral, the decrease in the proportion of students receiving referrals was again evident. In the baseline year, 28.1% of the student body received one or more referrals compared to only 18.9% in the project year. The

crosstabulation produced a Pearson Chi-Square value of 17.091 with a significance level of .000. Using the effect size index of proportions to compare the difference over the two-year period produced an effect size of approximately .19. This indicated a small meaningful difference in proportions of students receiving referrals.

Also in Table 5, referrals related to nonviolent incidents were disaggregated. The percentage of students receiving one referral decreased from 18.7% to 9.0%. The percentage of students receiving two or three referrals decreased from 14.4% to 9.7%. The percentage of students receiving four or more referrals increased from 6.7% to 9.0%. On the other hand, the percentage of students not receiving a referral increased from 60.1% to 72.4%. Overall, there was a decrease in the percentage of students receiving a referral.

As a result, the change in proportions of students receiving referrals for nonviolent incidents produced a Pearson Chi-Square value of 42.39 that is statistically significant at the .000 level. Using the Contingency Coefficient, the  $w$  value was calculated at .17. This small to medium effect size indicates a somewhat meaningful decrease in the proportion of students receiving referrals for nonviolent incidents.

A further comparison of students receiving a referral for nonviolent incidents to those students not receiving a referral for nonviolent incidents was examined through a two-by-two crosstabulation. This procedure showed that the percentage of students receiving a referral decreased from 39.8% to 27.6% from baseline to project year. This confirmed the statistically significant decrease in the previous analysis. The Pearson Chi-Square value of 24.322 was statistically significant at the .000 level. Using the effect size

index of proportions, a small effect size of approximately .19 was found indicating that there is a small meaningful difference in the proportion of students referred for nonviolent incidents from baseline to project year.

It appears that there was a reduction in the proportion of students receiving a referral from baseline to project year. This reduction was seen in both violent and nonviolent incidents, as well as overall referrals. Each analysis indicated a small to medium meaningful decrease in the proportion of students receiving referrals.

Table 6

Means, Standard Deviations, and Mean Differences for Referral Rates for Violent and Nonviolent Incidents from Baseline to Project Year

	x	(sd)	Mean Diff.	t	p	ES*
<b>Referral Rates for Violent Incidents</b>						
Baseline Year	.42	(.83)	-.07	1.45	.149	NA
Project Year	.35	(.90)				
<b>Referral Rates for Nonviolent Incidents</b>						
Baseline Year	.91	(1.61)	.02	-.13	.895	NA
Project Year	.93	(2.17)				

\* For Effect Size, .20 = small, .50 = medium, and .80 = large. NA = Not Applicable

In order to examine the rate of referrals per student, a *t* test was conducted. Table 6 indicates that in the baseline year there were .42 referrals written for violent incidents per student as compared to .35 referrals written for violent incidents per student in the project year. The difference in means of these referral rates was -.07. This difference was not statistically significant indicating there was no change in the rate of referrals per

student from baseline to project year. For nonviolent incidents, a mean of .91 in the baseline year increased slightly to .93 during the project year. This minimal increase in referral rate also was not statistically significant.

Overall, there was a statistically significant reduction in the proportion of students receiving referrals. Effect sizes indicated that these reductions were meaningful for overall referrals (Table 5) and when disaggregated into violent and nonviolent incidents (Table 6). Examination of referral rates, however, showed no statistically significant difference from baseline to project year. It thus appears that the conflict resolution program at Monroe Middle School was associated with a reduction in the proportion of students referred for violent and nonviolent incidents in the school. On the other hand, the conflict resolution program did not appear to be associated with a reduction in the rate of referrals at the school.

#### Teacher Survey

The Teacher Survey administered to the entire Monroe Middle School teaching staff was used for the analysis of Research Questions 3 and 4. Six statements from the Teacher Survey were identified as measures of perception of general discipline: Statements 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12 (see Appendix B for Teacher Survey). These statements, which are shown below, were analyzed to compare differences from baseline year to project year:

- Students new to school have a higher percent of conflict problems.
- Teachers spend too much time disciplining students
- Students are generally happy with the present discipline system.

- Students know how to solve problems without getting into fights.
- Teachers listen to both sides when there is a conflict between students.
- There are lots of fights among students in our school.

Six statements from the Teacher Survey were identified as measures of perception of overall/general school climate: Statements 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 10. These statements, which are shown below, were analyzed to compare differences from baseline to project year:

- Students have pride in our school.
- Students have a lot of school spirit.
- Teachers take students' concerns seriously.
- Students take part in solving their own problems in school
- Students cooperate with one another at school.
- Students in our school really like the school.

### Question 3

Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with perceived improvement in general discipline as measured by staff survey responses?

The null hypothesis is that there is no difference in the perceived improvement in general discipline from baseline to project year among staff. The research hypothesis is that there is a difference in the perceived improvement in general discipline from baseline to project year among staff.

Initially, a crosstabulation was conducted to compare expected and actual counts on a five-point Likert scale between years for each statement related to general discipline. In this analysis, one statement, Statement 12, showed significant differences ( $p = .042$ ) from the baseline year to project year. Statement 12, "There are lots of fights among students in our school," showed a significant decrease in the proportion of staff who agreed with this statement. The Pearson Chi-Square produced a value of 9.909 with a significance level of .042. This statistically significant difference indicates that teachers perceived improvement related to fights from baseline to project year.

In an attempt to determine any further significance, the Likert scale was recoded into two groups, "Very strongly agree/Agree" and "Very strongly disagree/Disagree/Undecided." This was done to work with larger cell sizes by grouping similar responses. As a result of this recoding, Statement 9, "Students know how to solve problems without getting into fights," also showed significance at the .036 level. Together, Statements 9 and 12 showed significant differences in teacher perception of fighting and conflict resolution.

In the baseline year, the crosstabulation for Statement 9 showed 9 respondents who very strongly agreed/agreed that students know how to solve problems without getting into fights. The following year, 18 respondents, double the original number and percentage, agreed with that statement. Similarly for Statement 12, in the baseline year, the crosstabulation showed 33 respondents who very strongly agreed/agreed that there were lots of fights in the school among students. The following year, only 18



respondents, approximately half of the original number and percentage, agreed with that statement.

As shown in Table 7, the Pearson Chi-Square for Statements 9 and 12 produced values of 4.42 and 8.66 with significance levels of .036 and .003, respectively. The statistically significant differences in teacher responses to Statements 9 and 12 indicated that teachers perceived improvement in fighting and conflict resolution from baseline to project year.

Table 7

Proportions for Teacher Survey – General Discipline Statements 9 and 12 (Recoded) for Baseline and Project Years

	Baseline Year		Project Year	
	N	(%)	N	(%)
<b>Statement 9: Students know how to solve problems without getting into fights.*</b>				
Very Strongly Agree/Agree	9	(18.4%)	18	(37.5%)
Very Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Undecided	40	(81.6%)	30	(62.5%)
<b>Statement 12: There are lots of fights among students in our school.**</b>				
Very Strongly Agree/Agree	33	(67.3%)	18	(37.5%)
Very Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Undecided	16	(32.7%)	30	(62.5%)

\* Chi-Square value = 4.42;  $p = .036$ . Effect Size = .65

\*\* Chi-Square value = 8.66;  $p = .003$ . Effect Size = .60

In addition, the recoding allowed examination of the effect size index of proportions. Using the difference in proportions between those whom responded “Very strongly agree/Agree” and those who responded “Very strongly disagree/Disagree/Undecided,” an effect size estimate of approximately .65 was found for Statement 9 and

.60 for Statement 12. These are medium to large effect sizes indicating that the differences as noted between the baseline year and project year are meaningful.

To determine if similar differences would be seen among specific groups of staff members, crosstabulations were conducted disaggregating by gender, grade level taught, high/low years of teaching experience, highest degree received, coursework taken in educational administration, and team. Team affiliation refers to whether a staff member was considered an academic team member or a unified or cooperative arts team member.

When analyzing both original and recoded variables, no significant differences with respect to the six statements of general discipline were found between genders, grade level taught, and high/low years of teaching experience. Additionally, highest degree received, coursework taken in educational administration, and whether the staff member was on an academic or unified/cooperative arts team did not significantly impact the perception of general discipline.

In reexamination of the six statements pertaining to teacher perceptions of general discipline, *t* tests were conducted to confirm the results of the crosstabulations. The Independent-Samples *T* Test procedure was used to compare means for two groups of cases. Table 8 shows the means of the recoded Likert responses. The two groups, baseline year and project year, again showed significant differences in Statement 12. Statement 9, “Students know how to solve problems without getting into fights,” showed statistically significant differences from baseline to project year.

To further test for differences in perception of general discipline among specific groups of staff members, *t* tests were conducted disaggregating gender, grade level taught,

and high/low years of teaching experience. In addition, coursework taken in educational administration and whether the staff member was on an academic or unified/cooperative arts team were assessed with a *t* test. No significant differences were found between these descriptive characteristics in either the original or recoded variables.

Table 8

Means, Standard Deviations, and Mean Differences for Teacher Survey – General

Discipline Statements (Recoded) Comparing Baseline to Project Year

	x	(sd)	Mean Diff.	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	ES*
Statement 6: Students new to school have a higher percent of conflict problems.						
Baseline Year	2.12	(.75)				
Project Year	2.21	(.71)	-.09	-.60	.550	NA
Statement 7: Teachers spend too much time disciplining students.						
Baseline Year	1.08	(.34)				
Project Year	1.17	(.52)	-.09	-.95	.345	NA
Statement 8: Students are generally happy with the present discipline system.						
Baseline Year	2.06	(.90)				
Project Year	1.98	(.82)	.09	.47	.640	NA
Statement 9: Students know how to solve problems without getting into fights.						
Baseline Year	2.41	(.79)				
Project Year	2.04	(.90)	.37	2.14	.035	.44
Statement 11: Teachers listen to both sides when there is a conflict between students.						
Baseline Year	1.24	(.63)				
Project Year	1.13	(.44)	.12	1.09	.281	NA
Statement 12: There are lots of fights among students in our school.						
Baseline Year	1.57	(.87)				
Project Year	2.10	(.93)	-.53	-2.92	.004	.53

\* For Effect Size, .20 = small, .50 = medium, and .80 = large. NA = Not Applicable

In examining the responses of teachers, two significant differences were seen from baseline year to project year regarding the teachers' perceptions of general discipline. In the project year, fewer teachers than in the previous year perceived that

there were lots of fights among students (Statement 12). Also, more teachers perceived that students know how to solve problems without getting into fights (Statement 9). Thus, the conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School was associated with perceived improvement in general discipline, albeit limited to the areas of fighting and conflict resolution, as measured by staff survey responses. No other differences in perception were seen, either among the whole group or the groups disaggregated by gender, grade level taught, high/low years of teaching experience, highest degree received, coursework taken in educational administration, and whether the staff member was on an academic or unified/cooperative arts team.

#### Question 4

Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with perceived improvement of the overall/general school climate as measured by staff survey responses?

The null hypothesis is that there is no difference in the perceived improvement in the overall/general school climate from baseline to project year among staff. The research hypothesis is that there is a difference in the perceived improvement of the overall/general school climate from baseline to project year among staff.

First, a crosstabulation was conducted to compare expected and actual counts on a five-point Likert scale between years for each of the six statements related to overall/general school climate. In this analysis, one statement showed significant differences from baseline to project year. The statement, "Students take part in solving their own problems in school," showed a significant increase in the proportion of staff

who agreed with this statement. The Pearson Chi-Square produced a value of 13.278 with a significance level of .010. This statistically significant difference indicates that teachers perceived improvement from baseline to project year in students solving their own problems.

In an attempt to determine any further significance, the Likert scale was recoded into two groups, "Very strongly agree/Agree" and "Very strongly disagree/Disagree/Undecided" as shown in Table 9. Similar responses were grouped in order to work with larger numbers in each cell. Even after recoding, Statement 4 remained the only statement with a significant difference in teacher perception in any component of the overall/general school climate.

In the baseline year, this crosstabulation showed 17 respondents who very strongly agreed/agreed that students take part in solving their own problems in school. The following year, 33 respondents, almost double the number and percentage of respondents, agreed with that statement. As shown in Table 9, the Pearson Chi-Square for Statement 4 produced a value of 11.26 with a significance level of .001. This statistically significant difference from baseline to project year indicates that teachers perceived improvement in students solving their own problems.

Recoding the Likert scale responses also allowed examination of the effect size index of proportions. Using the difference in proportions between those whom responded "Very strongly agree/Agree" with Statement 4 and those who responded "Very strongly disagree/ Disagree/Undecided," an effect size of approximately .70 was found. This is a

large effect size indicating that the difference in proportion between the baseline and project year is meaningful.

Table 9

Proportions for Teacher Survey – Overall/General School Climate Statement 4 (Recoded)  
Comparing Baseline to Project Year

	Baseline Year		Project Year	
	N	(%)	N	(%)
Statement 4: Students take part in solving their own problems in school.				
Very Strongly Agree/Agree	17	(34.7%)	33	(68.8%)
Very Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Undecided	32	(65.3%)	15	(31.2%)

\* Chi-Square value = 11.26;  $p = .001$ . Effect Size = .70

Again, crosstabulations were conducted to determine if similar differences would be seen among specific groups of staff members when disaggregating by gender, grade level taught, high/low years of teaching experience, highest degree received, coursework taken in educational administration, and whether the staff member was on an academic or unified/cooperative arts team. No significant differences were found in either the original or recoded variables.

Lastly, conducting  $t$  tests confirmed the results of the crosstabulations. The Independent-Samples  $T$  Test procedure was used to compare means for baseline year and project year responses. These groups again showed no significant differences with the exception of Statement 4 that was significant at the .000 level. The results of the recoded variables are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Means, Standard Deviations, and Mean Differences for Teacher Survey –Overall/General School Climate Statements (Recoded) Comparing Baseline to ProjectYear

	x	(sd)	Mean Diff.	t	p	ES*
<b>Statement 1: Students have pride in our school.</b>						
Baseline Year	2.02	(.85)				
Project Year	2.02	(.91)	-.00	-.00	.998	NA
<b>Statement 2: Students have a lot of school spirit.</b>						
Baseline Year	2.47	(.74)				
Project Year	2.35	(.73)	.12	.77	.441	NA
<b>Statement 3: Teachers take students' concerns seriously.</b>						
Baseline Year	1.06	(.32)				
Project Year	1.02	(.14)	.04	.81	.423	NA
<b>Statement 4: Students take part in solving their own problems in school.</b>						
Baseline Year	2.02	(.85)				
Project Year	1.44	(.71)	.58	3.65	.000	.66
<b>Statement 5: Students cooperate with one another at school.</b>						
Baseline Year	1.92	(.89)				
Project Year	1.90	(.95)	.02	.12	.904	NA
<b>Statement 10: Students in our school really like the school.</b>						
Baseline Year	1.92	(.81)				
Project Year	1.96	(.71)	-.04	-.26	.798	NA

\* For Effect Size, .20 = small, .50 = medium, and .80 = large. NA = Not Applicable

To further test for differences among specific groups of staff members, *t* tests were conducted again disaggregating by gender, grade level taught, high/low years of teaching experience, highest degree received, coursework in educational administration, and whether the staff member was on an academic or unified/cooperative arts team.

Again, no significant differences were found between these descriptive characteristics in either the original or recoded variables.

Similar to the analysis related to teachers' perception of general discipline in the school, a significant difference was seen from baseline to project year regarding the teachers' perceptions of overall/general school climate. Significantly more teachers during the project year, perceived that students take part in solving their own problems in school. No other differences in perception were seen, either among the whole group or the subgroups disaggregated by gender, grade level taught, high/low years of teaching experience, highest degree received, coursework taken in educational administration, and whether the staff member was on an academic or unified/cooperative arts team. Thus, the conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School was associated with perceived improvement in only one component in overall/general school climate, that of the students' role in solving their problems, as measured by staff survey responses.

#### Pupil Survey

The Pupil Survey, administered during baseline and project year, to the entire Monroe Middle School student population was used for analysis of Research Question 5. The responses to the statements measured student perceptions of general discipline and of conflict resolution. They explored how the respondents felt about disagreements or conflict, how others perceived the respondent in terms of grades, homework, and behavior, and how they interacted and communicated with fellow students.



### Question 5

Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with perceived improvement in general discipline and conflict resolution as measured by student survey responses?

The null hypothesis is that there is no difference in the perceived improvement in general discipline and conflict resolution from baseline to project year among students. The research hypothesis is that there is a difference in the perceived improvement in general discipline and conflict resolution from baseline to project year among students.

The individual statements were analyzed to compare differences from baseline to project year with regard to general discipline and conflict resolution. Analysis of the individual statements using a *t* test yielded only two statements with significant differences between baseline year and project year responses: Statement 7 – “I try to talk out a problem instead of fighting” and Statement 26 – “I treat other people well.”

To follow the normal progression from 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 8<sup>th</sup> grade as a cohort, baseline statistics for 7<sup>th</sup> grade students were compared to project year statistics for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. In the cohort group, eight statements yielded significant differences. While these statements appear to be associated with the implementation of a conflict resolution model, further analysis used subscales to ensure meaningful test results.

In the original research conducted by Brown (1992), the Pupil Survey was divided into three subscales (see Appendix A):

Subscale 1: How pupils feel about disagreements or conflicts (questions 1-8, questions 19-22).

Subscale 2: How teachers and other students assess pupils (questions 9-18).

Subscale 3: How pupils deal with others (questions 23-36).

Using the data from the survey administered in this study, factor analysis and reliability statistics were conducted to determine if there should be any changes in the identified subscales. Subscales 2 and 3 have remained the same. Subscale 1, which originally included Statements 1-8 and 19-22, was changed to include only Statements 1-8. This modification improved the standardized item Cronbach Alpha reliability of Subscale 1 from .73 to .78. The remaining statements, 19-22, alone produced a Cronbach Alpha of .23. For this reason they were not used in a separate subscale. The Cronbach Alpha of Subscale 2 was .85 and for Subscale 3 it was .78.

Subscale 1 included statements to solicit the students' feelings regarding disagreements or conflict. The statements investigated the students' perception of possible resolutions to disagreements including fighting, talking things out, or ignoring a situation. Some of the statements were worded in a negative format. Those responses were recoded to parallel the statements presented in a positive format.

Subscale 2 is a self-report by the respondents of how they believe fellow students and teachers view them. The statements ascertained how the student thought other students and teachers would describe him or her in areas of doing homework, receiving good grades, staying out of trouble, and obeying rules in general.

The statements in Subscale 3 ask the respondents how they deal with others, communicate with others, and what they think of themselves. Statements regarding their

friendships, how they are treated in such relationships, and how they treat others are used to determine their current success at conflict resolution.

To compute factor scores, a mean of the responses to the statements in each subscale was calculated. *T* Tests were conducted using the means of the subscales. Because the means were not significant, a second calculation was computed using the component score coefficients. This provided factor loadings that weighted the individual statements differentially according to their importance in the factor, as opposed to the equal weighted scores. The results from the subsequent *t* tests are shown in Table 11.

A *t* test was conducted comparing the responses of the entire school population from baseline to project year. As shown in Table 11, no significant differences were found in mean scores of the three subscales. Another *t* test was performed to compare the responses of the cohort population from baseline to project year. Again no significant differences were found in mean scores of the three subscales. The second subscale, however, approached significance. If this were analyzed using 1-tailed significance, then it would be significant at the .035 level. However, the effect size of .14 is considered less than small indicating little meaningful difference.

Thus, the only subscale found to have any statistical significance was Subscale 2, "How teachers and other students assess pupils." This significance was only present with the cohort population. Although this subscale showed statistical significance, its relationship to general discipline and conflict resolution is somewhat nebulous. In combination with the other subscale statements, this subscale may have an indirect relationship on the choices a student makes to resolve peer conflict and contribute to

improved school climate. However, because there was no relationship with the other subscales, this subscale alone has little meaning as it pertains to conflict and climate.

Table 11

Means, Standard Deviations, and Mean Differences for Pupil Survey – Means of Subscales Comparing Baseline to Project Year

	<i>x</i>	( <i>sd</i> )	Mean Diff.	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	ES*
<b>General Population – Subscale 1: Feelings regarding disagreements or conflicts</b>						
Baseline Year	3.94	(1.20)	.10	1.41	.160	<i>NA</i>
Project Year	3.84	(1.16)				
<b>General Population – Subscale 2: How students feel students and teachers view them</b>						
Baseline Year	2.89	(1.14)	.09	1.43	.153	<i>NA</i>
Project Year	2.79	(1.08)				
<b>General Population – Subscale 3: How students deal and communicate with others</b>						
Baseline Year	1.64	(.85)	.08	1.61	.107	<i>NA</i>
Project Year	1.56	(.86)				
<b>Cohort Population – Subscale 1: Feelings regarding disagreements or conflicts</b>						
Baseline Year	3.88	(1.25)	.04	.46	.647	<i>NA</i>
Project Year	3.84	(1.10)				
<b>Cohort Population – Subscale 2: How students feel students and teachers view them</b>						
Baseline Year	2.90	(1.20)	.16	1.81	.071	<i>NA</i>
Project Year	2.74	(1.03)				
<b>Cohort Population – Subscale 3: How students deal and communicate with others</b>						
Baseline Year	1.60	(.88)	.10	1.45	.148	<i>NA</i>
Project Year	1.50	(.78)				

General Population: N = 615 for baseline year; N = 573 for project year

Cohort Population: N = 319 for baseline year; N = 277 for project year

*NA* = Not Applicable

Thus, it is concluded that the conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School was not associated with perceived improvement in general discipline and conflict resolution as measured by student survey responses.

### Conflict Resolution Managers

Data related to students selected as conflict resolution managers were also examined to determine if there was an impact on any developmental changes that might have been associated with the involvement of the students as managers in the conflict resolution program. This analysis included a review of attendance, academic, and discipline records, as well as a measure of self-esteem using a survey.

#### Question 6

Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with positive effects on student Conflict Resolution Managers as measured by an increase in attendance rate, improved grade point average (GPA), a reduction in the rate of student referrals, and enhanced self-esteem?

The null hypothesis is that there is no change in attendance rate, grade point average (GPA), proportion and rate of student referrals, or score on a self-esteem measure from baseline to project year among students selected as conflict resolution managers. The research hypothesis is that there is an increase in attendance rate, improvement in grade point average (GPA), reduction in proportion and rate of student referrals, and/or improvement in score on a self-esteem measure from baseline to project year among students selected as conflict resolution managers.

As shown in Table 12, paired  $t$  tests were used to analyze the data for 13 students who served as conflict resolution managers during both years. Unfortunately, for varied reasons, seven of the original conflict resolution managers did not participate during the project year.

Examined first was the attendance rate for conflict resolution managers. The percentage of attendance during the baseline year was 96.5% while the percentage of attendance during the project year was 93.6%. A paired  $t$  test showed this to be a significant negative difference at the .016 level with a  $t$  value of 2.754. This is not a large percentage drop from some points of view. However, these averages do indicate that the attendance rate decreased rather than increased as was anticipated.

In comparison, the average rate of attendance for the total student body was 92.1% in 1993-94 and 91.9% in 1994-95. The attendance rate of the total student body remained virtually stable during the two-year period, decreasing only .02%. The attendance rate of students selected as conflict resolution managers decreased significantly by 2.91%. Unfortunately, this decrease produced an effect size of .604 indicating that the difference in attendance rate was medium to large in magnitude. Apparently, participation in the conflict resolution program did not encourage attendance on the part of the conflict resolution managers. As a result of decreased attendance rates, it appears that the conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School was not associated with an increase in attendance rates for students selected as conflict resolution managers.

Table 12

Means, Standard Deviations, and Mean Differences in Attendance Rates, GPAs, Referral Rates, Subscale Scores, and Total Self Scores for 13 Pairs of Conflict Resolution Managers Comparing Baseline to Project Year

	x	(sd)	Mean Diff.	t	p	ES*
<b>Attendance Rate</b>						
Baseline Year	96.53	(4.04)	2.91	2.75	.016	.604
Project Year	93.63	(5.59)				
<b>Grade Point Average</b>						
Baseline Year	1.52	(.78)	-.15	-1.51	.155	.189
Project Year	1.67	(.81)				
<b>Referral Rate</b>						
Baseline Year	.62	(1.45)	-.08	-.16	.874	.061
Project Year	.69	(1.18)				
<b>General Self Score</b>						
Baseline Year	17.86	(4.70)	-2.07	-1.71	.111	.467
Project Year	19.93	(4.16)				
<b>Social Self-Peers Score</b>						
Baseline Year	6.57	(1.99)	-.43	-1.07	.306	.257
Project Year	7.00	(1.36)				
<b>Home-Parents Score</b>						
Baseline Year	4.69	(3.45)	-.54	-.74	.475	.194
Project Year	5.23	(2.13)				
<b>School-Academic Score</b>						
Baseline Year	6.29	(2.02)	-.14	-.37	.720	.088
Project Year	6.43	(1.50)				
<b>Total Self Score</b>						
Baseline Year	72.31	(18.49)	-4.46	-1.29	.223	.271
Project Year	76.77	(14.37)				

\* For Effect Size, .20 = small, .50 = medium, and .80 = large. NA = Not Applicable

Also shown in Table 12, paired  $t$  tests were used to analyze the grade point average (GPA) of students selected as conflict resolution managers. The mean of the GPAs was 3.48 in the baseline year; “4” represented the grade of “A” and “0” represented the grade of “F.” The mean for the project year was 3.33. Thus, there was a slight decrease in the academic record from one year to the next for the cohort of conflict resolution managers. Thus, the conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School was not associated with an improvement in grade point average from baseline to project year among students selected as conflict resolution managers.

Paired  $t$  tests in Table 12 were used to analyze the referral rate for students selected as conflict resolution managers. Of the 13 conflict resolution managers, only three students received referrals during the baseline year; a total of eight referrals. The other 10 students completed the baseline year with no documented behavioral incidents. This gave a referral rate of .62 referrals per conflict resolution manager during the baseline year.

On the other hand, five students received referrals during the project year; a total of nine referrals. Eight of the cohort group had no referrals during the project year. This yielded a referral rate of .69 referrals per conflict resolution manager during the project year. The mean difference in referral rates was only .08, a statistically insignificant difference.

This statistically insignificant difference parallels the lack of change seen in the referral rate of the general population (refer to Table 4) of Monroe Middle School. In the general school population, the referral rate in the baseline year was 1.33 and in the



project year was 1.28, a change of only .05 referrals per student. Although the overall referral rate for conflict resolution managers was approximately half the rate of the overall student body, the referral rate nevertheless remained virtually unchanged from baseline to project year. Thus, the conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School was not associated with a reduction in the rate of referrals from baseline to project year among students selected as conflict resolution managers.

Finally, Table 12 illustrates the results of the Conflict Managers Survey/Measure of Self-Esteem (The Coopersmith Inventory–SEI) that was administered to the conflict resolution managers. The SEI survey instrument has 57 questions and is divided into four subscale areas: general self, social self-peers, home-parents, school-academic. The overall measure of self-esteem in the survey instrument was titled Total Self Score. Although there was a slight improvement, from 72.3 to 76.7, these mean Total Self Scores did not indicate a statistically significant improvement in self-esteem. However, while the scores were not statistically significant, the effect size of .271 indicates a small meaningful improvement in Total Self Scores from baseline to project year. The subscale scores shown in Table 12 also reflected no significant differences from baseline to project year.

Overall, the changes in several developmental areas were measured to assess their impact on conflict resolution managers. Unfortunately, attendance rate showed a statistically significant decrease from baseline to project year. The Total Self Score, while not statistically significant, did show a small to medium meaningful improvement in students' self-esteem. The other characteristics of developmental change, GPA and rate

of referrals per student, did not show any statistically significant or meaningful improvements from baseline to project year. Thus, for students selected as conflict resolution managers, the conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School was associated with meaningful improvement in only one of the developmental areas, enhanced self-esteem scores, from baseline to project year.

### Summary

The findings of this study indicate no reduction in the proportion or rate of suspensions from baseline to project year. Not only was no reduction evident, but unfortunately there also was a statistically significant increase, in direct contrast to the reduction anticipated with the implementation of a conflict resolution program. Even when disaggregated into violent and nonviolent incidents related to suspensions, there was no statistically significant reduction in the proportion or rate of suspensions.

As relates to referrals, a statistically significant reduction in the proportion of students receiving referrals was found. This was also true when the data was disaggregated into violent and nonviolent categories. This finding supports the research hypothesis that the implementation of a conflict resolution program may be associated with a reduction in the proportion of students referred. At the same time, there was no statistically significant difference in the rate of referrals in spite of a slight decrease per student. Further examination showed no statistically significant differences in referral rates when disaggregating data into categories of violent and nonviolent incidents.

While the reality of the two-year period was that proportion and rate of suspensions increased, the perception of the teaching staff was that there were fewer

fights (Teacher Survey – Statement 12). In addition, during the project year, significantly more teachers indicated that they felt students know how to solve problems without getting into fights (Teacher Survey – Statement 9). These were the only two statistically significant changes in teacher perceptions of general discipline from baseline to project year.

Of the statements related to overall/general school climate in the Teacher Survey, Statement 4 reflected the only change in teacher perception over the two-year period. This statement indicated that teachers felt that students took part in solving their own problems in school. No other statistically significant differences in teacher perception of overall/general school climate were seen between the two years.

The Pupil Survey was examined to determine perceived differences in general discipline and conflict resolution that could be associated with implementation of a conflict resolution program. The survey was divided into three subscales and the means of the subscales were tested for differences from baseline to project year. No significant differences were found in the total student body's perception of general discipline and conflict resolution.

The final aspect of the study examined the developmental changes resulting from the program's impact on students selected as conflict resolution managers. While attendance rate, grade point average, referral rate, and self-esteem were measured, no significant positive differences were found between the two years. This may have been due to the small number of students in the cohort. As a result, effect size estimates were calculated and it was determined that a small to medium difference was seen with regard

to Total Self Scores on the Coopersmith Inventory–SEI as was anticipated in the research hypothesis. On the other hand, effect size estimates showed a medium to large meaningful decrease in the attendance rate of conflict resolution managers. This contradicted the research hypothesis that attendance rates among conflict resolution managers would show improvement from baseline to project year.

The data analysis discussed in this chapter gives insight to the effects, or lack thereof, of the conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School. This raises other questions concerning the effectiveness of this type of program and/or delivery of the program. The following chapter explores the implications of this research, provides the basis for recommendations for future practice, and presents suggestions for further study.

## CHAPTER V

### Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter provides a summary of the purpose, review of literature, and findings of the study. In addition, discussion and recommendations for future practice and further study will be presented.

#### Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to identify and investigate possible effects produced by the implementation of a conflict resolution program in a middle school. Research questions were developed to examine the effects on student behavior and teacher and student perceptions of general discipline and overall/general school climate. The secondary purpose of this study was to examine the developmental changes resulting from the program's impact on conflict resolution managers.

The research questions were as follows:

1. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with a reduction in the proportion and rate of suspensions in the school?
2. Has conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with a reduction in the proportion and rate of student referrals related to incidents of violence in the school?
3. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with perceived improvement in general discipline as measured by staff survey responses?

4. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with perceived improvement of the overall/general school climate as measured by staff survey responses?

5. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with perceived improvement in general discipline and conflict resolution as measured by student survey responses?

6. Has a conflict resolution program implemented at Monroe Middle School been associated with positive effects on student Conflict Resolution Managers as measured by an increase in attendance rate, improved grade point average (GPA), a reduction in the rate of student referrals, and enhanced self-esteem?

### Review of Literature

The review of literature was undertaken to explore the depth and breath of violence plaguing youth today, and ways in which educational systems are working to ensure safe school environments. In general, conflict resolution programs are based on the assumption that students have the capabilities to solve their own problems.

Two types of conflict resolution models that offer training and curricula in conflict resolution and peer mediation were discussed. The first type, the cadre approach, involves a small number of students trained as conflict resolution managers or peer mediators who mediate conflict situations as they arise. The total student body approach or concentrated curriculum approach is the second model. It emphasizes training every student in the school to manage conflict constructively.

### Procedures and Methodology

This study provided an in-depth look at the implementation of a conflict resolution program using the cadre approach. Initially, the staff selected as trainers established that the San Francisco Community Board Conflict Managers Program could be a successful program if implemented well. The data used in this study was collected over the baseline and project years.

The study population consisted of three groups: total student body, teaching staff, and students selected as conflict resolution managers. Three survey instruments were used to obtain information regarding perceptions of staff and students related to general discipline, overall/general school climate, and conflict resolution. Statistical analysis of the surveys included crosstabulations, Pearson Chi-Square procedures, and independent samples and paired *t* tests. Statistical significance and effect size estimates were taken into account. To balance these perceptions, actual suspension and referral data were also collected and analyzed using crosstabulations and Pearson Chi-Square procedures.

### Findings of the Study

The following findings were drawn from the analysis of data:

- There was no evidence of a decrease in suspension statistics from baseline to project year. Rather, the proportion and rate of suspensions in the school increased. When the suspension data was disaggregated into violent and nonviolent categories, there remained no statistically significant differences in the proportion or rate of suspensions.

- There was a statistically significant decrease in the proportion of students receiving referrals from baseline to project year. The effect size related to this decrease indicated that the observed change was meaningful.
- There was no evidence of a change in referral rates per student from baseline to project year. This finding held true when the referral data was disaggregated into violent and nonviolent categories.
- Significantly less teachers, during the project year, perceived that students engaged in a lot of fights. Also more teachers, in the project year, perceived that students know how to solve problems without getting into fights. These statements were the only two statistically significant differences found in teachers' perception of general discipline when disaggregating the data by gender, grade level taught, high/low years of teaching experience, highest degree received, coursework taken in educational administration, and team.
- Significantly more teachers, during the project year, perceived that students take part in solving their own problems in school. No other differences in perception were seen, either among the whole group or the group disaggregated by gender, grade level taught, high/low years of teaching experience, highest degree received, coursework taken in educational administration, and team.
- No significant differences were found in students' feelings about the three subscales of the Pupil Survey related to disagreements or conflicts, how they believe teachers and others assess them, and how they deal with other students.



- No significant positive differences were found from baseline to project year in measurement of attendance rates, grade point average, referral rates, and self-esteem for the cohort of students selected as conflict resolution managers. However, a small to medium effect size indicated a somewhat meaningful improvement in self-esteem in spite of the fact that the finding was not statistically significant.

### Discussion and Conclusions

The following conclusions are drawn from the findings of this study:

- This particular cadre approach appeared to have no positive effect on the actual proportion and rate of suspensions occurring at the school. Instead of seeing the anticipated reduction in the proportion and rate of behavior incidents, the school experienced an increase in many areas. Because the district-wide Code of Conduct requires certain consequences for the more severe violations of the Code, the administration was compelled to suspend under specific circumstances.

Thus, a conflict resolution program applied as a cadre approach as compared to a total student body model, may generally find little if any immediate change in the proportion and rates of suspension. This may be because, in a cadre approach, more time is required for all students to be exposed to the basic knowledge and common vocabulary of conflict resolution needed to peaceably resolve conflicts. The total student body model allows all students equal exposure to these skills through an integrated curriculum.

- The implementation of the conflict resolution program provided teachers with an alternate method to handling conflict situations. The traditional method of referring students to the office for a consequence was supplemented with the new method of

referring students to the conflict resolution program. This study, however, measured only the traditional method and analyzed whether or not there was a decrease in the rate of referrals written to the office for violent and nonviolent incidents. What was examined was whether or not students had, in association with the implementation of a conflict resolution program, acquired problem-solving skills to positively impact the overall/general school climate and alter the perception of general discipline and conflict resolution in the school. Unfortunately, there was not a statistically significant difference in the rate of students referred to the office. At the same time, however, there was a reduction in the proportion of students receiving referrals for violent incidents. What this means is that fewer students proportionately received referrals and that this group of students received a greater number of referrals during the project year than the baseline year. One could speculate that whereas students were informed of the program, they either were not taught the skills of successful conflict resolution or, after only one year of implementation, students did not have opportunity to practice the skills.

As schools implement such programs, a goal might be to encourage teachers and students to rethink the implications of referrals, from being a means to communicate inappropriate and negative behavior to being an early warning system for identifying students who are willing to build constructive ways to handle inevitable conflict. Thus, the goal of a conflict resolution program might be more referrals at the beginning of implementation with the outcome of improving overall school climate.

- Perceptions of teachers would indicate a safer school climate as it relates to fighting within the school. During the project year, fewer teachers felt that there were lots

of fights among students. Also more teachers believed that students know how to solve problems without getting into fights. While the reality of the situation was that there was an increase in the proportion and rate of violent and nonviolent incidents leading to suspension in the school, teachers perceived a decrease from baseline year to project year. This may have been due to the faculty's introduction to the conflict resolution program and their desire to see it be successful.

In addition, specific situations in the teachers' classrooms where students were recommended or requested to go to peer mediation may have indicated to teachers that students were sharing in the responsibility of ensuring a safe and peaceful learning environment. This change may be a necessary first step to a successful school-wide adoption of such a program.

On the other hand, because of the implementation of a conflict resolution program, some students may have felt it necessary to minimize or hide their conflicts from teachers as a way of fulfilling the expectation of a more peaceful school climate. Thus, some existing peer disagreements may not have taken place in direct view of teachers, but may have later escalated to more serious conflicts requiring administrative intervention. This may have been a contributing factor to the increase in the proportion of students receiving suspensions and the concurrent decrease in the proportion of students receiving referrals.

- Student perceptions of general discipline and conflict resolution did not experience a significant change from baseline to project year. Students were asked how they felt about disagreements or conflicts, how teachers and other assess them, and how

they deal with other students. After only one year of implementation, basically one year with a new focus on how to handle conflict situations, students may not necessarily yet understand that there may always be general discipline concerns but that the goal is to use conflict resolution skills to arrive at peaceful solutions.

Another issue that may have deterred students from perceiving improvement in the general discipline of the school was the method of implementation. Whereas students were informed of the program, they were only taught the skills of successful conflict resolution after the fact. In addition, only those students who were trained as conflict resolution managers or who were in conflict situations were exposed to those skills. A program aimed at teaching conflict resolution skills to the total student body might have allowed more students to recognize and encourage positive changes in the school environment.

- Conflict resolution managers showed little change from baseline to project year. Examination of the students' baseline data would indicate that perhaps ceiling effects and/or regression to the mean were taking place. In other words, the majority of students selected as leaders by their peers already had good attendance, grades, behavior, and self-esteem. Thus, significant improvement at the top end of the scale may have been limited. It was the goal of the implementation team in future years to include students whose past had involved negative leadership in a positive leadership role. By training these students to be conflict resolution managers, significant improvements could be expected. Whereas a meaningful difference was seen in Total Self Scores of self-esteem with students whose self-esteem was already considered somewhat high, one could certainly anticipate large

observed improvements for students with initially lower self-esteem. Currently, no positive effects were seen in GPA and attendance rate, however, continued emphasis on conflict resolution skills may or may not over a longer period of time show improvement.

### Recommendations for Practice

On the basis of the findings and conclusions of this research, the following recommendations for practice are offered:

- A program that involves only a select number of students and teachers may have a limited impact on the total school population. One that is infused in the daily curriculum in addition to the cadre approach may provide more far-reaching effects. All teachers, administrators, and counselors probably should be trained in conflict resolution skills and be responsible for teaching the entire student body. All students and staff probably should recognize their role and responsibility in creating and maintaining a harmonious school environment.

- A program that reacts to an incident that has already occurred instead of teaching constructive, preventative behaviors is less able to bring about total school change. A proactive program, integrated into the curriculum, should be examined and implemented in conjunction with a cadre approach.

- As teachers begin to recognize that conflict resolution skills can be taught and encourage students to utilize these skills, real change in discipline patterns may result. A common vocabulary and school-wide expectation of appropriate behavior must be used as a foundation for building constructive ways to resolve inevitable disputes.

- In view of the findings of this study regarding the decrease in proportion of students receiving referrals and the lack of change in the rate of referrals per student, one aim of a conflict resolution program might be to utilize referrals as a method of initiating mediation opportunities. This method would be in contrast to the current practice of using referrals to document negative behaviors and solicit punitive consequences. Teachers should be encouraged to frequently refer students in efforts to de-escalate potential negative situations.

### Recommendations for Research

On the basis of the discussion and conclusions of this research, the following recommendations for further study are offered:

- Hasty conclusions should not be drawn regarding the impact of a program such as this in the first year of its implementation. Significant change cannot be expected after one year. The main goal of a conflict resolution program is to teach students how to peacefully address inevitable conflict. This study provided some evidence of potential improvement in attitudes toward this goal.

The conflict resolution program continues to this day at Monroe Middle School, and has been subsequently implemented at several other middle schools and high schools within the district. Several students from the original group continued to function as conflict resolution managers on the high school level.

Further research could replicate this study either at Monroe Middle School or at other middle schools where the program has been implemented to determine if similar or additional improvements may have occurred over time. In particular, a study of the

dynamics regarding the increase in the proportion and rate of suspensions and the decrease in the proportion of students receiving referrals should be conducted.

- A qualitative study of students who served as conflict resolution managers at both the middle level and high school level would provide more in-depth understanding of the long-term developmental changes experienced by this cohort. Additional studies might also survey the parents of these students for observed developmental changes.

- When students are involved in dispute situations and show a willingness to work with conflict resolution managers, teachers should be encouraged to write referrals that direct students to the program. While the rate of student referrals in this situation might initially show an increase, over time the result might be more referrals for the purpose of conflict resolution and fewer referrals requiring punitive sanctions. A change in the form used to refer students should distinguish referrals requiring administrative sanction from those made to conflict resolution managers for mediation purposes. As a result, further disaggregation of this refined referral data would allow a better understanding of the effects of the conflict resolution program on the student population.

- Further disaggregation of the data by race and gender after several years might lead to a better understanding of differences in these groups and their responses to conflict. This could provide information on modifications needed within the program.

- Evidence of the pervasiveness of the conflict resolution program in the student body could be studied in terms of student knowledge of the language of conflict resolution. Surveys to determine the understanding and frequency of use of conflict

resolution terminology could be conducted as evidence of acceptance of conflict resolution principles and procedures.

- Research should also be conducted to assess the impact on administration and counselors in terms of a reduction or increase in workload after implementation as compared to before implementation of a conflict resolution program.

### Concluding Thoughts

While this study found limited evidence of significant positive change as a result of the implementation of a conflict resolution program at Monroe Middle School, it did find that the proportion of students receiving teacher referrals were significantly reduced. In addition, it was found that teachers' perception related to fighting and conflict resolution did significantly improve over the two-year period. While the other areas of suspension and pupil perception showed no evidence of the anticipated changes, that should not prevent schools from working to find nonviolent answers to conflict.

Implementation of this program began the long process of changing the climate of Monroe Middle School. Educators must continuously strive to find ways to ready their students to be productive citizens. A conflict resolution program that directly combats the inevitable discord that occurs in any school environment teaches students skills that empower them to be successful. The teaching of lifelong skills is a continuum, and a program such as this is only one piece of that continuum. Expansion of the program to the entire student body may be the next step. There can be no time limit on teaching students peaceful alternatives and solutions to destructive behavior and violence.



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APPENDIX A

PUPIL SURVEY – Test Booklet

Directions  
for  
**GENERAL PURPOSE – ANSWER SHEET**

1. Use a "No. 2" pencil.
2. Answers to Questions 1 thru 36 are to be entered on the answer sheet.  
  
On the answer sheet:
3. Do not enter your "NAME." Your name will not be needed for this survey.
4. Enter your "SEX" as "M" (male) or "F" (female).
5. Enter the "GRADE" with either "7" (seventh grade) or "8" (eighth grade).
6. Enter your "BIRTHDATE" with the correct month, day, and year.
7. Enter your "IDENTIFICATION NUMBER" taken from back page of test booklet – use only the A, B, C, and D columns.
8. Enter your "RACE/ETHNIC GROUP" under the SPECIAL CODES – K column:
  - ① African-American/Black
  - ② Asian
  - ③ Hispanic
  - ④ Native American
  - ⑤ White
  - ⑥ Other/Biracial
9. Most importantly – thank you for your time!

## PUPIL SURVEY – Test Booklet

The first questions ask how you feel about disagreements or conflicts. Circle the number that best describes how you feel about each statement.

	Very Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree
1. Even if other students would think I'm weird, I would try to stop a fight.	1	2	3	4	5
2. It's O.K. for me to hit someone to get them to do what I want.	1	2	3	4	5
3. If people do something to make me really mad, they deserve to be beaten up.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Sometimes a person doesn't have any choice but to fight.	1	2	3	4	5
5. When my friends fight I try to get them to stop.	1	2	3	4	5
6. There are better ways to solve problems than fighting.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I try to talk out a problem instead of fighting.	1	2	3	4	5
8. If I'm mad at someone, I just ignore them.	1	2	3	4	5

Next, we'd like to know how you think other students and teachers would describe you. For each phrase in the list below, first tell us how much of the time you think other students would agree that the description fits you (circle the number under the statement that best fits.)

	Always	Nearly all of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
<b>How much of the time would <u>other</u> students think that you...</b>					
9. are a good person?	1	2	3	4	5
10. obey rules?	1	2	3	4	5
11. stay out of trouble?	1	2	3	4	5
<b>How much of the time would <u>your</u> teachers think that you...</b>					
12. are a good person?	1	2	3	4	5
13. obey rules?	1	2	3	4	5
14. stay out of trouble?	1	2	3	4	5

The next questions ask how important certain things are to you. For each one, please circle the number that best describes how you feel.

	Extremely important	Very important	Of average importance	Somewhat important	Not important at all
How important is it to you...					
15. to have good grades in school?	1	2	3	4	5
16. to have your teachers think of you as a good student?	1	2	3	4	5
17. to be involved in school activities?	1	2	3	4	5
18. to complete homework assignments on time?	1	2	3	4	5

	Very Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree
19. It's hard to know what to do when I get mad at someone.	1	2	3	4	5
20. To help somebody with a problem I have to know how they feel about it.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I'm good at helping people solve their problems.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I have a hard time solving my problems.	1	2	3	4	5

The next questions ask about yourself and how you deal with others.

	Very Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree
23. I work well with others.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Most students would like to have me for a friend.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Most of the time I feel good about myself.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I treat other people well.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I can think of at least one thing I'm good at.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I get along really well with other people.	1	2	3	4	5

The next questions ask about yourself and how you deal with others.

	Very Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree
29. I wish students thought of me differently than they do.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I wish I lived someplace else where people didn't know what I'm like.	1	2	3	4	5
31. When students I'm with do something bad I usually go along with them.	1	2	3	4	5
32. At times I feel like a leader and feel that other kids can learn something from me.	1	2	3	4	5

The next questions ask about how you communicate with others.

	Very Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree
33. It's easy for me to explain things to people.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I'm good at asking questions when I want to find something out.	1	2	3	4	5
35. When people talk I have a hard time paying attention.	1	2	3	4	5
36. It's hard to figure out how other people are feeling.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B

TEACHER SURVEY – Test Booklet

April 25, 1994

Dear Colleague,

Being asked to complete a questionnaire is probably only a notch above receiving an IRS notice, however, your cooperation would be greatly appreciated. Please take 10 minutes and respond to the attached questions. This study addresses the issues of "school climate, ways of dealing with conflict, and how a middle school staff feels about violence."

Please respond to all of the following questions. If the questions do not ask what you feel is important related to these issues, then feel free to add whatever comments you wish.

**ALL INFORMATION REPORTED IN THIS INTERVIEW WILL BE HELD IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE.** Only a summary of the statistical data will be released. If you have any questions or comments on this project, please contact me.

Return your responses to the main office by Tuesday, April 26.

Sincerely,

Deborah A. Frison

Please return completed survey to main office by Tuesday, April 26. Check off name.

Directions  
for  
**GENERAL PURPOSE – ANSWER SHEET**

1. Use a “No. 2” pencil.
2. Answer Questions 1 thru 12 on the answer sheet.
3. Do not enter your “NAME”, “BIRTHDATE”, or “IDENTIFICATION NUMBER”. This information will not be needed for this survey.
4. Enter your “SEX” as “M” (male) or “F” (female).
5. Enter the “GRADE” level you teach as “7” (seventh), “8” (eighth), or “9” (both).
6. Enter under “SPECIAL CODES – K Column” whether you are on an:
  - ① Academic Team (Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies)
  - or
  - ② Unified Arts Team (All other subject areas).
7. Enter under “SPECIAL CODES – L Column” your highest degree/years of education:
  - ① Bachelor’s
  - ② Master’s
  - ③ Master’s +30
  - ④ Specialist
  - ⑤ Doctorate
8. Enter under “SPECIAL CODES – O & P Columns” your number of years teaching (include this year).  
Example: 2 years teaching = 02  
          10 years teaching = 10
9. Most importantly – thank you for your time!

Deborah A. Frison



## TEACHER SURVEY – Test Booklet

This survey asks you to tell us about your school. For every statement below, please let us know whether you “very strongly agree,” “agree,” are “undecided,” “disagree,” or “very strongly disagree.” Circle the response that best describes how you feel about your school.

	Very Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree
1. Students have pride in our school.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Students have a lot of school spirit.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Teachers take students' concerns seriously.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Students take part in solving their own problems in school.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Students cooperate with one another at school.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Students new to a school have a higher percent of conflict problems.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Teachers spend too much time disciplining students.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Students are generally happy with the present discipline system.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Students are generally happy with the present discipline system.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Students in our school really like the school	1	2	3	4	5
11. Teachers listen to both sides of the story when there is a conflict between students.	1	2	3	4	5
12. There are lot s of fights among students in our school.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Was any of your degree coursework in Educational Administration?				Yes	No