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Resolving Student-to-Student Conflict in our School: The Effects of Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation on School Climate

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RESOLVING STUDENT-TO-STUDENT CONFLICT IN OUR SCHOOL: THE EFFECTS OF
CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEER MEDIATION ON SCHOOL CLIMATE

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research project is to evaluate the peer mediation program that was implemented at Western Mennonite School in the fall of 2005. The program was started after an increase in student-to-student conflict in 2004. A student survey in 2005 reported that 32% of our students experienced times when they felt threatened or unsafe on campus. The program lasted for one academic school year. During that time, 14 middle and high school students were trained as mediators and participated in a peer mediation program. I was the coordinator of the program that included a team of six other members. The program experienced moderate success, but was not renewed the following year. My investigation will include an evaluation of the peer mediation program, looking specifically at attitudes of safety affecting the school's climate, the design of the program and the level of program support by the Western Mennonite School's community.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In the fall of 2001, I attended the Mennonite Educator's Conference held in Chevy Chase, Maryland. It was one week after the attacks on the Twin Towers and Pentagon and the devastating effects of that violence hung in the air. John Paul Lederach, Professor of International Peace-building at the University of Notre Dame was the keynote speaker for that conference (2003). This was my introduction to the idea of building peace by helping those in crisis situations learn a process to resolve disputes. I was intrigued when Professor Lederach suggested using literature as a beginning point to help students look at situations from different points of view. This began my interest and investigation into conflict resolution and peer mediation. The conference helped me gain an understanding of the Mennonite tradition of nonviolent reconciliation and conflict resolution that I was not familiar with, but have come to appreciate.

Statement of the problem:

Student-to-student conflicts at Western Mennonite School began to escalate in the fall of 2004, affecting student learning and changing the school's climate. A peer mediation program was recommended as a way to address the increase in aggressive behaviors by students. Because of my interest in conflict resolution, I jumped at the chance to be part of a team that would train peer mediators. I agreed to be the coordinator of the program with the understanding that others with experience in mediation and conflict resolution would provide support. The team, called the Peer Mediation Advisory Team, consisted of seven members of the staff. One member of the Peer Mediation Advisory Team (PM Advisory Team) had been trained in peer mediation and conflict resolution.

Using the data gathered from a student survey administered in the spring of 2005, we invited 14 students identified by their peers as trustworthy, to be mediators. The PM Advisory Team decided to design a peer mediation program for our specific community. It quickly became apparent that creating and implementing this program would require more time than we had anticipated. Our team spent two days training 14 students to be peer mediators. Additional training days were scheduled to take place once a month for 20 minutes throughout the school year. Immediately after our training sessions, we had several requests for mediation. Although few of the mediators felt prepared to mediate a conflict, several volunteered and were allowed to do so.

The mediators who led the mediation process asked for more training and time to practice the mediation process. Members of the PM Advisory Team realized that further training of the students was necessary in order to prepare them to be effective mediators. We tried to arrange for help with training from a local middle school with a strong peer mediation program, but were unable to arrange a time that worked for everyone.

This experience helped me identify three major challenges facing the program. Those challenges were time, resources, and support for the program from the entire staff.

Hypothesis

I hypothesize that a successful peer mediation program at Western Mennonite School requires (1) a realistic understanding of safety on campus, (2) a belief that peer mediation can help resolve student-to-student conflicts and improve the school's climate, and (3) a commitment of time and resources dedicated to planning, implementing and sustaining a peer mediation program.

Research questions

The purpose of this research project is to evaluate the peer mediation program implemented at Western Mennonite School in the fall of 2005. My study will examine the attitudes about safety that affect our school's climate, the design and effectiveness of the program and the level of support for the program by the staff. The results of this program evaluation will be used to identify the program's strengths and weaknesses, make recommendations for change and determine the level of commitment for implementing a peer mediation program in the future. This study is designed to answer the following research questions:

1. Do students and staff share a similar view of safety on campus?
2. Was the peer mediation program effective?
3. Does the staff support a peer mediation program at WMS?

Definition of terms

When used in this study, the term *peer mediation* (PM) refers to the process of training a third party of the same or similar age to help disputing students find points of agreement and come to a fair resolution of the dispute (Hill & Hill, 2005). *Conflict resolution* (CR) is the process of teaching students how to recognize and manage conflict in peaceful and constructive ways (Stevahn, 2004). The term *staff* is used to refer to members of the administration, advancement team, faculty and staff who work at Western Mennonite School (WMS).

Limitations

Because it has been two years since the peer mediation program was introduced, it is important that I plan for limitations as I compare student data gathered two years ago with the data I will be collecting in 2007. In the span of two years, the school has experienced a change in the staff and student body which could affect the results of the study and the interpretation of the

data. For example, a lack of understanding about the peer mediation program by current staff members may not mean a lack of interest in supporting the program. Additionally, other factors may affect the program's feasibility even if it has support from the staff.

Another limitation could be reluctance on the part of the staff to participate in the survey. I plan to enlist the support of my principal and request that I be allowed to administer the survey at a staff meeting. I am hopeful this will guarantee a higher percentage of returned surveys. To ensure confidentiality, I intend to recruit the assistance of the school's secretary, counselor, and technology specialist to help with the administration and collection of the surveys.

As I evaluate the data gathered from the surveys and the records on file of mediations that were conducted, I need to prepare for unexpected results that may lead me to an understanding of the program and its potential that differ from my hypothesis.

Delimitations

Volunteers and parents will not be included in this study. The short duration of the PM program did not provide adequate time to include academic achievement as a measure of school's climate.

Conclusion

As a result of this study, I hope to gain a better understanding of peer mediation and conflict resolution. I expect to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the peer mediation program that was in place for one year and determine the feasibility of implementing and maintaining a peer mediation program at Western Mennonite School.

I understand that the focus of this research project is on a very specific situation with a small population. Nevertheless, I hope that the information I gather from this study will benefit similar organizations attempting to find interventions that can reduce student-to-student conflict and improve school climate.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the literature

Conflict is a normal part of everyday life experiences, providing children with countless opportunities to practice resolving disputes. From sharing toys to doing chores, children learn ways of handling conflict. Yet, many children and adolescents are not learning how to manage conflict constructively and there is evidence to suggest that without instruction, those daily conflicts are often managed in destructive ways (Johnson & Johnson, 2004). The inability to deal with conflict in a positive manner has led to an increase in violence and antisocial behavior in America's classrooms (Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2005). Concern for student safety has school administrators, educators, and parents looking for programs that promote safety, are effective in preventing violence, and help students develop positive social interactions (Smith, Daunic, Miller, & Robinson, 2002). As schools work to create safe learning environments, many are implementing conflict resolution and peer mediation programs.

Viewed as alternatives to programs that are punitive or reactive in nature, conflict resolution (CR) and peer mediation (PM) programs teach students how to manage conflict and resolve disputes in positive ways. Conflict resolution programs provide training in conflict management to a whole class, grade level, school or district (Powell, Muir-McClain, & Halasyamani, 1995), while peer mediation programs involve the selection and training of a number of students to mediate disputes between two or more students. Both programs teach students how to master the ability of managing conflict in constructive and peaceful ways and both allow students to settle disputes themselves. Over the past 10 to 15 years, CR and PM programs have broadened their emphasis to include an understanding of the diverse populations

and perspectives inherent in our pluralistic society (Graham & Pulvino, 2000). The appeal these programs hold for schools is their focus on violence prevention. The goal of this literature review is to examine the research on conflict resolution and peer mediation programs and to identify their overall effects on school climate.

Overview

Both conflict resolution and peer mediation approach conflict using an integrative strategy. Unlike a distributive strategy that approaches conflict from a win-lose perspective, where one party will seek to maximize personal benefit at the expense of the other party, an integrative strategy approaches conflict with a view to maximizing mutual benefits (Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2005). Using an integrative strategy, disputants work to develop an understanding of each other's point of view in order to reach a mutually beneficial agreement (Stevahn, Johnson, Johnson, & Schultz, 2002).

Conflict resolution and peer mediation programs may be implemented separately or in conjunction with one another. There are numerous design options available. While these program designs may differ in procedures and implementation, their basic goal is to help students learn how to manage conflict in positive and constructive ways.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution teaches students the procedures and cognitive skills for recognizing and managing conflict (Stevahn, 2004). There are two central purposes for conflict resolution programs in schools. The first is to make schools safe places for students to learn and relate to each other in positive ways. The second purpose is to help students develop life-long competencies in the social skills necessary to resolve conflicts constructively (Johnson & Johnson, 2004). Developing these skills has the potential to benefit individuals throughout their

lives as they interact with family members, co-workers, members of their community and in other social settings.

Students involved in CR programs are required to learn the skills of managing anger, controlling aggressive responses, understanding the nature of conflict and learning how to avoid or diffuse potentially violent confrontations. They are also expected to learn the skills of active listening, paraphrasing and role reversal. As students learn and use these skills, some develop the ability to think beyond right or wrong responses and are able to synthesize new solutions to problems (Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2005). According to Opatow (1989), the ability to learn these skills and manage their own conflict constructively can benefit children and adolescents by helping them clarify their personal values and generate interpersonal insight.

Conflict resolution programs are intended to be used with a group of students such as an individual class, grade-level, school or district. They are designed to use a curriculum-integrated approach that looks at areas in the curriculum where conflict naturally occurs (Stevahn, 2004). Subject areas that lend themselves well to conflict resolution instruction and training include literature, language arts, social studies and the humanities.

Benefits to students participating in conflict resolution and peer mediation programs may go beyond the reduction of school-related violence and antisocial behavior. Heydenberk and Heydenberk (2005) conducted research to examine the effects of learning conflict resolution skills on meta-cognitive competencies and the ability to reflect and self-regulate one's thinking. A pretest and measure using the SAAC and Meta-cognition subscale compared the treatment group and the control group for gains in meta-cognition. The results indicated that all treatment classrooms showed significant gains on the Meta-cognition subscale while the control group showed no significant gains. According to the results of their research, students demonstrated

measurable gains in meta-cognitive skills as a result of the critical-thinking skills embedded within the conflict resolution curriculum (Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2005).

Not all research demonstrated such positive results. A study conducted by Smith et al., (2002) examined the effects of conflict resolution and peer mediation programs implemented in three middle schools. The intent of the study was to determine whether the intervention of CR and PM resulted in a change in student attitudes or school climate. The measures used included a Student Attitudinal Survey, a Conflict Resolution Scale and a School Climate Survey. The surveys were administered to 1,800 students and 100 teachers in three schools, over a two-year period. The study found little or no significant change in student attitudes towards conflict. Additionally, teacher attitudes about school climate did not improve significantly (Smith et al., 2002). They did discover a reduction in the total number of disciplinary incidents per month and incidents of social conflicts declined at each of three schools following the beginning of the CR and PM programs. The authors indicated several contributing factors that may have affected the outcomes of this research, including the unplanned and abbreviated curricular intervention and a relatively short duration allowed for implementation. They also noted a lack of instructional time that permitted only five lessons to be taught per academic school year. Although there was no significant attitudinal change, the surveys indicated that satisfaction for the mediation process was high among mediators, parents, and disputants. An examination of the resulting data prompted the authors to broaden their focus from looking only at the outcomes, to looking at the process as a valuable component of the program's overall value.

Conflict resolution programs provide students with the opportunity to look at a variety of situations from different perspectives and to think critically about potential outcomes. They are taught that conflict is an inherent part of human interactions that requires creativity and respect for opinions that differ from their own (Graham & Pulvino, 2000). By incorporating CR training

into the curriculum, students began to use constructive negotiations and critical thinking as ways to resolve issues found in the content of the material they studied. Stevahn (2004) recommended that teachers establish cooperative classrooms, define conflict, practice conflict resolution, and apply the process to resolve actual conflicts.

Peer Mediation

The process of developing a peer mediation program involves identifying, recruiting, and training student mediators. It also involves some form of orientation for the entire student body. Peer mediation programs that are implemented in schools are designed to train a select number of student mediators to assist with mediation between disputing students following a step-by-step process. Trained mediators are generally close to the same age as the disputants and trained to remain impartial (Powell et al., 1995). The mediators use listening, communication skills, problem identification and team cooperation to help disputing students find ways to resolve their conflict. Mediators do not solve the dispute but through the mediation process assist disputing students to negotiate a solution peacefully (Theberge & Karan, 2004).

Creating a safe school environment is important to schools and the local communities. For this reason, it is not uncommon for community groups to support peer mediation programs if they believe a significant reduction in violence and student aggression will result. A study by Powell et al., (1995) identified a group of public authorities including the Injury Prevention and Control Program, Department of Criminal Justice, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Police Department, the PTA and a group of local merchants who joined together to support a PM program in a high crime area of Baltimore, Maryland. During a two-year period, 23 girls and 21 boys from the third, fourth and fifth grades were trained as mediators and helped resolve 311 disputes. The resolved disputes included incidents of threats and harassment, personal property

issues, name calling, line cutting, rumors, gossip, and physical contact such as kicking and pushing (Powell et al., 1995).

Humphries (1999) reported that those who support the use of peer mediators identify the additional benefit of peer mediator's often becoming role models to other students by setting high standards of behavior. Crawford and Bodine (2001) found similar results from their research and identified responsible student behaviors as those that evoke innate motivation, self-esteem, and dignity.

According to Johnson and Johnson (2004), two reasons for establishing peer mediation programs in schools are to create safe learning environments and to help students develop socialization skills. The benefits to the peer mediator included increased peer status, academic improvement, increased leadership skills, higher self-esteem, and improved ability to resolve conflict at school and at home (Humphries, 1999). Two concerns identified by peer mediators included missing recess or other extra-curricular activities and having negative interactions with students who were not mediators.

While many results are encouraging, other research has indicated less promising results. In a year-long qualitative study, Theberge and Karan (2004) conducted interviews and surveys to identify the effectiveness of a peer mediation program in a junior high school. The results of this research identified six factors that inhibited success of the program. These factors included (a) student's feelings and attitudes towards mediation, (b) student's methods of dealing with conflict, (c) student's attitudes and behaviors in school, (d) school climate, (e) structure and organization of the peer mediation program, and (f) societal issues. These factors give educators a glimpse into the challenges that face peer mediation programs and may provide guidelines for program implementation and further research.

The ability of mediators to master the program requirements is an additional factor in the effectiveness of PM programs. Providing students with the time and training needed to learn the process and follow the steps is essential for the program's success. Students must learn the basic steps of dispute resolution and be able to follow them in actual conflict situations for the process to be effective. When this happens, the development of positive social skills and interactions follows (Smith et al., 2002).

Effects on school Climate

A school's climate is largely affected by the values of the local community and larger society. Multiple issues contribute to a school's climate, including socioeconomic and sociodemographic factors that interconnect within local communities and have an impact on youth violence (Dykeman & Daehlin, 1996). According to Theberge and Karan (2004), in order to gain an understanding of the effects of CR and PM on the climate of a school, it is important to recognize how members of the community view conflict, develop organizational constructs and interact socially. To evaluate the effects of CR and PM programs requires the monitoring of student behavior, academic achievement, and overall school safety (Powell et al., 1995).

Students, parents, administrators, faculty, and staff bring their attitudes and views of conflict with them when they enter the school building. Conflict resolution and peer mediation programs have a philosophy of conflict that often runs counter to popular culture. They offer a fundamentally different approach to conflict that should not be applied as an additional level of discipline (Theberge & Karan, 2004). These programs require time and education to build the integrative strategies that are foundational to their success (Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2005).

Viewing conflict as a natural part of living and interacting in a community with diverse perspectives may be an unfamiliar concept for many community members who are used to viewing differences as incompatible and therefore as threatening (Graham & Pulvino, 2000).

Understanding and identifying a school's perception of violence may provide helpful insights to distinguish between the actual risks of anti-social behavior and the perceived risk. According to St. George and Thomas (1997), gender, age and race play a role in aggressive behaviors. Their survey, conducted in a Maryland middle school of 517 African-American and white students using a stratified random sample, reported 72% of the students perceived fighting as high-risk, but only 20% reported fighting on a regular basis. This study also reported that adolescents who engage in fighting do not anticipate physical harm because they are at an age when they developmentally believe themselves to be invulnerable. The results of this study indicate that there is a gap between the actual risk of violence and the perceived risk. Understanding this gap could help schools as they make decisions for addressing aggressive behaviors.

Graham and Pulvino (2000) conducted research aimed at integrating multicultural conflict resolution into an existing program in a K-8 Catholic school. One of the goals of the research was to determine how students understood the role of culture in shaping their perspectives. The focus group consisted of 22 third-grade students. The group was racially diverse and divided equally between genders. The students were taught to view conflict as a natural part of human interactions. Their instruction focused on active listening, developing an understanding of other perspectives, and learning the five "Rules for Fighting Fair" from the Creative Conflict Solving for Kids program. An evaluation of the program reported successful gains in challenging the way students conceptualized conflict, shifting word associations from negative to positive responses, and enabling students to identify the Rules for Fighting Fair. However, students gained only limited knowledge of cultural and familial influences (Graham & Pulvino, 2000).

In addition to the way a community views conflict, the climate of a school is affected by its organizational structure which provides a framework for the exercise of power and decision-

making. Through the exercise of power, the disciplinary practices of an organization are developed. Schools that ideologically and organizationally are structured to share power with students and parents are better prepared to support CR and PM programs as they already provide a collaborative culture for mediation and the resolution of conflict (Theberge & Karan, 2004). Within this structure, administrators play a significant role in the success of CR and PM programs. Administrators that support and set a high priority on these programs provide leadership and influence over their staff by providing adequate training time, needed resources, and financial support. They also help create an environment within which CR and PM have a greater chance of success (Johnson & Johnson, 2004; Powell et al., 1995; Theberge & Karan, 2004).

To determine the effects of conflict resolution and peer mediation on school climate, Powell et al., (1995) found it necessary to collect, evaluate and record data identifying student behaviors, school safety, and academic achievement. Keeping detailed records can provide schools with a view of the effectiveness of CR and PM programs over an extended period of time. In addition to keeping individual records of student behaviors that move from school to school with the student, Powell et al., (1995) suggested that records need to be collected on a school-wide basis and tracked from year to year. These records are most effective and provide a clearer overall picture of the school's climate if they identify student behaviors by categorizing those of concern (St. George & Thomas, 1997). For example, student behaviors that include physical contact should be counted differently from those that are verbal. Monitoring student behaviors and keeping detailed records of student disciplinary actions, attendance and grades can alert schools to changes in a school's climate.

Determining the effectiveness of conflict resolution and peer mediation programs would not be complete without looking at the ability of those programs to demonstrate a positive and

lasting effect on academic achievement. Through their research, Heydenberk and Heydenberk (2005) found evidence to suggest that conflict resolution curriculum has embedded within it critical thinking and meta-cognitive demands that may enhance a student's thinking ability in both social and academic settings. Conversely, Larson (1994) reported that academic underachievement and anti-social behavior tend to coexist. Although the relationship between academic achievement and anti-social behavior is not clearly understood, it is evident that a relationship exists. In another study, students in a 10th grade social studies class that had been trained in CR and PM achieved a significantly higher score on a posttest at the end of an academic unit than those students who had not received the training (Stevahn et al., 2002).

Conclusions

A review of the literature suggests that conflict resolution and peer mediation programs have shown promise in their ability to promote safe learning environments, and help students develop positive social interactions (Smith et al., 2002). The schools that experienced success through CR and PM programs were able to view conflict as a natural part of living and dealing with diverse perspectives (Graham & Pulvino, 2000; Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2005). Success of CR and PM programs were enhanced when the organizational structure of the school provided an ideological framework and collaborative culture for mediation (Theberge & Karan, 2004). Additionally, schools that provided administrative leadership, adequate resources, time for training, and outside expertise increased their potential for success (Johnson & Johnson, 2004).

The research indicates that the benefits of incorporating conflict resolution and peer mediation programs into the school environment often go beyond the initial goal of a reduction in school violence and may include improvements in the areas of school climate, student-to-student relationships and academic achievement (Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2005; Johnson & Johnson, 2004; Smith et al., 2002). The research also indicates that students involved in peer

mediation benefit personally from learning the process of mediation (Smith et al., 2002).

Internalizing the PM process provides students with a framework for developing listening and communication skills that they will benefit from their entire lives (Humphries, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 2004). Additionally, these programs help students expand their understanding of the complex nature of conflict and provided opportunities for them to view conflict from multiple perspectives (Graham & Pulvino, 2000).

While there is persuasive evidence for the inclusion of CR and PM programs in our schools, areas of weakness persist that require further research and evaluation of overall effectiveness (Stevahn et al., 2002). Areas where additional investigation is desired include (a) program implementation, (b) training for faculty and students, (c) program cost vs. effectiveness, (d) community support, and (e) evidence of improved academic achievement. Documentation on the successful implementation of CR and PM programs is needed to track student behaviors and attitudes towards violence. Variations in program curricula, materials and training time have produced varying results that suggest the need for more research.

As violence has become more prevalent in our society and moved into the hallways, cafeterias, restrooms and classrooms of our schools, we have often acted quickly to respond to the felt urgency of anticipated violence by imposing interventions that fall short of preventing the violence we fear. To deal effectively with violence and aggression in our schools requires taking a hard look at what generates conflict and what prompts our response to real and perceived threats. It also requires the active participation of all stakeholders in the community and larger society. Programs such as conflict resolution and peer mediation provide an option for schools and communities to work together to help students learn how to manage conflict in positive and constructive ways. The further study of these programs could yield benefits to our schools and society by providing evidence for effectively dealing with conflict that have a lasting impact.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Setting

Western Mennonite School is a small private Christian school rurally located in the Willamette Valley near Salem, Oregon. The campus rests on 45 wooded acres close to the Willamette River. The school has been situated on this site since 1945 when it was established as a high school with 23 students (Ward, 2007). At the time of the first graduation ceremony, the entire faculty, staff and student body were of the Mennonite faith. This small community of people shared a common understanding of faith and tradition that defined how they interacted with each other.

Over the years, the school grew with the inclusion of international students in the high school and with the addition of middle school classes. Members of the student body and staff now come from a variety of faith backgrounds. This growth created a change in the character of the community and that once-common understanding of faith and tradition no longer exists. Today the student body consists of 245 day and boarding students in grades 6 through 12. Students receiving some form of financial aid equal 37% of the total student body. The student population includes 20% Asian, Hispanic, Black or African American, and non-white students ("PSS Private School Data," 2006).

In 2004, the school experienced significant growth when the middle school expanded to include 6th grade classes. With this growth came an increase in the number of aggressive behaviors that were focused in the middle school, but affected the high school and the climate of the entire school. At the end of the 2004-05 school year students were given a survey to determine the level of safety they felt at school. Of the 120 students surveyed, 32% reported

feeling unsafe at some time during the school year. As a result of this survey, the School Improvement Committee recommended that a peer mediation program be introduced to address the problem of aggressive behavior. The peer mediation program began in the fall of 2005 and ended in the spring of 2006. The first mediation took place in October 2005 and the last took place in February 2006.

The Program

The goal of the peer mediation program was to train mediators to help disputing students resolve conflict using problem-solving skills. The objectives were to reduce student-to-student conflict and improve the overall school climate. The program was designed by members of the PM Advisory Team to fit our school setting. It was a compilation of peer mediation information that included the selection of team members, training, and implementation of the program.

Mediators were selected from the list of students gathered from the student survey given in the spring of 2005. Selection of students was limited to those from the list who had maintained a 'C' average or higher and whom the PM Advisory Team deemed trustworthy. A total of 14 out of the 16 students invited to be trained as mediators agreed to participate in the program.

Training began with two all-day sessions and continued with a once-a-month meeting throughout the school year. The first all-day training took place in October of 2005 and the second in November of that same year. Mediators were taught the roles and expectations of a peer mediator, the mediation process, the importance of maintaining confidentiality, the referral process for serious problems and awareness of cultural differences.

The mediation process began with a student referral from a teacher, staff member, parent or student who witnessed or knew of a dispute. These referrals went to the principal or dean of students who decided whether or not they should be handled through mediation. As coordinator of the program, I received these referrals and with advice from the school counselor we selected

two mediators to mediate the dispute. One mediator's role was to lead the mediation and the other's role was to record what happened. Next, the disputing students were contacted and a time was arranged for each to meet separately with the mediators. The "initial meeting" allowed each student to tell their side of the story. This step gave disputing students the option to proceed to mediation or stop the process. A time was arranged for a "face-to-face mediation" if both of the disputing students agreed to proceed. Students who chose not to go to mediation were referred back to the principal or dean of students.

The face-to-face meeting provided disputing students the opportunity to tell their story and listen to the other student's story. The lead mediator's job was to listen, ask clarifying questions, and keep the process moving forward following the "Initial Meeting Guide" (form 1) (see appendix A). The disputing students were asked to read and sign the "Confidentiality Mediation Record" (form 2) (see appendix A). Then they discussed different ways to solve the problem. Once a solution was agreed upon, the recorder wrote out their solution and the disputing students signed a "Mediation Agreement" (form 3) (see appendix A). Arrangements were made for any follow-up meeting. A time was set for mediators to check with students to see if the situation was resolved and if the agreement was being followed.

Participants

For the purpose of this study, the participants included students in grades 6 through 12, members of the Western Mennonite School staff and members of the PM Advisory Team. The student body included middle and high school students who attended WMS from 2004 to 2006. The 14 students trained as peer mediators included seven female and seven male students. Included in those 14 students were one international student from Ethiopia, and two students of mixed race.

The *staff* included 52 members of the administration, advancement team, faculty and staff. There were 20 full-time faculty members creating a student-to-teacher ratio of 15 to 1. The PM Advisory Team (a subset of the *staff*) consisted of seven members including our principal, dean of students, school counselor, two middle school teachers, one high school teacher and me. I am a library media specialist and teach two middle school exploratory classes.

Individuals participating in this study were not identified by name. Confidentiality of survey participants was maintained by randomly assigning numbers to participants and surveys. The learning specialist helped distribute the surveys and the school secretary collected them and then gave them to me. The results of the surveys are available upon request to any of the participants.

Participation in this study was optional. All participants were required to read and sign the Informed Consent Document. They were also given an opportunity to ask questions before taking the survey.

Instrumentations

The literature review helped me identify areas where further investigation was needed to determine the overall effectiveness of peer mediation and conflict resolution programs (Smith et al., 2002). Those areas included program implementation, training for faculty and students, community support, and improved academic achievement. Powell et al. (1995) added that monitoring student behavior and overall school safety were good measures of a program's success. This information helped me identify three areas of focus in order to answer my research questions. The first focus was to assess the school's climate specifically looking at the level of safety and respect felt by students and staff. The second focus was to evaluate the design of the peer mediation program by looking at its outcomes. The third focus was to determine the level of support for the program by the staff.

The nature of the information I needed to gather to answer my research questions led me to decide that surveys would be an effective way of obtaining data. Surveying students and staff about their experiences and attitudes regarding the school's climate and the peer mediation program gave me a measure of the program's overall effectiveness.

The surveys were given to three different groups at different times. The student surveys for high school and middle school (I & II) (see appendix B) were given to students in grades 6 through 12 in the spring of 2005. The staff survey (III) (see appendix C) was given to the staff in January of 2008. The PM Advisory Team survey (IV) (see appendix D) was given in January of 2008. Each survey consisted of 20 to 35 questions that allowed for answers to be marked from a checklist, *yes* or *no* responses, a Likert scale, or a short-answer format (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

The student surveys (I & II) (see appendix B) were given during first period on a prearranged day using a paper and pencil format. They were administered to students by their first period teacher. The surveys were created by the seven members of the PM Advisory Team. They contained 20 to 30 questions relating to personal and observed behaviors of aggression and feelings of safety and respect. Each survey included a request for students to identify three peers they felt were trustworthy. The data gathered from these surveys will be included in this study.

The staff survey (III) (see appendix C) allowed participants to use a paper and pencil or online format and included 35 questions divided into six sections. The first section asked for personal information. The second section asked questions about student safety and respect. Sections three and four of the survey asked questions about personal safety and about issues of respect. Sections five and six of the survey included questions about the peer mediation program. I created the staff survey by asking questions about safety and respect similar to the questions on the student surveys in order to compare the results.

The PM Advisory Team survey (IV) (see appendix D) was administered in January of 2008 allowing participants to choose between a paper and pencil or online format. Questions for this survey were adapted from the Peer Mediation Implementation Readiness Survey created by Cohen (2005). The purpose of this survey was to evaluate the peer mediation program.

Research design

This research project was a qualitative study using surveys as instruments to gather data from three sources and compare the findings from each. The surveys were used to identify the attitudes of students, staff and members of the PM Advisory Team about school safety, program effectiveness and support for the peer mediation program. The triangulation design (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) created by gathering information from these three groups provided me with data to evaluate how the program's outcomes compared with the program's objectives and gave me an indication of the program's future feasibility.

Statistical analysis

To answer my research questions, I gathered data from the students, staff and PM Advisory Team and compared their responses. The student surveys (I & II) (see appendix B) and sections two through four of the staff survey (III) (see appendix C) evaluating feelings of safety and respect were a measure of the school's climate. Comparison of the responses from these groups addressed the question of personal safety on campus. Results from sections five and six of the staff survey (III) (see appendix C) were used to identify support for the peer mediation program. The PM Advisory Team survey (IV) (see appendix D) and program statistics were used to evaluate the PM program's design and determine how effective the program was at meeting its goals and objectives.

I used frequency tallies and percentages of frequencies to report the findings from the surveys when a checklist, *yes* or *no* responses, or a Likert scale was used. The data I gathered

from the short-answer questions were summarized and then categorized as positive or negative and then tallied accordingly.

Procedures

I administered the staff survey (III) (see appendix C) and the PM Advisory Team survey (IV) (see appendix D) with the help of my school principal, secretary, technology specialist and learning specialist. I asked my principal for permission to introduce the surveys to the staff during a regular staff meeting.

I gave an oral explanation of the purpose for the surveys and general instructions for answering the questions. I asked the staff and PM Advisory Team to read and (if willing to participate) sign the Informed Consent Document. The staff and the PM Advisory Team had the option of filling out their survey using a written or online format.

On the day I introduced the surveys to the staff and PM Advisory Team, the computer lab was available for participants to take the online surveys. The surveys were available through the participant's school email account.

I provided for confidentiality by asking the learning specialist to hand out the staff survey (III) (see appendix C) and asking the secretary to collect them. I asked the learning specialist to hand out the PM Advisory Team survey (IV) (see appendix D). I asked the secretary to have a list of all staff members and to check off their name when they returned their survey. The secretary was able to request surveys from staff members who had not turned in their survey by the submission date. Once the submission date had passed, the secretary destroyed the list of names and gave the collected surveys to me. The submission date was two weeks after the surveys were handed out to the participants. I tallied the responses from both surveys after the submission date had passed.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

Introduction

This chapter will present the findings from each of the surveyed groups by reporting their attitudes about safety and respect on campus, the effectiveness of the peer mediation program and support for a peer mediation program in the future. Of the 190 students attending WMS in the spring of 2005, a total of 120 students participated in the student surveys. That number included 36 middle school and 84 high school students. Forty of the current 55 staff members and six of the seven PM Advisory Team (PMAT) members participated in the surveys administered in January of 2008. An analysis of the data gathered from the surveyed groups found that the students and staff reported similar attitudes about safety and respect experienced on campus. Survey results from the PMAT along with an evaluation of the program's records identified the strengths and weaknesses of the PM program and supported its continuation. Results from the staff survey suggested moderate support for a peer mediation program in the future.

Findings

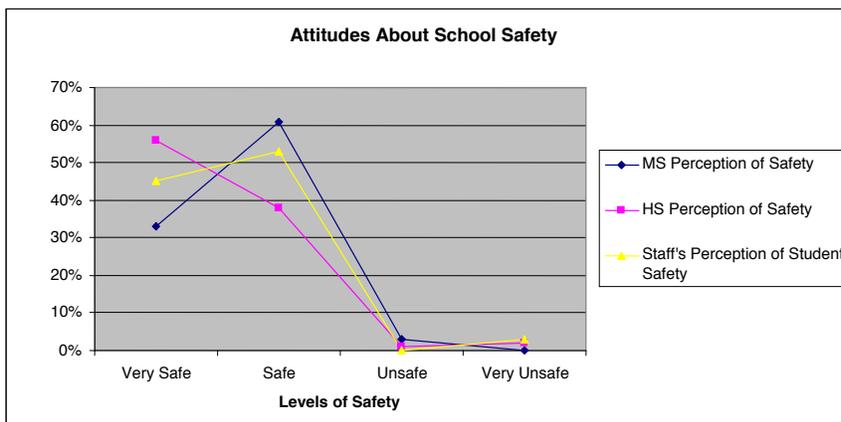
Results from the middle school (MS) and high school (HS) surveys (see appendix B) conducted in 2005 found that 38 of the 120 student participants reported feeling unsafe on campus at some time during the school year. When students were asked to identify areas they considered unsafe on campus, 32 % identified one or more areas as unsafe (question 13 on the MS survey and question 7 on the HS survey). Interestingly, when students were asked to describe how safe they felt on campus, only 3% reported feeling unsafe to very unsafe (question 20 on the MS survey and question 5 on the HS survey). These survey results, along with an

increased number of student referrals, led to the creation of the peer mediation program that began in the fall of 2005.

Upon examining the data that were collected from the 2005 student surveys, I discovered a lack of consistency between the questions asked of high school and middle school students. An example can be seen in questions 12 and 13 on the MS survey and questions 6 and 7 on the HS survey (see appendix B). These questions asked students to identify safe and unsafe areas, but the middle school survey included the outside and bathroom while the high school survey omitted these areas and added the dorms. To address those inconsistencies and get a clear understanding of the school's climate, I categorized similar questions about physical safety together and similar questions about respect together on each of the surveys. Then I compared the results. The staff survey was designed to closely align with the high school survey in order to facilitate comparisons.

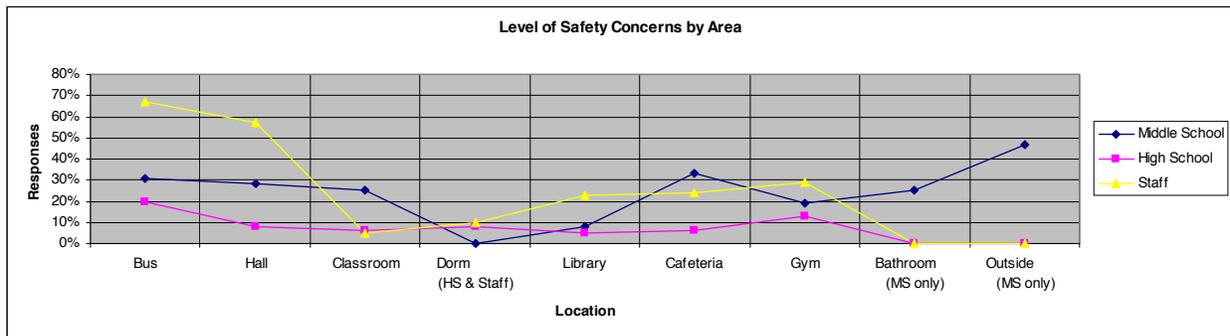
Questions about the physical safety of students that received similar responses from students and staff members asked participants to rate how safe students felt on campus (question 20 on the MS survey and question 5 on the HS and staff survey) (see appendices B and C). Ninety-four percent of middle school students, 94% of high school students and 98% of staff members rated student safety on campus as *safe to very safe* [see Figure 1].

Figure 1



When asked if students had been in a physical fight on campus, 21% of high school students answered *yes* (question 11 HS survey) and 30% reported witnessing a physical fight (question 12 HS survey). Middle school students reported that 58% had been hit, punched, kicked, shoved, etc., at some time during the school year. When students were asked to identify areas they considered unsafe (question 7 on the HS and staff surveys, question 13 on the MS survey), middle school students identified the four highest areas of safety concern as outside (47%), cafeteria (33%), bus (31%) and the halls (28%). The four areas receiving the highest scores on the HS survey were the bus (20%), gym (13%), halls (8%) and the dorm (8%). The staff identified areas of highest concern as the bus (67%), halls (57%), gym (29%) and the cafeteria (24%) [see Figure 2].

Figure 2



An additional measure of a safe school environment is the willingness of individuals to tell someone when they perceive a threat. When asked if there was someone they would tell if they had a concern, 56% of middle school students and 76% of high school students reported that they would feel comfortable talking with a teacher or adult at school (question 18 on the MS survey and question 29 on the HS survey). Fifty percent of middle school students and 90% of high school students reported feeling comfortable talking with a friend or another student. Responses from the staff (question 22 on the staff survey) found that 52.5 % felt they could

always talk with some if they had a concern, 32.5% replied *frequently*, 12.5% *occasionally* and 2.5% *rarely*.

Questions designed to determine the level of respect on campus included questions one through six on the MS survey, questions nine, ten and 13 through 26 on the HS survey, and questions nine through 13 on the staff survey. The strongest concerns listed by middle school students included being stared at and given mean looks (question 1), being ignored (question 5) and having secrets told about them while they watched (question 4). The strongest concerns listed by high school students included experiencing unwanted flirting or sexual remarks (question 9), having rumors or lies told about them (question 13) and being teased because of the way they dress or talk (question 10). The staff identified their strongest concerns as students being teased because of the way they dress or talk (question 10), students experiencing unwanted flirting or sexual remarks (question 9), students having rumors or lies spread about them (question 12) and students hearing negative comments about their race or ethnicity (question 15).

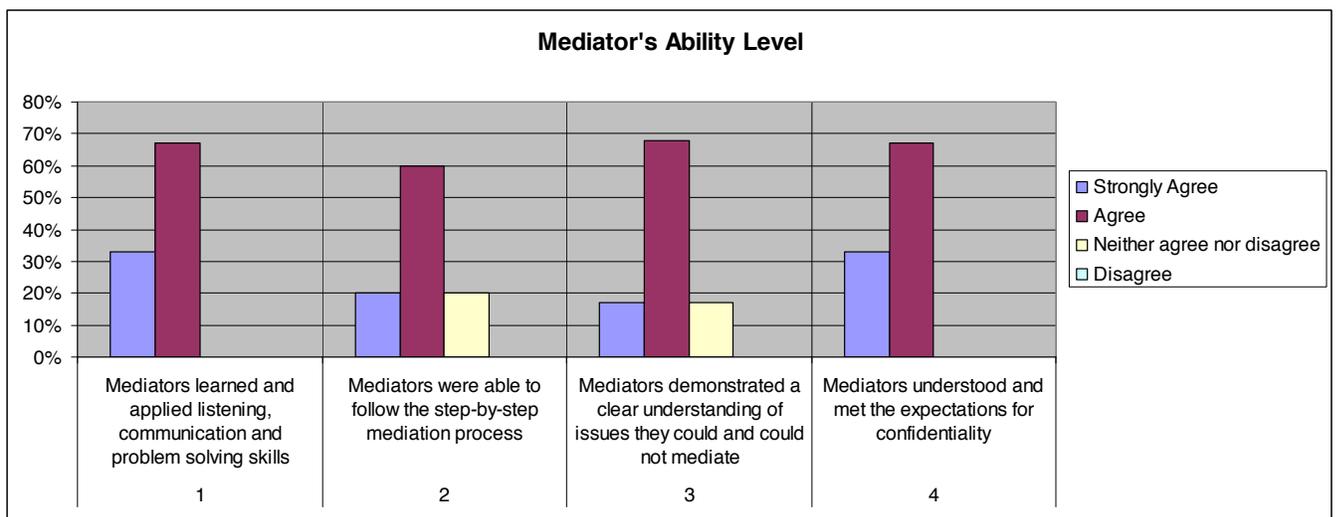
To gain an understanding of how effective the PM program was, I examined the program's records. The results of that examination found that the first mediation took place in October of 2005 and the last mediation took place in February of 2006. Seven male and seven female students were trained as peer mediators. The mediators included three seniors, two juniors, one sophomore, two freshmen, three 8th-grade students and three 7th-grade students.

A total of six disputes involving 15 students were referred to peer mediation. Twelve of the 15 disputing students agreed to mediation. As a result of working with the peer mediators and going through the mediation process, four of the six disputes (67%) ended with a signed agreement. Of the two unresolved disputes, one was stopped because a disputant refused to cooperate and one mediation was canceled because a disputing student refused to participate on the day of the face-to-face meeting. The disputants included eight 6th-grade students, four 7th-

grade students, and three students in the 8th-grade. Mediators who led the mediation process with disputing students included six seniors, one junior, two sophomores, two freshmen, and one 8th-grade student. The mediation process took anywhere from one to four weeks to complete depending on the school’s schedules and availability of the students and mediators involved.

One measure of the effectiveness of the PM program (Smith et al., 2002) was an evaluation of the peer mediator’s ability to follow the mediation process and apply problem-solving skills. Statements one through four on the PMAT survey were designed to determine how effective mediators were at learning and following the mediation process. Results from the surveys indicated a high level of confidence in the mediator’s ability to learn and apply listening and problem-solving skills (question 1), follow the step-by-step mediation process (question 2), demonstrate a clear understanding of what they could and could not mediate (question 3) and meet the expectations for confidentiality (question 4). The table below shows how the mediator’s performance in each of the four areas was rated by the PMAT [see Figure 3].

Figure 3



Information gathered from the PMAT survey identified several areas of weakness that presented challenges to the program. Responses to question 28 identified those challenges as:

(a) insufficient time to train mediators, (b) additional time needed for advisors to organize and implement the program, (c) the size of our school made it difficult to maintain confidentiality even though, technically, no one told, (d) it proved difficult to schedule mediations when many students already have a very full schedule, (e) finding available space for training and regular meeting times was difficult, (f) the program lacked support from the entire school community and (g) the program did not have an established funding source.

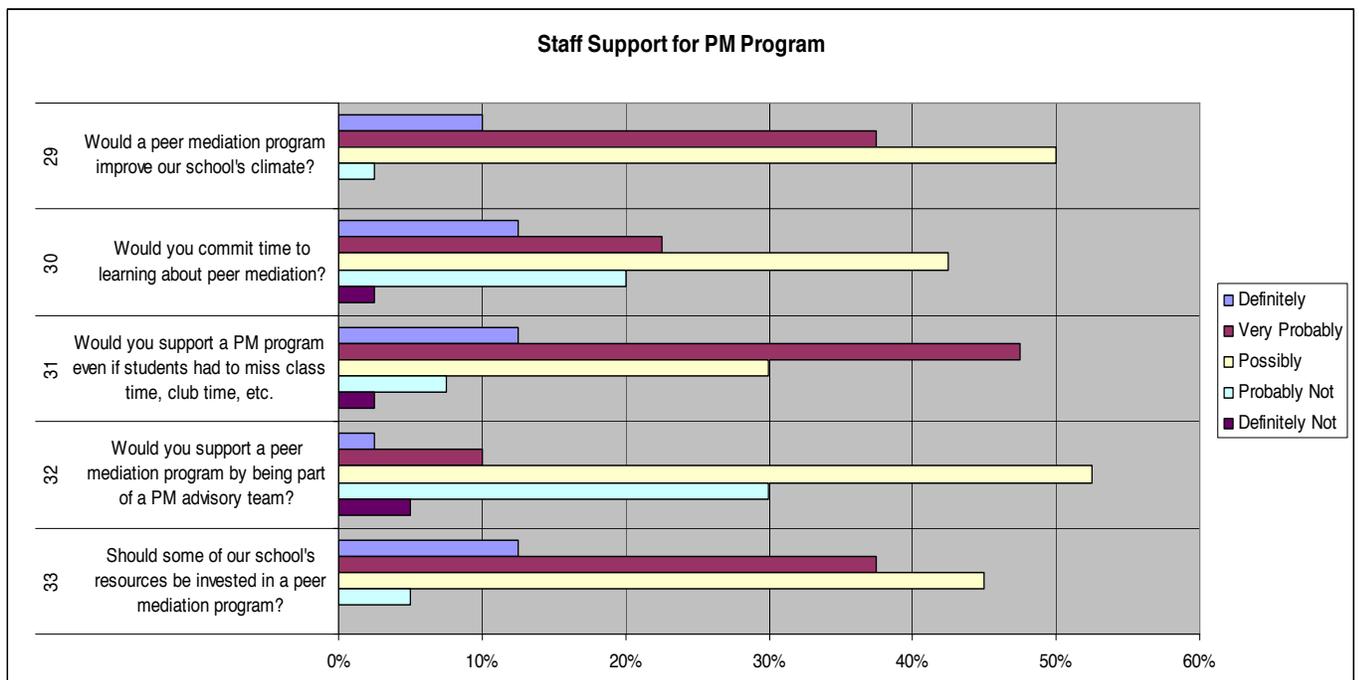
When members of the PMAT were asked if the PM program had helped reduce student-to-student conflict, 83% responded that they neither agreed nor disagreed. Additionally when asked if the PM program had a positive effect on our school's climate, 67% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Both the PMAT and the staff identified benefits to the student body as a result of the PM program. Responses from the PMAT surveys (question 27) credited the program with providing opportunities for relationships to be built out of conflict and supporting the mission of the school. Respondents also said it provided a procedure and process for resolving differences with others and provided a way to communicate safely. They reported that students felt other students cared and were held accountable for their actions. Responses from the staff when asked what the benefits of a peer mediation program were (question 35) included improved communication, improved relationships, improved student self-image, a better campus environment, opportunity for teaching leadership skills, greater trust, and ties to peace and service.

To determine the level of support for a PM program, the staff was asked if they would be willing to commit time to learning about peer mediation (question 30). Thirty-five percent answered *definitely* or *very probably*, 42.5% replied *possibly* and 22.5% responded *probably not* or *definitely not*. Asked if they would be willing to support a peer mediation program even if it required peer mediators to miss some class time, tutoring time, etc., (question 31), 60% replied

definitely or very probably, 30% answered possibly and 10% replied probably not or definitely not. Asked if staff would be willing to be a part of a peer mediation advisory team (question 32) 12.5% answered definitely or very probably, 52.5% replied possibly and 35% responded probably not to definitely not. When asked if they were willing to invest school resources to support a peer mediation program (question 33), 50% replied definitely or very probably, 45% responded possibly and 5% answered probably not [see Figure 4].

Figure 4



All members (100%) of the PM Advisory Team supported the continuation of a peer mediation program at WMS (question 29). They included the following recommendations (question 30) to improve the program: (a) A person trained in Peer Mediation needs to be involved in the leadership and training of PM advisors and faculty, (b) training time for students needs to be offered within the curriculum or as a mini-term, (c) a tracking and evaluation process needs to be implemented by someone who has time to do it, (d) everyone needs to be informed of the process and support the program, (e) student mediators need to be carefully selected,

(f) fewer students should be trained as mediators so they all have more opportunity to use and develop their skills, (g) mediators need a room and regular training times, (h) a peer mediation class needs to be created for the peer mediators, (i) the school administration, faculty and staff must give the peer mediation program validity through education, publications, and inclusion in orientations, communications, class curriculum and chapel, (j) training opportunities and teacher support needs to be built into contracted time.

Conclusion

Despite a lack of consistency in the student data collected in 2005, there was sufficient evidence to suggest that students and staff share similar views of personal safety and respect. The data gathered from the peer mediation program records verified the ability of mediators to help disputing students resolve student-to-student conflict by learning and applying problem-solving skills. Information furnished by the PM Advisory Team indicated strong support for a PM program and provided clear recommendations for changes needed to improve its effectiveness. Data collected from the staff surveys indicated moderate support for a peer mediation program in the future through the investment of the school's resources and a willingness to learn more about the program.

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

In this chapter, I will share my interpretation of the findings from the surveys and program records about safety and respect on campus, the effectiveness of the peer mediation program implemented in 2005 and the level of support for a PM program at Western Mennonite School (WMS) in the future. I will check for instrument validity by assessing how well the surveys addressed my research questions. The end of this chapter will include suggestions for further research that could contribute to an increased understanding of peer mediation and conflict resolution programs and their impact on creating safe school environments.

Discussion

The peer mediation program at WMS was born out of concerns for student safety when a significant number of students reported feeling unsafe on campus and the dean of students received increased student referrals from teachers. When the peer mediation program was not continued in 2006, I began to wonder how effective it had been. It was then I realized that in our rush to create a program to help students deal with conflict, we had neglected to establish a thorough implementation plan or a way to evaluate the program. Conducting research for this study, I discovered a great deal of information that could have helped in designing, implementing and evaluating our PM program. The work done by Cohen (2005) would have been particularly helpful as it included a survey intended to help schools predict if a peer mediation program was likely to be successful in a specific situation. Cohen's work provided me with a framework for the surveys I created in order to answer my research questions.

Cohen recommended that schools evaluate the level of safety experienced by students and staff before establishing a peer mediation program. In 2005, students reported their feelings

about safety on campus. To validate their perception of safety, I wanted to determine the staff's perception of safety and then compare responses from the two groups. Results from the staff survey proved to be very similar to the results from the student surveys. Both groups rated their overall perception of safety on campus as *safe* to *very safe*. Yet, both groups identified areas where student safety was a concern. Those areas included the outside, cafeteria, bus, halls, gym, and dorm. The similarity of responses from both groups provided validity to their perceptions of safety. An interesting note is that each of these areas lacks consistent adult supervision at some time during the school day, which could account for the unsafe conditions experienced by students.

Issues of respect that were acknowledged by the staff were nearly identical to those identified by high school students. While they did not rank them in the same order, the fact that they included the same concerns indicated their views were realistic. The consistency of results from responses about safety and respect supports the reliability of the research and the use of anonymous surveys to gather data needed to answer my research questions.

To determine if the PM program was effective, I looked at the program's goals and objectives and compared them with the program's statistics and the data collected from the PMAT survey. The goal of the program was to train mediators to help disputing students resolve conflict using problem-solving skills. Smith et al., (2002) identified one measure of a successful PM program as the student's ability to master the peer mediation process. According to the program's records and responses from the PMAT, peer mediators were able to learn and effectively apply problem-solving skills. As a result, mediators were able to help students resolve the majority of the disputes they mediated.

The objectives of the program were to reduce student-to-student conflict and improve the overall school climate. When members of the PMAT were asked if the PM program had helped

reduce student-to-student conflict and improve the school's climate, the majority neither agreed nor disagreed. Unfortunately, there was no way to determine if the objectives had been met because when the program was created we did not establish how they would be evaluated. As a result, we did not have records documenting the number of student conflicts before, during or after the program was implemented. The program records only tracked the conflicts that were referred to mediation. This made it impossible to determine if the program had reduced student-to-student conflicts or improved the school's climate.

Support for a PM program at WMS received different responses from the staff and the PMAT. Responses by the majority of staff members gave moderate support to the PM program, while the responses from the PMAT gave it strong support. Both groups identified numerous benefits to students and the school but also recognized some challenges facing the program. The benefits to students and the school that were identified by both groups included improved communication skills, improved relationships, an increased level of trust and support for the mission of the school with ties to peace and service. Challenges that were identified by both groups included a lack of time for training and instruction, scheduling of mediations, available space, an established funding source and support from the entire school's community.

Conclusions

The research for this study proved to be extremely valuable in helping me identify some of the reasons our PM program experienced limited success. It also provided me with a broad base of resources to draw upon if we decide to redesign a peer mediation program in the future. An essential principle I learned from this study and one that was supported by the research was the importance of setting clear and measurable goals and objectives during the program's planning stage.

One resource I would recommend our school use if we consider beginning a new peer mediation program is Cohen's Peer Mediation Implementation Readiness Survey (p. 72) to help predict how effective a peer mediation program would be in our setting. The results from this survey could then be used to determine our readiness to develop a new program. If we decided to move forward with a peer mediation program, I would recommend following an implementation and design strategy from a peer mediation program model that has been successful.

Because of our school's size, I would recommend recruiting and training a smaller number of mediators. The size of the group proved to be too large for our population and the number of conflicts that were referred to mediation. Training fewer mediators would provide students with more opportunities to practice and improve their skills. Having fewer mediators would also reduce the number of students and classes affected by training and mediation sessions.

I would also recommend that records of student conflicts be kept and tracked by the school in addition to keeping that information in individual student files. Otherwise data that is important for evaluating the program is lost because it moves with the student. Additionally, I suggest keeping records that distinguish between the different types of negative behaviors such as physical fights, verbal aggression and property disputes.

As a result of this study, I would encourage WMS to investigate incorporating a conflict resolution program into the curriculum even if they decide not to renew a PM program. Conflict resolution would fit well with our school's paradigm and mission statement and it would provide an opportunity for all students to learn the cognitive skills for managing conflict (Stevahn, 2004). This could prove to be a relatively easy transition as many of the classes that are currently taught at WMS would lend themselves well to the incorporation of conflict resolution curriculum.

Future research

To be effective, a peer mediation program requires a long-term investment of time, resources and support from the school or district that implements it into the educational setting. While the goal of most peer mediation and conflict resolution programs is a reduction in aggressive behavior in our schools, they also have the potential to benefit society. As students move from the classroom into the world, those trained in PM and CR take with them positive social and emotional competencies capable of helping them navigate complex personal and global disputes. With that in mind, further research is needed to determine the long-term effectiveness of these programs. By tracking attitudes about violence and aggressive behavior by post-high school students who did and did not participate in PM and CR programs, additional insights as to the lasting value of these programs could be gained that reach far beyond our school's walls.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FACE-TO-FACE MEDIATION

Initial Meeting Guide

Form 1

Part One: Introduction and Explanations

- ❖ Introduction and welcome
- ❖ Confidentiality explained
- ❖ Agreement for participation in mediation
- ❖ Explain the role of the mediators
- ❖ Define the steps of mediation
 - Talk about what happened and the effects it had
 - Explore the things that need to be worked out
 - Work at coming to an agreement

Part Two: Setting Ground Rules and Clarifying the Dispute

- ❖ Explain ground rules and have disputants sign *Confidential Mediation Record*
- ❖ Decide which disputant will share first
- ❖ Talk about what happened
- ❖ Identify who has been harmed or hurt
- ❖ Ask how that affected them
- ❖ Ask how it affected others

Part Three: Brainstorming

- ❖ Restate what disputants stated
- ❖ Ask disputants to brainstorm possible ways to make the situation right
- ❖ Set ground rules for brainstorming
 - All ideas will be listed
 - Do not criticize ideas
 - Encourage variety of options
 - Mediators do not contribute ideas

Part Four: Restatement and Discussion

- ❖ Review each person's list of ideas
- ❖ Ask if there is anything they want added to the list
- ❖ Pick something on the list for disputants to begin talking about
- ❖ For each item you may ask: "What else needs to be understood about _____?" or ask "What can be done to prevent this from happening in the future?"

- ❖ Note: If there is an argument over an idea you can ask, “What is it that bothers you about that suggestion?”

Part Five: Mediation Agreement

- ❖ When it seems like things have been worked out, use the Mediation Agreement form and ask the following questions:
 - Which of these ideas do you want written down?
 - How are you going to do these things so that the agreement works?
 - When can we meet again briefly to see if things are working?
 - Does the wording of this agreement work for you?
 - Who else needs to know about this agreement?
- ❖ Ask students to let their friends know the problem has been solved so they don't spread rumors.

Part Six: After Signing the Agreement

- ❖ Hand out copies to all participants
- ❖ Ask participants to share their thoughts about the process
- ❖ Answer any questions
- ❖ Thank participants for going through the process
- ❖ Announce follow-up when appropriate
- ❖ Close with a prayer if you feel it is appropriate

FACE TO FACE MEDIATION
Confidential Mediation Record
Form 3

Name of participants:

Name of mediators:

Nature of dispute:

Ground Rules

I agree to:

1. Follow the process and listen to the mediators
2. No interrupting
3. Try to be honest
4. No put-downs or name calling
5. Keep what is discussed confidential
6. Stay seated throughout the process
7. Consider many possible solutions to the problem

Signature

Signature

FACE TO FACE MEDIATION

Mediation Agreement

Form 3

The following is an agreement between:

Date: _____

Identify the following in your agreement:

- ❖ Who will do what?
- ❖ By when?
- ❖ Who will follow-up?
- ❖ When will the follow-up take place?

We agree that:

Signatures _____

Mediator's _____

APPENDIX B

STUDENT SURVEY (I) Western Mennonite School Student Questionnaire Safety at School and Student Behaviors High School Spring 2005

Please consider the following questions carefully and answer truthfully. This questionnaire is asking how you view the attitudes and actions of students on our campus.

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions.

Please circle your answer.

1. How old are you?
a. 14 b. 15 c. 16 d. 17 e. 18
2. What gender are you?
a. Female b. Male
3. What grade are you in?
a. 9 b. 10 c. 11 d. 12
4. How would you describe yourself?
a. American Indian or Native Alaskan
b. Asian
c. Black or African American
d. Hispanic or Latin American or Latino
e. White or Caucasian
f. Other
5. How safe do you feel when you are at school?
a. Very safe b. Safe c. Unsafe d. Very unsafe
6. Identify areas at school where you feel safe.
a. Bus b. Hall c. Classroom d. Dorm e. Library f. Cafeteria
g. Gym
7. Identify areas at school where you feel unsafe.
a. Bus b. Hall c. Classroom d. Dorm e. Library f. Cafeteria
g. Gym
8. Have you ever been hit, shoved, kicked, tripped, or slapped, by someone who wasn't just kidding around?
a. Yes b. No c. Maybe (not sure of their motive)
9. Have you experienced unwanted flirting or sexual remarks that made you feel uncomfortable?
a. Never b. Sometimes c. Often
10. Have you ever been made fun of because of the way you look, dress, or talk?
a. Yes b. No
11. Have you been in a physical fight?
a. Yes b. No
12. Have you witnessed a physical fight?
a. Yes b. No
13. Have you ever had rumors or lies spread about you?
a. Yes b. No

14. Have you ever participated in the spreading of rumors about someone?
a. Yes b. No
15. Have you ever had sexual jokes, comments, or gestures made to you?
a. Yes b. No
16. Have you ever had any property stolen or deliberately damaged?
a. Yes b. No
17. Have you ever damaged or witnessed someone damage school property on purpose?
a. Yes b. No
18. Have you ever sent an e-mail that said something negative you wouldn't say in person?
a. Yes b. No
19. Have you ever been the repeated target of rumors?
a. Yes b. No
20. Have you ever been made to feel uncomfortable because of your political views?
a. Yes b. No
21. Have you ever been made to feel uncomfortable because of your religious beliefs?
a. Yes b. No
22. Have you ever witnessed anyone being teased because of a physical disability?
a. Yes b. No
23. Have you ever witnessed anyone being teased because of their academic ability?
a. Yes b. No
24. Have you ever heard negative comments about your race or ethnicity?
a. Yes b. No
25. Have you ever heard negative comments because of your gender?
a. Yes b. No
26. Do you think both genders are treated equally on our campus?
a. Yes b. No
27. Do you feel respected as a person by other students?
a. Yes b. No
28. Do you feel respected as a person by faculty and staff?
a. Yes b. No
29. Is there faculty or staff at school you would feel comfortable talking with if you had a concern or problem?
a. Yes b. No
30. Are there students at school you would feel safe talking with if you felt unsafe or had a problem with another student?
a. Yes b. No

Peer Mediators are students that possess leadership ability and are trusted by other students to help resolve conflict.

Please identify three students you feel would make good peer mediators.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

STUDENT SURVEY (II)

Western Mennonite School Student Questionnaire Safety at School and Student Behaviors Middle School Spring 2005

Please read the following questions carefully and answer truthfully.
Circle the answer that fits you best.

How old are you?

11 12 13 14

What gender are you?

Male Female

What grade are you in?

6th 7th 8th

Has anyone at school done any of these things to you this year?

1. Stared at you or given you mean looks.
a. Yes b. No
2. Told lies or started rumors about you.
a. Yes b. No
3. Called you names you didn't like.
a. Yes b. No
4. Told secrets to someone else while you were watching.
a. Yes b. No
5. Ignored you when you asked them a question or tried to talk with them.
a. Yes b. No
6. Refused to let you talk, walk, or sit with them.
a. Yes b. No
7. Hit, punched, shoved, grabbed, tripped, pinched, or scratched you.
a. Yes b. No
8. If you answered yes, have any of these things happened to you more than once or twice?
a. Yes b. No
9. Have you seen these things happen to any of your friends or classmates?
a. Yes b. No
10. Have you done any of these things to your friends or classmates?
a. Yes b. No
11. It is usually the same kids that do these mean things to you or others?
a. Yes b. No
12. Which of the following areas are places you consider safe?
a. bus b. hall c. classroom d. library e. cafeteria f. bathroom
g. gym h. outside
13. Which of the following areas are places you consider unsafe?
a. bus b. hall c. classroom d. library e. cafeteria f. bathroom
g. gym h. outside
14. What do you do if someone does something mean to you?
a. Tell someone b. ignore it c. get even d. stay away from that person

15. If you ignore it, why do you?
- a. Afraid of what might happen.
 - b. It doesn't bother me.
 - c. Don't want to get others in trouble
 - d. No one will believe me
 - e. Don't want to tattle
16. If someone is mean to you, who are they?
- a. Your friends
 - b. Students you don't know
 - c. Students you do know
 - d. Older students
 - e. Bigger students
17. If someone is being mean who do you tell?
- a. Friend, or other student
 - b. Teacher
 - c. Another school adult
 - d. Parent or other adult outside of school
 - e. No one
18. Are there teachers or adults at school you would feel comfortable talking with if you had a concern or problem?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
19. Are there students at school you would feel safe talking with if you felt unsafe or had a problem with another student?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
20. How safe do you feel when you are at school?
- a. Very safe
 - b. safe
 - c. unsafe
 - d. very unsafe

Peer mediators are students that possess leadership ability and are trusted by other students to help resolve conflict. We are planning to begin training peer mediators to help students with conflict resolution.

Please identify three students you feel would make good peer mediators.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

APPENDIX C

STAFF SURVEY (III) Western Mennonite School School Climate Survey for Staff 2008

The following survey contains questions similar to those asked of the WMS student body in the spring of 2005. Please answer the following questions based on your perception of our current school climate.

I. Personal Information: **Please circle your answer.**

1. What is your gender?
a. Female b. Male

2. How would you describe yourself?
a. American Indian or Native Alaskan b. Black or African American c. Asian
d. Hispanic, Latino or Latin American e. White or Caucasian f. Other

3. What is your current position or area of responsibility?
a. Administration b. Faculty c. Staff d. Advancement

4. How long have you worked at Western?
a. 1 – 5 years b. 6 – 15 years c. 16 - 20 years d. 21 - 25 years e. over 26 years

II. Your Perception of Student Safety: **Please circle your answer.**

5. How safe do you believe our students are on campus?
a. Very safe b. Safe c. Unsafe d. Very unsafe

6. Identify each area at school where you believe our students feel safe? **Circle all that apply.**
a. Bus b. Hall c. Classroom d. Dorm e. Library
f. Cafeteria g. Gym

7. Identify each area on campus where you believe our students feel unsafe? **Circle all that apply.**
a. Bus b. Hall c. Classroom d. Dorm e. Library
f. Cafeteria g. Gym

8. Have you witnessed a student on campus being hit, shoved, kicked, tripped, or slapped by someone who wasn't just kidding around?
a. Yes b. No c. Maybe (not sure of their motive)

9. Have students reported to you experiencing unwanted flirting or sexual remarks that made them feel uncomfortable?
a. Never b. Sometimes c. Often

10. Have you witnessed students on campus being teased because of the way look, dress, or talk?
a. Yes b. No

11. Have you witnessed a physical fight between students on campus?
a. Yes b. No
12. Has a student reported to you that lies or rumors have been spread about them?
a. Yes b. No
13. Have you witnessed a student being teased because of a physical disability?
a. Yes b. No
14. Have you witnessed a student being teased because of their religious beliefs?
a. Yes b. No
15. Have you heard negative comments about a student's race or ethnicity?
a. Yes b. No

III. Your Perception of Personal Safety: Please circle your answer.

16. Have you had any property stolen or deliberately damaged on campus?
a. Frequently b. Occasionally c. Rarely d. Very rarely e. Never
17. Have you been made to feel uncomfortable on campus because of your political views?
a. Frequently b. Occasionally c. Rarely d. Very rarely e. Never
18. Have you been made to feel uncomfortable on campus because of your religious beliefs?
a. Frequently b. Occasionally c. Rarely d. Very rarely e. Never
19. Have you heard any negative comments about your race or ethnicity while on campus?
a. Frequently b. Occasionally c. Rarely d. Very rarely e. Never
20. Have you heard any negative comments about your gender while on campus?
a. Frequently b. Occasionally c. Rarely d. Very rarely e. Never

IV. Level of Respect: Please circle your answer.

21. Do you believe your contribution to the WMS community is valued by other members of the staff?
a. Always b. Frequently c. Occasionally d. Rarely e. Never
22. When you have a concern or problem, is there someone on campus you feel safe talking with?
a. Always b. Frequently c. Occasionally d. Rarely e. Never
23. Do you feel respected by other members of the WMS staff?
a. Always b. Frequently c. Occasionally d. Rarely e. Never
24. Do you think both genders are treated equally on our campus?
a. Always b. Frequently b. Occasionally d. Rarely e. Never
25. Do you feel respected by students at our school?
a. Always b. Frequently c. Occasionally d. Rarely e. Never

V. Peer Mediation and School Climate: **Please circle your answer.**

Two years ago a Peer Mediation Program was started at WMS. Fourteen students were trained to help mediate peer disputes. Please answer the following questions even if you were not here at the time.

26. How would you characterize your understanding of peer mediation?
a. Excellent b. Good c. Fair d. Poor
27. Do you think our students are capable of resolving their conflicts peacefully without adult intervention?
a. Definitely b. Very probably c. Possibly d. Probably not
e. Definitely not
28. Do you think our students would benefit from a peer mediation program?
a. Definitely b. Very probably c. Possibly d. Probably not
e. Definitely not
29. Do you think a peer mediation program would improve our school's climate?
a. Definitely b. Very probably c. Possibly d. Probably not
e. Definitely not

VI. Support of a Peer Mediation Program at WMS:

A peer mediation program would require resources of time, money, and personnel in the areas of staff training, student training, and program implementation. **Please circle your answer.**

30. Would you be willing to commit time to learning about peer mediation?
a. Definitely b. Very probably c. Possibly d. Probably not e. Definitely not
31. Would you be willing to support a peer mediation program even if it required peer mediators to miss some class time, tutoring time, work time, club or meeting time?
a. Definitely b. Very probably c. Possibly d. Probably not e. Definitely not
32. Would you be willing to support a peer mediation program by being part of a peer mediation advisory team?
a. Definitely b. Very probably c. Possibly d. Probably not e. Definitely not
33. Do you think some of our school resources should be invested in a peer mediation program?
a. Definitely b. Very probably c. Possibly d. Probably not e. Definitely not
34. What do you see as some possible challenges facing a peer mediation program at WMS?
35. What do you see as some possible benefits resulting from a peer mediation program at WMS?

APPENDIX D

PEER MEDIATION ADVISORY TEAM SURVEY (IV) Western Mennonite School Program Evaluation 2008

Please respond to the following statements by circling your answer.

1. Mediators were able to learn and apply listening, communication skills, and other problem solving skills in order to help disputing students resolve conflicts.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
2. Mediators were able to follow the step-by-step mediation process.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
3. Mediators demonstrated a clear understanding of the issues they could and could not mediate.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
4. Mediators understood and met the expectations for confidentiality.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
5. The two all-day and once-a-month training sessions provided sufficient instruction and practice for mediators to learn the mediation process.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
6. Additional training was needed for mediators to confidently lead mediations.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
7. Members of the PM Advisory Team had previous training in peer mediation.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
8. Ongoing training and support for the Advisory Team was part of the program.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
9. PM Advisory Team members were allowed release time to be trained in mediation.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
10. PM Advisory Team members were allowed release time to train peer mediators.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree

11. The peer mediation program was effective in selecting students to be trained as mediators.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
12. The peer mediation program was effective at teaching mediators the mediation process.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
13. A funding source was established to support the peer mediation program.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
14. The school at large was well informed about the mediation program.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
15. The mediation program was adequately communicated to faculty, staff, students, parents, and administrators.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
16. The process for referring students for mediation was clear and easy to follow.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
17. The conference room provided a positive setting for the mediations.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
18. Scheduling mediations during the school day worked well for students.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
19. Scheduling mediations during the school day worked well for teachers.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
20. The mediation process supported student confidentiality.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
21. Mediations took place in a timely manner.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
22. Guidelines were established to evaluate the peer mediation program.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
23. The peer mediation program helped reduce student-to-student conflicts at our school?
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree

24. The peer mediation program had a positive affect on our school's climate?
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
25. Our school environment encourages a collaborative culture that supports peer mediation.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neither agree nor disagree d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree

Short Answer Essay:

26. What, if any, were the benefits to the student body as a result of the peer mediation program?
27. What, if any, were the benefits to the mediators as a result of the peer mediation program?
28. What were the major challenges facing the peer mediation program?
29. Would you support the continuation of a peer mediation program at WMS?
30. What changes would you recommend to improve the peer mediation program if it were to continue?