

Sealth High School 1998-1999 Training Project Evaluation Outcomes

This study involves 149 ninth grade students who were trained in conflict mediation and given pre and posttest questionnaires. They were compared with a control group of students who were given the same pre and posttests without intervention of conflict mediation training. The results (see table on page 3) indicate that conflict mediation training has a significant positive effect upon the students' knowledge of conflict resolution skills and upon their understanding of people who are different from them.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether conflict mediation training has an effect on students' perceptions of their behavior and skills and on their view of the school's environment.

The program used in this study was CRU Institute's secondary school conflict mediation training program designed for use in the classroom. It consists of interactive training, trainer demonstration, role play practice, and videos. The program teaches students how to mediate disputes for others and how to use negotiation skills or "be their own mediator."

The subjects of this study were all 9th grade students (approximately 200) at Sealth High School located in Seattle, WA. The school is an inner city school, and demographics for 1998-99 as reported by the district are: 3.3% Native American, 15.4% African American, 19.9% Latino, 30.4% Asian, and 31.3% White. Fifty-one point seven percent of the 946 student population are on free or reduced lunch, 47.1% are not living with both parents, and 18.7% have Limited English proficiency. Although statistics were not obtained, it is assumed that the study subjects were representative of the total population of the school.

A control group consisting of 15 eighth grade students who had not had mediation training was chosen. The group was from Washington Middle School in Seattle, WA. The 1998-99 demographics for students at this school as reported by the district are 2% American Indian, 15% Asian, 28% African American, 5% Latino, and 50% Caucasian. Eight percent are special education and 4% are bilingual education.

The study design was a pre-post test model. Each of eight classes of 9th grade students with approximately 25 students per class, were given the study questionnaire. (See CRU Institute program evaluation, peer mediation) These questionnaires were presented to the students by their classroom teacher prior to conflict mediation training. The teachers were instructed to tell the students to be honest about their responses and to inform the students that they would not be in trouble for negative responses. Further, students were not required to write their name on the questionnaire. The completed questionnaires were collected by the classroom teachers and given to CRU Institute for evaluation. CRU trainers then conducted eight hours of conflict mediation training for each of the eight classes. At the conclusion of the training, CRU trainers distributed the same questionnaire to students in the class and gave the same instruction as classroom teachers had given regarding honesty in filling out the questionnaire.

Conflict mediation training for each class was conducted in four sessions, each two hours long. The training was conducted by CRU trainers. Session one consisted of an introduction to conflict resolution strategies, Rumors video, discussion of the qualities of a mediator and the mediation process, small group role play practice, and two listening skill activities. Session two consisted of a review of session one, two exercises on listening and communication skills, demonstration and discussion on feelings and "I" messages, trainers demonstrated "being your own mediator," and role play practice. The third session consisted of a review of session two, exercises on recognizing others' point of view, a story and video, Names, dealing with cultural diversity and conflict, and a discussion of how differences are dealt with in their school and what problems might occur as a result of put downs and ridicule by other students. Session four consisted of a "stop action" role play to review the mediation process, presentation and discussion of mediation techniques, and student practice in small groups on "being your own mediator" and demonstrating this technique for the class.

Pre and Posttest questionnaires were matched and only those where participants had responded to both questionnaires were used. A total of 149 students were in the final sample. This included 84 girls and 65 boys. Pre and posttest data was analyzed by Time Sequence (t -test) methodology. The mean for each sub element, both pre and post, was computed. The pre and post mean data was analyzed to determine the p and t values.

The students in the control group were given the questionnaire and were given the same instruction regarding honesty in answering it. About ten weeks later the control group was given the questionnaire again. They were again instructed to be honest in their responses. There was no conflict mediation training given to these students between the pre and posttests. Both sets of questionnaires were administered by the school counselor and given to CRU for analysis. Pre and posttests were matched and there was attrition of one as that person was determined to have had mediation training. The final control group sample consisted of 14 students.

The measure used to assess students' responses pre and post training, was CRU program evaluation for peer mediators (see questionnaire for details: Appendix B). The four main categories were:

1. How do you resolve conflict with family, friends, in sports, and with strangers?
2. How do you rate yourself in the following areas: your school attendance, arriving at class on time, your self-esteem, the way you get along with your parents, the way you get along with your friends, your grades, your attitude in the classroom, and your self-control?
3. How do you rate your: ability to communicate with others, ability to help solve conflicts, listening skills, sensitivity to students whose backgrounds are different from yours, knowledge of conflict resolution strategies?
4. Rate the following conditions at your school: safety, the way people talk to each other, school spirit, and violence.

The results of the study are presented in the attached table (see page 3).

The measures used in the study appeared to us to possess face validity as they measure participants' ability to resolve conflict. We believe the measures to be reliable as feedback from the groups tested was that they clearly understood the questions. However, there may have been some confusion with the last question regarding violence in the school. This is discussed below.

We recognize that the numbers of the control group are small. However, we present it in conformance with the guidelines presented. This is an exploratory study, and although the findings are encouraging more research will need to be done.

The study outcomes reveal no significant change in the control group. However, the group trained in conflict mediation skills showed significant changes in several categories. There was a positive change in the aggregate group's ability to resolve conflict with strangers. Also, there were significant positive changes in three of the four categories of question 3. Interestingly, boys seemed to have a positive change in more areas than girls. The lack of significant change in answers to question 2 may be related to the fact that there had not been enough time for the change to occur. This area should be retested to assess whether there is change in the future. Question 4, posttest responses indicate that the trained students rated their school as significantly more safe, but rated violence at their school as significantly worse. It is possible that students noticed violent incidents more as a result of the training. It is also possible that a stabbing at the school which occurred during the time period in which six of the classes were trained may have influenced this score. However, a comparison of the scores of the two groups trained in another time period revealed similar scores. Another possibility is that the way in which this question appears on the questionnaire (1=very high and 5=low) may have been confusing. All other questions were rated 1=excellent and 5=poor.

In summary, it appears from our findings that conflict mediation training has a positive effect on students' assessment of their ability to communicate, to help solve conflicts, and their knowledge of conflict resolution strategies. Further, students' perceptions of their sensitivity to others who are different from them significantly increased. These changes increase students' social and emotional competency. Although further study is needed, our findings show positive changes in the trained students. Future research will include a larger control group and retesting of the trained students to assess further change.

Question 1 - Generally how do you resolve conflict:					
	With Family?	With Friends?	In Sports?	With Strangers?	
Male n=65	Mean Before	2.18	2.04	2.87	3.25
	Mean After	2.01	1.89	3.08	2.83
	p	0.09	0.18	0.14	0.004
	T	1.75	1.34	1.49	2.98
	n=	65	64	62	63
Female n=84	Mean before	1.96	1.55	2.48	2.67
	Mean after	1.87	1.41	2.39	2.50
	p	0.23	0.14	0.28	0.09
	T	1.20	1.50	1.09	1.71
	n=	82	82	75	78
Group n=149	Mean before	2.06	1.76	2.65	2.93
	Mean after	1.93	1.63	2.72	2.67
	p	0.07	0.08	0.36	0.002
	T	1.81	1.77	0.91	3.10
	n=	147	146	137	141

n = number of subjects
Scale:
1 = Excellent 5 = Poor
Statistically significant values:
p value < .05
t test > 1.96

Question 2 - How do you rate yourself in the following areas:

	Your self-esteem?	The way you get along with your parents?	The way you get along with friends?	Your grades?	Your attitude in the classroom?	Your self-control?	Your school attendance?	Arriving to classes on time?
Male n=65	Mean Before	1.50	1.62	2.05	2.32	1.82	2.36	2.15
	Mean After	1.53	1.58	2.00	2.24	1.72	2.25	2.22
	p	0.36	0.36	0.34	0.20	0.15	0.10	0.30
	T	0.92	0.92	0.96	1.31	1.46	1.68	1.06
	n=	64	65	65	65	65	65	65
Female n=84	Mean before	1.86	1.84	2.17	2.50	1.63	2.29	2.08
	Mean after	1.85	1.90	2.04	2.52	1.67	2.23	2.01
	p	0.45	0.22	0.09	0.43	0.32	0.23	0.39
	T	0.77	1.23	1.71	0.79	1.01	1.22	0.86
	n=	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
Group n=149	Mean before	1.70	1.74	2.11	2.42	1.71	2.32	2.11
	Mean after	1.70	1.77	2.17	2.50	1.63	2.29	2.08
	p	0.46	0.35	2.04	2.52	1.67	2.23	2.07
	T	0.75	0.93	0.09	0.43	0.32	0.23	0.39
	n=	148	149	149	149	149	149	149

Question 3 -How do you rate yourself in the following areas:

	My ability to communicate?	My ability to help resolve conflicts?	My Listening skills?	My sensitivity to students whose backgrounds are different from mine?	My knowledge of conflict resolution skills?
Male n=65	Mean Before	2.56	3.09	2.45	2.16
	Mean After	2.31	2.59	2.31	1.89
	p	0.03	0.001	0.13	0.02
	T	2.20	3.40	1.53	2.39
	n=	64	64	64	64
Female n=84	Mean before	2.32	2.85	2.23	1.81
	Mean after	2.24	2.63	2.18	1.72
	p	0.17	0.03	0.31	0.15
	T	1.39	2.24	1.02	1.46
	n=	82	83	83	83
Group n=149	Mean before	2.43	2.96	2.33	1.96
	Mean after	2.27	2.61	2.24	1.80
	p	0.02	0.0002	0.13	0.01
	T	2.35	3.82	1.54	2.53
	n=	146	147	147	145

Question 4 - rate the following conditions at your school?

	Safety?	The way people talk to each other?	School spirit?	Violence?	
Male n=65	Mean Before	3.06	3.47	3.07	2.67
	Mean After	2.78	3.36	3.05	2.96
	p	0.02	0.22	0.46	0.02
	T	2.38	1.25	0.74	2.38
	n=	64	64	64	64
Female n=84	Mean before	2.80	3.40	2.87	2.76
	Mean after	2.76	3.30	3.00	2.86
	p	0.34	0.18	0.13	0.23
	T	0.95	1.35	1.53	1.20
	n=	83	83	83	83
Group n=149	Mean before	2.91	3.43	2.96	2.72
	Mean after	2.78	3.33	3.03	2.90
	p	0.03	0.11	0.24	0.03
	T	2.14	1.59	1.19	2.19
	n=	147	147	147	147