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ABSTRACT

This document presents a critical analysis of two of the most popular types of programs that schools have implemented to prevent violence among students: (1) mediation programs, and (2) conflict resolution curricula. While both promote interpersonal skills necessary to prevent violence, their effectiveness has not been evaluated adequately. These programs are not sufficient by themselves to promote peace among youth, since they do not transcend the interpersonal level of conflicts to consider the involvement of groups of students, the school system, families, and communities in both the causes of violence and the promotion of peace as an alternative. Several mediation programs are described. The results from these programs seem to be positive, but usually only students who already possess social skills are trained as mediators, and they do not deal with situations where firearms, drugs, and physical or sexual abuse are involved. The goal of conflict resolution curricula is to teach students how to deal with interpersonal conflicts in a positive, nonviolent way. Among the most popular conflict resolution curricula available to schools are: (1) curricula that stand on their own; (2) curricula that are part of a set in different areas; and (3) those with a narrow focus. Research in both areas is highlighted. This article presents some possible characteristics of the next generation of violence prevention programs including comprehensive programs, continuous programs, creating caring communities, incorporating cognitive, affective, and behavioral components, and training students, school staff, and community representatives on conflict resolution and mediation. (DK)

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Promoting Peace: Integrating Curricula to Deal With Violence

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Youth violence has become a social problem in contemporary America. Youngsters are frequently both the perpetrators and victims of violence. In response, schools have implemented several types of programs to prevent violence among their students. This article presents a critical analysis of two of the most popular: mediation programs and conflict resolution curricula. While both promote interpersonal skills necessary to prevent violence, their effectiveness has not been evaluated adequately. Furthermore we believe these programs are not sufficient by themselves to promote peace among our youths, since they do not transcend the interpersonal level of conflicts to consider the involvement of groups of students, the school system, families and communities in both the causes of violence and the promotion of peace as an alternative. This article presents what we think should be the characteristics of the "next wave" of violence prevention programs. Or maybe we should emphasize the positive and establish as our goals not only to prevent violence, but to promote peace.

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Atlanta, Georgia, April 1993.



"A powerful handgun taken to school by a teenager who feared gangs fired accidentally in a class Thursday, killing one student and wounding a second, police said... The armed youth apologized to about 30 classmates and waited for police, teacher Charles Schwartz said. 'I am sorry. I didn't mean to do it,' students quoted the 15-year-old as saying." This cable from the Associated Press (1/22/93) reflects an increasing trend in contemporary America for youngsters to resort to violence to solve their conflicts. For this paper we will adopt the National Research Council definition of violence: "behaviors by individuals that intentionally threaten, attempt, or inflict physical harm on others" (NRC, 1993, p.2).

It is not uncommon to see reports that conclude with statements such as: "violence and injury account for three of four adolescent deaths" (Gans, Blyth, Elster, and Gaveras, 1990, p. xi). Frequently the perpetrators of violence are also youngsters (especially adolescents). According to the same report, "homicide is the leading cause of death among black 15- to 19-year-olds" (p.xi). Through a survey, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement found that teachers report more physical violence among middle school students than among high school students (1987).

According to Simons, Finlay, and Yang (1991), in 1988 the arrest rates among 18-year-olds for violent crimes and weapons violations was at its highest point in 20 years. That same year the rates for property crimes and drug offenses were near its

highest point this century. They also report that gang related violence is on the rise (Riley, 1991).

Gaustad (1991) reports that even school teachers are part of this wave of violence; in San Francisco three high school teachers admitted to reporters that they were carrying weapons to school to defend themselves from student attacks. Gaustad (1991) also reports that only about one third of all violent crime committed against youths is reported. In the same article a longitudinal study is cited that found that children that were violent at age eight tended to remain violent when they reached adulthood (Gaustad, 1991).

In recent years several organizations have responded to youth violence. In 1991 the American Psychological Association established its Commission on Youth and Violence. Among the tasks this commission has is to "articulate the state of psychological knowledge related to violence and youth" (Gentry & Eron, 1993, p.89). Some organizations have published volumes analyzing this issue (e.g. National Research Council, 1993). The National Crime Prevention Council has developed programs and curricula aimed at reducing violence among young Americans (Calhoun, 1988). Other programs focusing on mediation and conflict resolution have been developed by local school districts and other agencies. These two programs could be denominated the "first wave" of programs designed to prevent violence among our youth.

The goals of this paper are to analyze several of the most widely implemented school responses to the problem of violence,

namely mediation programs and conflict resolution curricula, and to present some recommendations that we think should characterize the "second wave" of violence prevention programs. Our analysis has concentrated on curricula and programs for adolescents in middle and high school grades. We have not included curricula to prevent gang violence in our analysis.

Even though several of the violence prevention programs analyzed in this paper focus on social skills and do not explicitly emphasize values, it is clear to us that they are attempting to communicate to youngsters the importance of values such as caring, empathy and respect. Actually we could say that the purpose of all violence prevention programs is to promote **PEACE**. We define peace in a broad sense, as both preventing violence (negative peace) and promoting some form of social justice and development (positive peace; Reardon, 1988). In changing the way we conceive violence prevention programs (and we think a change is needed) we could start by emphasizing in the name of our programs the goal we are striving for, and refer to them as "peace education" programs.

Mediation Programs

This section presents a description and gives examples of mediation programs in schools. In a typical mediation program, some students are trained to intervene when conflicts between fellow students or between students and teachers arise: "Student mediators are facilitators who help disputants settle their own problems in a mutually gainful manner. They do not act as a

counselor, judge, lawyer, or advice giver; they remain neutral and treat people and problems with respect as they take the disputants through the process--from stating the problem to writing the agreement" (Araki & Takeshita, 1991, p.33).

An example of a mediation program is Mediation for Kids¹. This program is designed for grades 3-12 and can be taught from a manual (many others require staff training). While this program suggests that all students be trained as mediators, many mediation programs train just a few students.

NAME, the National Association for Mediation in Education², has probably been the most active organization in promoting the teaching of mediation (and conflict resolution) skills in schools. NAME publishes books, curricula, a newsletter (The Fourth R), and organizes annual conferences and workshops. In these workshops teachers and other professionals learn how to train their own students to be mediators.

The results from such mediation programs seem to be positive. Araki and Takeshita (1991) report that in a specific program 95% of the cases where mediators intervened, differences were resolved. While this results are impressive, the evaluation was not rigorous. The results came mostly from self-reports, and the validity of these as data gathering instruments is questionable.

Also from this evaluation it seems that only those trained to be mediators learn the social skills necessary to solve conflicts non-violently (Araki & Takeshita, 1991). And these many times are students that already had good social skills (some evidence for

this was found by Kaufman, 1991). We believe that the social skills required to solve conflicts non-violently (communication, perspective taking, anger control, stress management, non-violent behavioral repertoire) should be learned by all students, and not just those trained as mediators.

Mediation programs do not deal with situations where firearms, drugs, and physical/sexual abuse are involved (Schmidt, Friedman, Marvel, 1992), which as noted before are becoming a frequent occurrence in American schools. Mediation programs only deal with interpersonal problems such as gossip, dirty looks, classroom behavior, harassment, jealousy, fights, and invasion of privacy (Araki & Takeshita, 1991), thus making this approach a limited one when conflicts arise that involve more than two individuals.

Conflict Resolution Curricula

This section presents the general characteristics of conflict resolution curricula but attempt to teach pro-social skills to all students. Conflict resolution curricula usually assume that conflicts are a normal part of life and may have a positive value. Thus the goal of conflict resolution curricula is to teach students how to deal with interpersonal conflicts in a positive, non-violent way. To accomplish this, students are taught several skills such as: How to listen, how to express personal feelings in an assertive manner, how to solve problems and make decisions so that both parties "win", and in some situations how to escape a conflict where no peaceful solution is likely (e.g. when a gun is involved). Among the teaching strategies adopted frequently by

conflict resolution curricula are brainstorming, class discussion, role playing, small group learning, using media and handouts for seatwork and homework. Figure 1 presents several of these curricula:

(Insert figure 1 here)

Conflict resolution curricula offer a set of exercises aimed at various conflict resolution skills. These exercises usually reflect the author's perceptions of the causes or correlates of violence. Many curricula focus on one pro-social skill and offer a little bit of other pro-social skills, without much theoretical backbone. Among the most popular conflict resolution curricula available to schools are:

1) Curricula that stand on their own, such as Conflict Resolution: A Secondary School Curriculum (1987) published by the Community Board Program of San Francisco. This curriculum focuses on several interpersonal skills, especially communication and cooperation, as deterrents of violence. This organization also has published a conflict resolution curriculum for elementary grades.

Another example of this type of curricula is Second Step. A Violence-Prevention Curriculum, published by the Committee for Children (1990) and designed for grades 6-8. This curriculum is designed to teach "empathy training, interpersonal cognitive problem solving, behavioral social skill training and anger management" (p.1).

2) Curricula that are part of a set in different areas, such as Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents (Prothrow-Stith, 1987). This curriculum is part of the Teenage Health Teaching Modules, that includes curricula in other areas such as drug abuse prevention, health, and family relations. This curriculum is designed for secondary school students and teaches several social skills, with a special focus on anger control. Among their goals are to:

-Increase students' awareness of the causes and effects of violence... - Assist students in learning that anger is a normal part of life, and that anger can be expressed and channeled in healthy, constructive ways... - Enable students to identify positive ways to express anger - Encourage students to think about alternatives to violence in conflict situations (Prothrow-Stith, 1987, p.4).

3) Curricula with a narrow focus such as The Magic of Conflict (Crum, 1987). The curriculum is based on an approach called aiki, which "combines the latest breakthroughs in conflict resolution, stress management and optimum performance from science, education, sports and business with mind/body training techniques from the Japanese martial art of Aikido" (training manual, p.3). The Magic of Conflict is based on the skill of "centering". This skill, or state of being, is supposed to help youngsters get in touch with their internal power when solving interpersonal conflicts. The Magic of Conflict includes manual for teachers, one for students, a video and cassette tapes. This curriculum

seems to us is narrow in that it emphasizes the personal aspect of solving conflicts, orienting their exercises towards how to stay calm during a conflict and react in a non-violent way.

Enright has done extensive research on forgiveness (Enright, Gassin, Wu, 1992). His work suggests to us that while some of the skills taught by conflict resolution could solve specific problems on the surface, if forgiveness is not granted by the person offended, the potential is great for the conflict arising in some other form. Enright presents a stage theory of forgiveness that could be useful for educators. Forgiveness is an interpersonal skill (or value) that is not mentioned by any of the curricula we reviewed and would seem to be an essential component of conflict resolution.

While the skills mentioned by each of the curricula cited are necessary to prevent violence, we think it is naive to believe that a single curriculum would succeed in accomplishing all the different goals cited. Although conflict resolution curricula go one step beyond mediation programs in that they teach social skills to all youngsters (instead of just a group of mediators), their approach is limited by the fact that they only address situations where interpersonal problems (usually between peers) occur. While necessary, these skills may not be sufficient when more complex problems arise.

Among the complex problems adolescents have to face are poverty, stereotyping and racism. While interpersonal skills could help solve specific occurrences of these problems, we

believe that a more comprehensive approach is needed to solve conflicts that, like racism, permeate the school, the community, or society itself. By addressing only interpersonal problems, conflict resolution curricula often times deal only with the symptoms of the problems of violence. The structural roots of these problems are probably found in the way families, schools, communities, and societies themselves function. While schools cannot take on by themselves the task of solving social problems, they should not ignore them either by focusing only on interpersonal conflicts.

Another problem with conflict resolution curricula is that they are usually designed for a specific class (e.g. health and safety) in a specific grade (frequently middle school) during a limited time (about a month), although the authors of these materials frequently recognize that violence is a complex problem. Frequently they realize this limitation and expect their materials only to be a "starting point". But youngsters need to learn how to solve interpersonal conflicts in school, in the family, in the community, and throughout their lifetime. How could this be accomplished? In the last section of this paper we present a few of the recommendations we think need to be implemented to prevent violence among our youths. First we present a review of some of the studies that have evaluated the effectiveness of mediation and conflict resolution programs.

Evaluation of Violence Prevention Programs

The state of Ohio has established a Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management that has established a three-year demonstration project (1990-1993). The commission evaluated violence prevention programs (which they call "conflict management" programs) in 17 schools (Kaufman, 1991). These programs include both conflict resolution and mediation programs. The results are modestly positive, although the Commission expects better results after a few years of implementation. Also the results come only from students self-reports and not from actual behavioral accounts.

The Iowa Peace Institute has compared seven conflict resolution and mediation curricula (1992), many of them included in Table 1. After describing them they acknowledge that for most there is no evaluation data available.

Wilson-Brewer, Cohen, O'Donnell, and Goodman (1991) have surveyed violence prevention programs for the youth around the U.S.A. Most of these programs were based on conflict resolution techniques. The programs studied seemed very effective in the eyes of those administering them and even by youngsters participating in them. But when discussing the limited number of evaluations conducted about these programs, the authors conclude that "In short, there have been only a handful of programs that have been evaluated at a level approaching rigorous experimental design. None would meet the rigorous methodologic standards of outcome evaluation" (p.57). Thus we can see that the

effectiveness of mediation programs and conflict resolution curricula has not been established.

Even if conflict resolution curricula and training programs were effective, what then? Schools are dealing these days with problems in other areas of youth behavior, such alcohol and drug abuse, gangs, teenage pregnancies, drunk driving, eating disorders, suicide. Should schools buy a curriculum in each one of these areas and train teachers to incorporate them in their classes as isolated programs? We believe the answer is a resounding "no". Instead the next section presents our recommendations on how to improve violence prevention programs.

Recommendations

What can we conclude from the above discussion? It seems clear to us that while mediation programs, conflict resolution curricula and other types of materials are positive and necessary efforts to prevent violence among our youth, they are not enough. The reason for this is essentially that violence is too complex a problem to be dealt with programs that train only a few students (mediation programs) or with a curriculum that is implemented as a one-time effort only (conflict resolution curricula).

Training programs and curricula in general many times have a second problem, and that is that they are not flexible enough to accommodate specific characteristics of the environments where they are implemented. It seems to us that the characteristics of youth violence are different in every site and the programs designed to prevent them should accommodate these.

We believe that the next generation, or second wave, of violence prevention programs should be developed locally and be characterized by:

1) Comprehensive programs: It is evident from other areas of prevention in education (e.g. drug abuse) that if violence prevention programs are to succeed they need to include schools as well as parents and community organizations (e.g. police departments, youth clubs and agencies, churches, businesses, newspapers, radio and television stations).

Traditionally schools have been assigned the task of educating the youth in every area deemed important on top of teaching youngsters traditional subject matters. Simply put, schools are being asked to do too much and not offered the assistance of other groups in the community in a coordinated effort to prevent violence. We might be having some change in this direction already. In fact, some of the programs described by Wilson-Brewer, Cohen, O'Donnell, and Goodman (1991) did include community participation as a fundamental component.

If violence prevention programs are developed with the input of a broad sector of the community (including the students themselves) under the guidance of the school, the chances of them being responsive to specific local needs are great. Also by participating, community residents gain some ownership over the program, and this seems to be an important factor in the success of any educational intervention (Havelock, 1973). Community

participation would also favor what is probably a very effective way to teach violence prevention: through modeling.

2) Continuous programs: We also believe that to be effective, violence prevention programs need to be implemented by the whole school and community on a continuous basis. Conflict resolution curricula are usually designed to be implemented as another course, within a class, during a specific time frame. Youngsters need to learn that the need to avoid violence is permanent, in and out of school.

3) Creating caring communities: Noddings (1992) has argued for the need to create caring schools in caring communities as the main goal of education. In caring environments conflicts would occur, but they would not escalate into violence because one of the main concerns of the individuals would be not to hurt other members of the caring network. To accomplish this, youngsters need to learn how to solve interpersonal problems (conflict resolution curricula could help accomplish this), mediate problems among their peers (mediation programs could help accomplish this), and also be involved in the school's overall climate and well-being. To create caring environments schools need to be responsive to the students' needs and interests, so that they become student-centered. Caring communities also need to be aware of its structural problems (e.g. racism, poverty) and be willing to discuss them to find solutions.

To create caring environments school administrators could share some of the decision-making with the students through

democratic practices (the work of Lawrence Kohlberg in developing the Just Community model could be helpful in doing this; Power, Higgins, Kohlberg, 1989). These democratic practices have been implemented in the form of meetings to discuss issues of justice and discipline at the high school level. In earlier grades, students could be given power in generating some of the class rules. The goal of Kohlberg was to create a community of students and teachers, and we think that succeeding in creating such an environment would be a good deterrent of violence.

4) Incorporating cognitive, affective and behavioral components into the program: The skills taught by the different mediation programs and conflict resolution curricula could be classified in three interrelated domains: Cognitive, affective and behavioral. In the cognitive domain, youngsters need to learn skills such as problem solving and decision-making. In the affective domain they need to learn values such as respect for others, empathy, caring, and forgiveness. In the behavioral domain, youngsters need to learn behaviors such as communication, anger control, and a non-violent repertoire of behaviors.

5) Training students, school staff and community representatives on conflict resolution and mediation: Johnson and Johnson (1992) report that teachers receive very little training in how to deal with issues of violence. Moreover, these authors have noted that teachers may actually need a year or two of classroom experience with the strategies before they actually become a natural part of their teaching.

We realize that we are suggesting recommendations that are difficult to implement. We believe there is no other way. Since youth violence is a complex problem (with causes that are beyond the scope of this article), the educational interventions designed to prevent violence must be equally complex. This complexity results from the fact that the main issue we are dealing with here is about teaching values. More specifically violence prevention programs are attempting to teach peace as a fundamental value, and violence prevention programs should be more open about their values message. We strongly believe that promoting peace should be a top priority of American schools and communities in this era of school reform and restructuring.

Notes

The addresses for the institutions and publishers mentioned in the article are:

- ¹ Mediation for Kids
Peace Education Foundation, Inc.
2627 Biscayne Boulevard
Miami, Florida 33137-3854
(305) 576-5075
- ² UMASS/NAME
c/o Mediation Project
139 Whitmore
University of Massachusetts at Amherst
Amherst, MA 01003
- ³ Alternatives to Violence
Peace GROWS
513 West Exchange
Akron, OH. 44302
- ⁴ Conflict Resolution: A Secondary Curriculum
1540 Market Street, Room 490
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 552-1250
- ⁵ Creative Conflict Solving for Kids: 5-9
Peace Education Foundation, Inc.
2627 Biscayne Boulevard
Miami, FL. 33137-3854
(305) 576-5075
- ⁶ Creative Controversies
Interaction Book Company
7208 Cornelia Drive
Edina, MN. 55345
(612) 831-9500
- ⁷ Dealing with Anger
Research Press
2612 North Mattis Avenue
Champaign, IL. 61821
- ⁸ Discover Your Conflict Management Style
The Alban Institute
4125 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 200016
- ⁹ Fighting Fair: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for Kids (4-9)
Peace Education Foundation, Inc.
2627 Biscayne Boulevard, Inc.

Miami, FL. 33137-3854
(305) 576-5075

- 10 Into Adolescence: Stopping Violence
Network Publications
P.O. Box 1830
Santa Cruz, CA. 95061-1830

- 11 Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum
Committee for Children
172 20th Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98122
(206) 322-5050

- 12 The Magic of Conflict
AIKI Works, INC.
P.O. Box 7845
Aspen Colorado
(303) 925-7099

- 13 Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents
Education Development Center
55 Chapel Street, Suite 24, Newton, MA 02160
(800) 225-4275

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Riley, K. (1991). Street Gangs and the Schools: A Blueprint for Intervention. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.

Schmidt, F., Friedman, A. & Marvel, J. (1992). Mediation for Kids Kids in Dispute Settlement (2nd ed). Miami, FL: Grace Contrino Abrams Peace Education Foundation, Inc.

Simons, J., Finlay, B. & Yang, A. (1991). The Adolescent & Young Adult Fact Book. Washington: Children's Defense Book.

The Iowa Peace Institute (Dec. 1991/ Jan. 1992). Fostering peace: A comparison of seven conflict resolution approaches for students. The Fourth R, 36, 1,4-7

Wilson-Brewer, R., Cohen, S., O'Donnell, L. & Goodman, I. (1991). Violence Prevention for Young Adolescents: A Survey of the State of the Art. Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development Working Papers. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Corporation.

FIGURE 1: VIOLENCE PREVENTION CURRICULA & MATERIALS

Curricula	Date	Grades	Brainstorming	Class Discussion	Homework	Lecture	Media	Roleplay	Small Group Activities	Seatwork
<u>Alternatives to Violence</u> (3)	1984	adult/teens	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
<u>Conflict Resolution: Secondary Curriculum</u> (4)	1987	6-12	X	X	X	X		X	X	X ^A
<u>Creative Conflict Solving for Kids</u> (5)	1985	4-9	X	X			X	X	X	X
<u>Creative Controversy</u> (6)	1992	6-12	X	X				X	X	X
<u>Dealing With Anger</u> (7)	1991	Not Specified		X	X		X	X		
<u>Discover Your Conflict Management Style</u> (8)	1991	all		X					X	
<u>Fighting Fair: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.</u> (9)	1990	4-9	X	X				X	X	X
<u>Into Adolescence: Stopping Violence</u> (10)	1991	5-8	X	X			X	X	X	
<u>Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum</u> (11)	1990	6-8	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
<u>The Magic of Conflict</u> (12)	1987	6-12	X	X			X	X	X	
<u>Violence Prevention Curriculum</u> (13)	1987	6-12	X	X	X		X	X	X	X