Western Justice Center
Foundation (WJCF) and
the Association for
Conflict Resolution (ACR)

Public Policy and Conflict Resolution in Education Project

Final Report
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Executive Summary

The Western Justice Center Foundation in Pasadena, California, in partnership with the Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR), undertook a project funded by the Compton Foundation to develop recommendations for integrating conflict resolution education (CRE) throughout California public schools. We interviewed and met with relevant practitioners, educators, policymakers and others to assess needs and gather their views with respect to CRE and public policy.

While there was no attempt to reach unity in the meetings that followed the interview phase, there were some common threads that emerged: the need for a well-funded coordinating body to spearhead the effort; the need for a flexible and comprehensive approach to integrating CRE programs into the schools; and the importance of research-based evaluation to demonstrate the impact of CRE on academic achievement.

Although 2001 brought near record state funding for already existing violence prevention programs in California, legislation appropriating funds to create new statewide youth violence prevention programs and policies were vetoed by the Governor. He cited declining revenues and a looming budget deficit as reasons for the vetoes. Bills AB 113, AB 79 and SB 398 are particularly relevant. AB 113 is a bill approved by the Governor in 1999 that allocates funds, in the form of small safety grants to schools and school districts, to establish programs that promote safety and emphasize violence prevention among youth in grades 8-12. Its scope and reach are narrow and its funding is limited. AB 79 was signed by the governor in 2001 and requires the Department of Education to develop model policies on conflict resolution and the prevention of bullying, to make the model policies available to school districts, and to require schools receiving the grants to have bully prevention and CRE policies in place. The bill did not require any additional funding which increased its odds of passing. It did not expand the scope or reach of AB 113. A third bill, SB 398, was much broader in reach (grades 1-12) and scope (the development and implementation of a model curriculum) than the two other bills. It also requested $300,000 in funding and as a result met an untimely end in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

The central challenge CRE supporters face is to develop a comprehensive K-12 policy that is well funded. With this goal in mind, there are several "next steps" to be considered, including convening a policy dialogue among key educational organizations; holding strategy meetings with legislators and legislative staff; working with the Department of Education to adapt program guidelines as part of the safety planning grant requirements; exploring creative funding options; and creating a consortium of foundation support for this work.

Introduction and Overview

The Western Justice Center Foundation in Pasadena, California and the Association for Conflict Resolution received a grant from the Compton Foundation to develop recommendations for integrating conflict resolution education (CRE) throughout California schools, which could help inform efforts in other states as well. The first phase of the project involved identifying and describing any cases of implementation of conflict resolution through State Departments of Education and/or state legislation. Our first priority was to identify states that mandate CRE in their schools and have implementation plans in place.

Our research led us to nine states that we included in the case study: Tennessee, North Carolina, Washington, Oregon, Vermont, Illinois, Ohio, Minnesota and Missouri. Missouri was selected as the heart of our case study because of their comprehensive approach to the development and on-going implementation of state statutes mandating conflict resolution education in the schools.

The results of this Phase One effort are documented in the Case Study Report noted in the Appendix.

Phase Two of the project focused on California. We interviewed practitioners, educators and others with a statewide perspective on education and legislative action to assess their needs and interests with respect to conflict resolution education (CRE) and public policy. A total of 38 phone interviews were conducted with 47% of the subjects being practitioners, 35% school-based educators and 18% representing a statewide point of view.

The data from these interviews were integrated into the California Report also noted in the Appendix.

Interview participants were invited to continue the conversation about developing recommendations for statewide integration of CRE in the schools at one of two regional meetings, held in Pasadena and Santa Rosa, California.

The goal of the meetings was to develop a set of recommendations that could serve as next steps in the process of developing a legislative approach to integrating conflict resolution into the fabric of school communities.

The meetings were designed around the elements found to be key to developing and implementing a successful public policy approach to conflict resolution education. These elements were identified through our research of Missouri and the other states that had undertaken legislative action.

The elements are:

1. **Funding.** It is important that any mandate be connected to funding to ensure implementation and that the funding be housed in a stable place such as under the Department of Education.

2. **Institutionalization.** There need to be structures in place to carry out the legislation and to offer resources and technical assistance to schools. In Missouri, the Missouri Center for Safe Schools was asked by the Governor's Office and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop and implement strategies that would ensure that the legislation was consistently put into practice throughout the state.

3. **Model.** Providing a research-based curriculum model rooted in best practices is critical to winning support and ensuring longevity. Things to consider are designing flexibility in implementation; making all components an integrated part of the instructional program rather than a separate program of instruction; focusing on overall school change, not just "fixing the kids;" developing a provision for administration of the program at the site level; providing on-going technical assistance; creating an evaluation plan; and making the case for the connection between CRE and academic performance.

4. **Higher Education.** Schools of Education can play a significant role in providing support mechanisms in the various regions of the states by offering pre-service courses in conflict resolution and program evaluation services to the K-12 schools.

5. **Buy-In.** Engaging stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, legislators, parents, students, and state education associations in the development and implementation process is the key to a successful effort. For example, Missouri held a statewide videoconference to gather input as smaller working committee was developing the Curriculum Framework. Or in Minnesota a state sponsored "Make the Peace" Publicity Campaign was designed to promote the implementation of programs in the schools.

Questions surrounding each key element were discussed:

- ***Funding and Buy-In***

    1. What do we need to do in California to promise funding for implementing public policy on conflict resolution education?

    2. What do we have to do in California to get buy-in on public policy for conflict resolution education?

    3. Are there models in other policy areas that address funding and buy-in?

- ***Institutionalization and Higher Education***

    1. What structures need to be in place to ensure that recommendations for integrating CRE into California schools will be implemented?

    2. What role can higher education play in implementing a public policy approach to conflict resolution education in the schools?

    3. Are there models in other policy areas that consider institutionalization and higher education?

- ***Model***

    1. Describe the programmatic approach you would like to see implemented statewide.

    2. Are there models in other policy areas that identify effective approaches to program implementation?

Participants then considered the barriers to integrating CRE as identified through the earlier interviews and brainstormed strategies to address these obstacles.

- **Culture of the school**. Resistance is built into the system. There is a fear of change. Transforming the culture of a school community is a major undertaking. Mandates are seen as red flags by school districts.

- **Standardization** *vs*. **local control.** Districts, schools and classrooms need/want to be able to tailor programs to meet individual needs including cultural, language and age diversity.

- **Time**. Teachers are already overwhelmed and this might be seen as an added responsibility particularly with the state's emphasis on test scores.

- **Leadership**. It is important to fully inform and involve key educational groups and state legislators, get adequate input from all sectors and have the right people at the table. Getting support from the top down across the board. Some also noted the need for a coordinating body to carry the vision forward.

- **Public Relations.** There is a lack of a shared understanding on the value of CRE. In part this is due to: a public perception that punishment is effective, inadequate public education, a conservative political agenda and a tendency to see the value of CRE only in times of crisis such as a school shooting.

The information gathered from the conversations above became the foundation upon which a set of initial preliminary recommendations was built.

The Recommendations

The recommendations focused on three key elements: Institutionalization, Model and Buy-In. Below is a cross section of the types of recommendations that emerged from small work groups:

Institutionalization

- **Group One Recommendations**

We recommend enactment of state legislation mandating conflict resolution education pre-K-16 throughout California schools, carried out under auspices of the Department of Education charged with standardizing criteria re: conflict resolution components and with every School Safety Plan required to include a conflict resolution component.

- **Group Two Recommendations**

We recommend that a working definition of conflict resolution education be developed a state level working conference; that a neutral coordinating body be established by the state to work with school districts to develop strategic plans and connect them with appropriate resources that meet the model program guidelines and serve as a resource to higher education to help them put in place a conflict resolution program for educators; and that anyone in a credentialing teacher program be required to take get conflict resolution training

- **Group 3 Recommendations**

We recommend an adequately funded state level coordinating body that would develop a model policy that school districts could adopt to implement CRE; link conflict resolution education to curriculum standards; and ensure that all teachers and administrators receive CRE training and that each school site has a conflict resolution coordinator.

Model

- **Group 1 Recommendations**

We recommend locally designed models that meet to be determined criteria and hallmarks, such as those addressing flexibility, interactivity, scope, cultural competencies, integrated curricula, school-wide integration, age appropriateness and evaluation.

- **Group 2 Recommendations**

We recommend mandating conflict resolution core pieces that each school would need to address and then provide a menu of options to chose from to meet these core requirements; developing an evaluation component that is an outcome model focusing on changed behaviors; creating a curriculum approach link with academic standards in language arts and social studies with teachers at the center delivering content and skills training that is augmented by after school activities; including a peer mediation component; providing ongoing coaching and follow-up technical assistance; and establishing a "School and Safety Committee" responsible for advocating, implementing and monitoring the program.

- **Group 3 Recommendations**

We recommend a multi-tiered approach (elementary, middle, high school, higher education and parents) based on a flexible curriculum model that infuses CRE into current curriculum with specific age, culture and language appropriate goals established for each tier.

Buy-In

- **Group 1 Recommendations**

We recommend a broad-based public awareness effort, including conflict resolution-oriented PSAs and presentations customized for groups such as legislature, PTAs, and CTA with individual districts convening separate stakeholder meetings with neutral facilitators and language assistance available.

- **Group 2 Recommendations**

  We recommend a "seal of approval" school-based approach including conflict resolution training for staff and youth focus groups to assist with implementation coupled with a media campaign based on an evaluation model that demonstrates the benefits of CRE.

- **Group 3 Recommendations**

  We recommend an educational campaign for stakeholders at the local, state and national level that includes educating voters about the importance of CRE with the goal of creating support for a conflict resolution initiative (like prop 10); this would also involve empowering youth and parents/caregivers to help them help create widespread support for conflict resolution and supporting school site teams to plan and build support for conflict resolution education.

While there was no attempt to reach unity in the range of thinking informing the recommendations, there are a few common threads worth noting: the need for a well funded coordinating body to spearhead the effort; the need for a flexible and comprehensive approach to integrating CRE programs into the schools; and the importance of research-based evaluation that demonstrates the effectiveness of conflict resolution education in an academic setting. All of the above presupposes that funding would need to be attached to any new legislation, a recommendation that was made by all participants.

Legislation

Although 2001 brought near record state funding support for already existing violence prevention programs in California, legislation appropriating funds to create new statewide youth violence prevention programs and policies were vetoed by the Governor. The Governor cited declining revenues and a looming budget deficit as reasons for the vetoes. Important insight into the challenge of a legislative approach to integrating a comprehensive CRE program in the schools can be found in AB113 which passed in 1999 and received increased funding in 2001, AB 79 that passed in 2001 without funding attached and SB 398 that met an untimely death in the Senate Appropriations Committee in 2001. The central challenge is developing a comprehensive k-12 policy that is well funded.

> **AB1113   School Safety and Violence Prevention Act.** The Governor approved this bill on June 30, 1999 and funds were allocated for implementation.

The bill provides for a statewide program to be to administered by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, allocating funds to school districts serving pupils in grades 8-12, inclusive. The funds are to be used to establish programs and strategies that promote school safety and emphasize violence prevention among children and youth in the public schools. The funds are to be used but not limited to providing conflict resolution personnel, providing on-campus communication devices, establishing staff training programs, and establishing cooperative arrangements with law-enforcement agencies. More specifically the intent of the legislation is that school sites receiving funds should attempt to accomplish all of the following goals:

1) **Teach** pupils techniques for resolving conflicts without violence.

2) **Train** school staff and administrators to support and promote conflict resolution and mediation techniques for resolving conflicts between and among pupils.

3) **Reduce** incidents of violence at the school site.

The funding attached to this bill ranged from a minimum of $5,000 per school site and $10,000 per school district for school safety grants.

This bill builds on the School Violence Prevention Grant Program; a statewide grant program coordinated through county offices of education and school districts for school violence prevention programs. Within the last seven years 188 districts out of 1054 districts have applied for these grants. Originally, grantees were required to send a district team to a regional training. But with the passage of this bill and the 1999 Auditor's Report, the focus has shifted to districts obtaining their own training to meet the three recommendations as outlined in the Auditor's report:

1. Training of students to act as peer mediators for other students who have disputes.

2. Incorporation of conflict resolution principles into the students' regular academic curriculum.

3. Education of all members of the school community including parents about methods of alleviating conflicts.

The bill's limitations include that it does not extend to elementary schools, the amount of the grants are insufficient to implement the recommendations, it does not support the creation of a model curriculum and it does not call for the development of program implementation guidelines.

AB796 that would expand this bill to elementary grade levels was introduced, but not enacted in the 2001 legislative session.

AB 79 School Safety Planning Grants. This bill was introduced by Assemblywoman Havice on January 4, 2001 and was signed by the Governor on October 9, 2001. The bill requires the state Department of Education to develop model policies on the prevention of bullying and on conflict resolution and to make the model policies available to school districts. It adds to the existing plan requirements for local school districts and county offices of education receiving school safety grants the requirement that school safety plans must include a policy for prevention of bullying and a policy on conflict resolution.

The bill arose out of Assemblywoman Havice's past experience as a school board member and her observations as Chair of the School Safety Committee. As the bill was being developed, school safety hearings were held around the state that provided feedback into the final tailoring of the bill.

Sponsors of the bill included the California Federation of Teachers, California Teachers Association, California School Employee's Association, California Police Officers' Association, California Association of School Psychologists, Gonzalez and Downey Unified School Districts.

The bill did not request any additional funding which increased its odds of passing. However, this is also a limitation because it puts more demands on the small school safety grants available to school districts. Also, it shares AB 1113 shortcomings with respect to a lack of curriculum and program guidelines.

SB 398 was introduced on February 21, 2001 by Senator Speier, but met an untimely end in Senate Appropriations on July 11, 2001 due to the financial climate in the state that led to a trend in 2001 for the legislature not to allocate money for any new programs. The bill requested $300,000 requiring the Superintendent of Public Education to develop a model conflict resolution curriculum and implementation guidelines for grades 1-12 and required each school district to review and consider the adoption of the model curriculum. It also called for creation of a Conflict Resolution Task Force to assist in the development of the model curriculum.

The genesis of the bill was a Young Women's Health Conference. Senator Speier worked closely with the National Center for Youth Law in the development of the bill. Other sponsors of the bill included the California Association of School Psychologists, California School Employees Association, The Women's Foundation and Girls, Inc.

This bill contains many of the key components that support the State Auditor's recommendations for a developing and implementing effective programs.

The failure of this bill to pass indicates that any future legislative action in California would require an innovative approach to identifying funding sources to support a conflict resolution in education initiative.

Suggested Next Steps

Consensus emerged out of the research, interviewing and convening processes that any state recommendations calling for CRE must be accompanied by funding for implementation. The steps outlined below recognize this and recognize further the current budget crisis in California and the precedent set in 2001 for the governor to veto all measures appropriating funds for new violence prevention programs and policies.

1. **Educator Forum.** Convene the stakeholding organizations whose support for CRE would be critical, such as the California Teachers Association, California School Boards Association, Association of California School Administrators and California Association of Student Councils. This could be structured as a formal "policy dialogue" in which the goal is to develop a comprehensive package of policy recommendations, not all of which need to be proposed legislation, that a broad cross-section of essential stakeholders would advocate among policymakers.

2. **Strategy Sessions.** Convene strategy meetings with legislators and legislative staff to plan a specific strategy for what would be proposed and when. Several specific outcomes might be anticipated: e.g., an agreement to go forward on a legislative package with a simple policy statement, a comprehensive set of implementation plans and resources, perhaps identification of an implementing agency. Other ideas might also emerge, such as an initiative campaign, or plan for state encouragement of local initiatives and experiments, or establishment of a statewide coalition charged with the task of developing a plan and securing resources.

3. **Leveraging Additional State and Federal Resources for CRE.** It may be prudent to design an approach that builds on existing state and federal resources, including linking CRE to AB1113 the School and Violence Prevention Act, and to AB79 concerning School Safety Planning Grants. Since neither of these bills provides program implementation guidelines, it may be very useful to convene meetings of the Department of Education and key stakeholders to explore the guidelines developed recently by the Association for Conflict Resolution, and to link them to school safety plan requirements.

4. **Creative Funding Options.** Any future legislative action on behalf of CRE must provide funding as well. Given the current economic climate in California, attention must be given to identifying creative funding options, such as a model based on the Stamp Act, something similar to the Dispute Resolution Program Act (DRPA) which sets aside a portion of the case filing fee, a tax check-off for conflict resolution, or,

perhaps, providing CRE funding through a percentage of fines related to school vandalism or speeding in school zones.

5. **Linking CRE to Academic Achievement.** Given the emphasis on academic achievement, it would be very useful to undertake the examination and research needed to demonstrate CRE's impact on same, and to link CRE directly to specific academic standards.

6. **Project Financing.** Foundations should be interested in supporting the work outlined above since its projected outcome is to leverage ongoing state and/or federal financing for CRE in the schools.

Conclusion

Many in the education, legislative and conflict resolution communities in California value conflict resolution education highly, including as a violence prevention strategy. The challenges are how to integrate CRE into the schools, and to leverage the funding needed to do so. The good news is that it has been done successfully in other states, and that there are resources to draw on, both locally and nationally.

Appendix A
Additional
Reports

Public Policy and Conflict Resolution in Education Project, Case Study Report, February 2002.

Public Policy and Conflict Resolution in Education Project, California Report, February 2002.

Both reports are available from the Western Justice Center Foundation.

Appendix B
Interviewees

Les Adelson
Superintendent
South Pasadena Unified School District
South Pasadena, CA

Adele Amodeo
Senior Policy Associate
Partnership for Public Health
Oakland, CA

Bob Barrett
Consultant
Former President, California Dispute Resolution Council
Menlo Park, CA

Pat Brown
Executive Director
Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center
San Mateo, CA

Sally Chou
Associate Superintendent
Compton Unified School District
Compton, CA

Larry Cohen
Executive Director
The Prevention Institute
Oakland, CA

Mary Culbert
Professor Loyola Law School
Board member, California Dispute Resolution Center
Los Angeles, CA

Rachael Davis
Schools Program
The Prevention Institute
Oakland, CA

Carolyn Doggett
Executive Director
California Teachers Association
Burlingame, CA

Annette Drey
Teacher
South Pasadena Unified School District
South Pasadena, CA

Dolores Fisette
Principal
Brookside Elementary
Willits, CA

Lynette Forbush
Schools Program Coordinator
Center for Youth Citizenship
Sacramento, CA

Bob Frassinello
Principal
And team: Marian Venaas, David Delgado, Jay McAllister, Jim Chapman, and
  Chris Herman
Nokomis School
Ukiah, CA

Arlen Gregorio
Consultant
And former State Senator
Etna, CA

Ada Hand
California Department of Education.
Elementary Networks Office
Sacramento, CA

Assemblywoman Sally Havice
Compton, CA

Genethia Hayes
Los Angeles School Board
Los Angeles, CA

Rebecca Iverson
Community Boards
San Francisco, CA

Gretchen Jones
SERA Learning
Region Director
San Francisco, CA

Jim Levine
Schools Program Coordinator
Mendocino County Youth Program
Ukiah, CA

Karen Lowrey
California Department of Education
Counseling and Student Support Services
Sacramento, CA

Joe Maloney
Executive Director
Center for Youth Citizenship
Sacramento, CA

Joe Maizlish
Schools Program Director
Martin Luther King Legacy Center
Los Angeles, CA

Margaret Marshall
Director, CR in the Schools
Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center
San Mateo, CA

Ann Nicksic
Professor, Teacher Education Program
Humboldt State University
Fortuna, CA

Pat Nourot
Professor, Teacher Education Program
Sonoma State University
Rohnert Park, CA

Ann Oliver
Consultant
And former ED of Mendocino County Youth Program
Redwood Valley, CA

Richard Rizzo
Chair of Elementary Education
Sonoma State University
Rohnert Park, CA

Gail Rosental
Principal
Allen F. Daily High School
Glendale, CA

Don Russell
Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Sonoma Country Office of Education
Santa Rosa, CA

Meg Sanders
Program Director, CREST
Office of Human Relations
San Jose, CA

Senator Jack Scott
Pasadena, CA

Allan Shore
Executive Director
California Coalition for Youth
Sacramento, CA

Najeeba Syeed-Miller
Executive Director
Asian Pacific American Dispute Resolution Center
Los Angeles, CA

Deborah Thomas
Director of Operations
Dispute Resolution Services
Los Angeles, CA

Kathy Owyang Turner
Executive Director
San Francisco Education Fund
San Francisco, CA

Karen Wandrie
Executive Director
Mendocino County Youth Program
Ukiah, CA

Gail Whang
Department of Student, Family and Community Services
Oakland Unified School District
Oakland, CA

Julie Williamson
Associate Director
Partnership for Public Health
Oakland, CA