



MAKING A DIFFERENCE:

*Creating More Skillful Educators and Students,
and More Peaceful Schools Through
Conflict Resolution Education*

THE MARYLAND SCHOOLS CONFLICT RESOLUTION GRANTS PROGRAM

*A Collaborative Partnership between
The Center for Dispute Resolution at the University of Maryland School of Law,
The Maryland Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office, and
The Maryland State Department of Education*

December 2007



Decreases in Discipline Referrals, Increases in Academic Achievement

“Our goal was to improve our school climate and our students’ lives by teaching social and emotional skills. There was a decrease in discipline referrals as well as an increase in academic achievement with our intermediate students.”

--*Angeline Wagaman, School Counselor
Germantown Elementary School
Anne Arundel County*



Positive Changes in Schools

“At least 5 children who previously were involved in ongoing conflicts now seek adult and peer assistance...Conflicts on the playground during recess and before school have become nearly non-existent. Students solve conflicts more often without adult intervention.”

--*Iris Murdoch, Assistant Principal
Cross Country Elementary School
Baltimore City (after two years of
building a CRE program)*

Students Resolving Their Own Conflicts

“Peer mediation gives us kids a chance. We really don’t want to fight but sometimes get forced into it. Mediation gives us a chance to work it out and save face.”

--*High School Student with a Peer
Mediation Program*



Parents Learning Alternative Ways of Resolving Conflicts

“After the kindergarten lessons were finished, a mother of four called me for an appointment. She said she was interested in learning more about the program, and how she could apply the skills at home to help resolve conflicts between her boisterous children ... she told me it was her kindergartner (the third child) who suggested she call me. She said he told her he had been learning about “conflict resolution” and he wanted her to learn to help them use these skills and talk about their feelings at home. This, for me, was an example of real change.”

--*Cindy Green, Project Manager, Curriculum
-based conflict resolution program, Monocacy
Valley Montessori School, Frederick County*

Educational institutions and teachers possess an incredible power to shape the learning and emotional growth of students in both positive and negative ways. Administrators and teachers are under strong pressure to show improved academic test results and student performance while student safety, youth violence and attendance have become critical concerns. Frequent fighting, teasing or bullying, office referrals, suspensions and expulsions highlight the need for more emphasis on teaching students of all ages better skills for communicating and managing conflicts without violence.

The Conflict Resolution Education Partnership (CRE Partnership) has given over 80 grants to schools in Maryland that have resulted in significant and meaningful changes. Beyond implementing short-term safety measures, Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) involves teaching problem solving, anger management and life lessons for effectively de-escalating and resolving conflicts in productive and peaceful ways. The results of the CRE Partnership show dramatic improvements in schools: successful conflict resolution programs reduce school discipline problems, improve student decision-making skills and increase academic achievement.

In 2002 the Maryland Schools Conflict Resolution Grants Program was created to encourage the development of conflict resolution education initiatives. The Grants Program is a collaborative partnership between the Maryland Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO), a state office within the judiciary, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and the Center for Dispute Resolution at the University of Maryland School of Law (C-DRUM). The schools receive support from the CRE Partnership throughout the year to develop sustainable programs that create meaningful change in the lives of teachers, staff and students. Over the last five years, 62 Maryland elementary, middle and high schools have received funds, skills training and curricular materials about managing conflicts in positive and non-violent ways.

This document provides an explanation of the Grants Program and highlights the accomplishments of 10 Maryland public school grant recipients.

THE MARYLAND SCHOOLS CONFLICT RESOLUTION GRANT PROGRAM

Promoting Cultural Change Through Comprehensive Conflict Resolution Education Programs

The Grants Program

“Conflict management programs have proven that young people and adults can quickly learn to use effective problem solving concepts. If they are given the opportunity to practice the skills in real life situations, the acquisition of conflict management techniques empowers individuals to take responsibility for their own conflicts and follow through with the resolution of these conflicts.”¹

Changing the way conflict is managed in a school may involve much more than teaching skills to students; it often requires staff training and change in discipline procedures. A comprehensive conflict resolution program involves common practices, procedures, and philosophies that impact school culture, pedagogy, curriculum and students. Only through a comprehensive approach can a school create institutional change and transform the culture of teachers, staff, administration and students. To address the need for change in conflict management, schools apply annually for a one year grant of up to \$10,000 to develop innovative conflict resolution programs or to expand and enrich existing school programs. The grants may be renewed for up to a total of three years. Schools are allowed the flexibility to select from a variety of methods designed to address the unique conflict needs and issues of the individual school. Over the years the programs have varied greatly from establishing a peer leadership program as Leonardtown High School in St. Mary’s County did, to launching peer mediation with school-wide conflict resolution curriculum as was accomplished at Thomson Estates Elementary School in Cecil County, to the staff training and community open houses regarding conflict management conducted at Parkside High School in Wicomico County.

CRE PROGRAM GOALS

- Increasing problem-solving behavior among children, youth and adults;
- Improving student engagement and achievement by solving problems that detract from learning;
- Developing effective alternatives to punishment-based discipline programs;
- Incorporating conflict resolution concepts and skills into the curriculum.

Over the years, the range of programs has included:

- Initiating peer mediation programs;
- Developing conflict resolution curriculum materials;
- Implementing the Steps to Respect Program;
- Implementing the Second Step Program;
- Creating a school-wide anti-bullying program;
- Teaching conflict resolution skills through a puppet show presentation;
- Creating and performing a play dealing with conflict;
- Developing a school-wide response to conflict resolution;
- Implementing a family training component to support an early childhood Second Step Social Skills Program;
- Initiating a peer leadership program;
- Establishing a chess club to reinforce positive conflict resolution in conjunction with other staff and student training;
- Establishing an after school drama club aimed at presenting instructive conflict resolution assemblies;
- Introducing the Daily Rap (classroom meetings) throughout the school.

¹ *Building Your School’s Conflict Management Program*, Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management, 2002.

“I was thinking—even trying to transfer or return to private education due to student-caused stress. Now I am looking forward to returning...”

--Teacher after attending the summer training program in Conflict Resolution Education

Summer Training

In addition to receiving funds, each grant recipient participates in the CRE Summer Training Program. Each school sends a team of four, including one administrator, to a powerful two day CRE training to learn valuable skills and strategies regarding classroom management, conflict de-escalation and curriculum infusion. The training is conducted by CRE expert trainers from Ohio, a national leader in this work. In addition to funds and training, each school receives an outstanding Resource Guide (prepared by the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution) containing conflict resolution interactive exercises, lesson plans and activities to bring back to their schools.



Winter Training

As the school year progresses and greater demands are placed on administration, counselors and teachers, the Collaborators host a winter training designed to reinforce conflict resolution topics and reconnect the schools with each other to share successes and challenges. Topics such as Community Conferencing, Bullying Prevention and School Cultures of Peace and Respect have been presented at winter meetings.

Some of the most powerful learning opportunities occur when schools share their personal experiences. At one winter training, the principal of a Baltimore County alternative high school provided useful information on the integration of conflict resolution materials into their in-school suspension program and shared the school's statistics and evaluation materials. The program coordinators of a Montgomery County middle school shared a video in which teachers dramatized bullying and harassment situations. Donning her school peer mediation sweatshirt, the coordinator of a Prince George's County high school peer mediation program shared practical advice on implementing a program and distributed the school's peer mediation newsletter for other schools to use.

“This was an amazing gathering of think tank collaboration. The presentations were all relevant and valuable. The True Colors activity was awesome!”

--School team member from the 2007 Winter Staff Training

University of Maryland School of Law Liaison

Throughout the year the schools are paired with a liaison. This liaison is either a student and trained mediator from the University of Maryland School of Law's Mediation Clinic, or a C-DRUM staff member. The liaisons assist with in-school planning meetings, student trainings, research and evaluation. Through this partnership, the law students have an opportunity to apply their mediation skills within a primary and secondary school context and serve as role models by providing presentations to students about the court system and how mediation is used in the courts. This relationship enriches the experience of the law students and the CRE program.

Schools List Serv

In 2004, C-DRUM created a list serv to allow for easy distribution of information and to facilitate communication among persons interested in Conflict Resolution Education. The list serv functions as a networking vehicle for sharing ideas and conveying information about resources related to Conflict Resolution Education. The number of participants using the list serv continues to expand and includes people from across the state, the country, and the international community. Over the years, several of the grant recipients have implemented ideas shared via the list serv including "No Name Calling Week," peer mediation newsletters and evaluation tools.

Listing of Maryland Trainers and Consultants

Although schools can apply for grants for up to three years, the majority of schools are applying for the first time. The CRE Partnership realized that the schools may have identified goals and plans for their programs, but may have difficulty identifying CRE experts to assist in the training and implementation. To address this need, C-DRUM has solicited and compiled a list of conflict resolution education trainers and consultants who serve the Maryland area. Any trainer or consultant who completes the required form can be listed on the C-DRUM web site. This list provides a valuable resource for schools to identify trainers and consultants to assist in the planning and implementation of their grants.

Results of School Conflict Resolution Programs

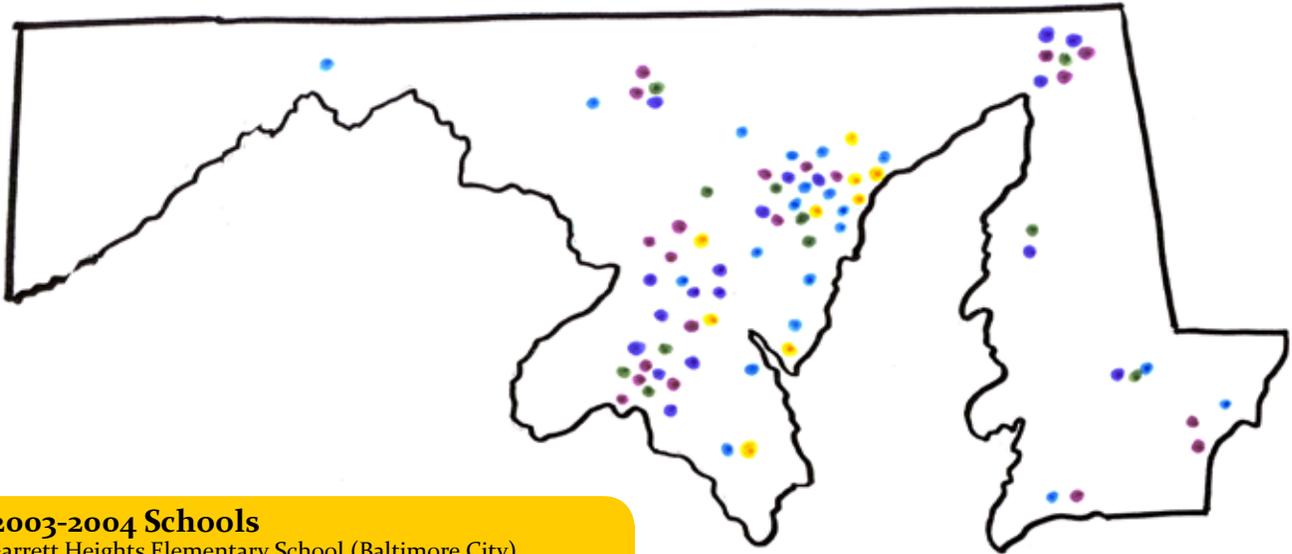
The Grants Program has seen positive results and changed the lives of numerous students, teachers and parents. Results like these not only indicate personal growth and change, but also demonstrate shifts in school culture and norms. These transformations are precisely what motivate teachers and administration to invest their time and effort in the development of CRE school programs.

SUMMARY OF BENEFITS

- Increased academic achievement linked with conflict resolution curriculum;
- Decreases in referrals/suspensions for violent incidents;
- Improved classroom and school climate according to student, teacher and administrator perceptions;
- Improved ability of students and staff to handle conflict;
- Enhancement of interpersonal communication skills;
- Reduction in time spent handling playground and lunchroom disputes;
- Fewer incidences of disrespectful and disruptive behavior;
- Reduction in name calling and put downs.

THE MARYLAND SCHOOLS CONFLICT RESOLUTION GRANT PROGRAM

SCHOOLS BY PARTICIPATING YEAR



2003-2004 Schools

Garrett Heights Elementary School (Baltimore City)
 Golden Ring Middle School (Baltimore)
 Hamilton Elementary/Middle School (Baltimore City)
 Judith P. Hoyer Early Childhood (Prince George's)
 Leonardtown Middle School (St. Mary's)
 Middlesex Elementary School (Baltimore)
 Mutual Elementary School (Calvert)
 Newport Mill Middle School (Montgomery)
 Rosedale Center (Baltimore)
 Shady Spring Elementary School (Baltimore)

2004-2005 Schools

Bear Creek Elementary School (Baltimore)
 Bennett Middle School (Wicomico)
 Berlin Intermediate School (Worcester)
 Braddock Middle School (Allegheny)
 Cross County Elementary School (Baltimore City)
 Crossroads Middle School (Baltimore City)
 Deer Park Elementary School (Baltimore)
 Digital Harbor High School (Baltimore City)
 Dumbarton Middle School (Baltimore)
 Germantown Elementary School (Anne Arundel)
 Hamilton Elementary/Middle School (Baltimore City)
 Leonardtown High School (St. Mary's)
 Marion Sarah Peyton Elementary School (Somerset)
 Monocacy Valley Montessori (Frederick)
 Mount Harmony Elementary School (Calvert)
 Mutual Elementary School (Calvert)
 Oliver Beach Elementary School (Baltimore)
 Pinecrest Elementary School (Montgomery)
 Rockledge Elementary School (Prince George's)
 Winand Elementary School (Baltimore)

2005-2006 Schools

Bennett Middle School (Wicomico)
 Cross County Elementary School (Baltimore City)
 Digital Harbor High School (Baltimore City)
 Gateway School (Carroll)
 Gwynn Park High School (Prince George's)
 Howard High School (Howard)
 Lansdowne Middle School (Baltimore)
 Malcolm Elementary School (Charles)
 RICA (DHMH)
 Stevensville Middle School (Queen Anne's)
 Thomas S. Stone Elementary School (Prince George's)
 Thomson Estate Elementary School (Cecil)

2006-2007 Schools

Benjamin Stoddert Middle School (Charles)
 Catonsville Center for Alternative Studies (Baltimore)
 Digital Harbor High School (Baltimore City)
 Gale-Bailey Elementary School (Charles)
 Gateway School (Carroll)
 Gilpin Elementary School (Cecil)
 Gwynn Park High School (Prince George's)
 Newport Mill Middle School (Montgomery)
 Parkside High School (Wicomico)
 Patterson Park Public Charter School (Baltimore City)
 Patuxent Elementary School (Prince George's)
 Perryville Middle School (Cecil)
 Piccowaxen Middle School (Charles)
 Redland Middle School (Montgomery)
 Silver Spring International Middle School (Montgomery)
 Stevensville Middle School (Queen Anne's)
 Thomas S. Stone Elementary School (Prince George's)
 Thomson Estate Elementary School (Cecil)
 Westlake High School (Charles)

2007-2008 Schools

Catonsville Center for Alternative Studies (Baltimore)
 Crestwood Middle School (Frederick)
 Crisfield Academy and High School (Somerset)
 Dallas F. Nicolas Senior Elementary School (Baltimore City)
 Dr. Rayner Browne Middle School (Baltimore City)
 Edgcombe Elementary School (Baltimore City)
 Gale-Bailey Elementary School (Charles)
 Garrett Heights Elementary School (Baltimore City)
 Kent Island High School (Queen Anne's)
 Parkland Magnet Middle School (Montgomery)
 Piccowaxen Middle School (Charles)
 Pocomoke Elementary School (Worcester)
 Pocomoke Middle School (Worcester)
 Redland Middle School (Montgomery)
 Richard Montgomery High School (Montgomery)
 Silver Spring International Middle School (Montgomery)
 Stevensville Middle School (Queen Anne's)
 Thomas Stone High School (Charles)
 Twin Ridge Elementary School (Frederick)
 Westlake High School (Charles)
 Windsor Hills Elementary School (Baltimore City)

One of the primary goals of the public schools in Maryland is preparing our students to be educated and responsible citizens. Learning to resolve conflicts in peaceful and productive ways is vital in this regard.

The partnership between the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the Maryland Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO) and the Center for Dispute Resolution at the University of Maryland School of Law (C-DRUM) which provides grant funds for innovative conflict resolution programs has stimulated and supported conflict resolution programs throughout the public schools in the state. In Maryland schools, numerous conflict resolution programs are in existence. This collaborative partnership provides training and funds to the schools in its programs, helping some schools launch new programs and assisting existing programs to broaden their efforts to create comprehensive conflict resolution programs. Peer mediation programs, curriculum plans and theatre groups are only a few of the programs supported by these grants.

Participating in this collaborative grant program is an opportunity for schools to access new resources. With help from MACRO, C-DRUM and MSDE, increasing numbers of schools are finding safe, effective and creative ways to manage conflict, teach conflict resolution skills and promote peace.

Nancy Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

“We have solidified an unbelievable team of students who believe in the mission and have begun the process of personal change. Some students who thought they had no one else are now starting to believe in something bigger.”

--Baltimore City Health Educator and Project Manager in a High School Peer Leader Program

The Maryland Judiciary’s Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO) works with stakeholders to establish, expand, evaluate and support conflict resolution education and services in courts across the state, and in communities, schools, state and local government agencies, criminal and juvenile justice programs, family service programs and the business community. The Maryland Judiciary recognizes that courts should be a place of last resort for dispute resolution.

Given that recognition, MACRO has partnered with the Center for Dispute Resolution at the University of Maryland School of Law (C-DRUM) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) in the operation of a grant program which supports the development and growth of conflict resolution education in primary and secondary Maryland public schools. The growth of violence in our communities can be averted through the preventative efforts involved in education programs in school communities, including training with students, parents and school staff. Educating communities in positive skills and techniques for non-violent conflict resolution can affect significant change in the current and future climate of Maryland.

Robert M. Bell
Chief Judge
Maryland Court of Appeals

The mission of the University of Maryland Law School's Center for Dispute Resolution (C-DRUM) "is to work collaboratively with individuals and groups . . . to promote, enhance and teach conflict resolution skills; research and develop conflict resolution systems; and change the way conflicts are resolved throughout the state . . ."

Toward this end, C-DRUM has worked with the Courts, the legislature, public agencies and private organizations on projects ranging from conferences on medical malpractice reform, rules and ethical standards for mediators practicing in the courts, to teaching conflict resolution skills and developing conflict resolution systems for organizations.

For the past five years, C-DRUM has operated a statewide public school conflict resolution program in collaboration with the Maryland Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The program funds public schools across the state in developing innovative conflict resolution programs that teach conflict resolution skills to the students and teachers and change the way conflicts are resolved. As this monograph makes clear, the programs funded through this initiative have made a great contribution toward reducing school violence and teaching positive conflict resolution skills to Maryland's elementary, middle and high school students.

The involvement of the Law School's Mediation Clinic students enhances the program and benefits both the public school students and the law students. Many of the students in the grant-funded programs have met lawyers and law students for the first time and had the opportunity to talk with them, interact in a positive relationship and understand the broad range of lawyer-related activities. For some students, this interaction has served as a motivator for college and an eventual career as a lawyer. For the law students, it has enriched their clinical experience as well as emphasized their commitment as future lawyers to public service.

I applaud all involved in these programs and am delighted that the Law School and C-DRUM are such a vital part of this collaboration.

Karen Rothenberg
Dean and Marjorie Cook Professor of Law
University of Maryland School of Law

"I met two students, a boy and a girl...both students were in the peer mediation group because it was a vehicle to keep them out of trouble. Both students had been arrested more than once in the previous year for fighting. Yet the young lady is the most requested mediator in the group and has performed more mediations than all the students involved.

After speaking with the young woman she told me that the peer mediation group helped to save her. She was on a path of destruction. She expressed that before becoming involved she felt like she was always forced to fight whenever she ran into a confrontation. Now she says she prevents others from fighting ... She hopes to one day go into law enforcement; she wants to be a Prince George's County police officer. It's amazing how someone can change their life around, and how effective alternative dispute resolution can be for young adults."

--Law School Mediation Clinic Student

The ten schools below reflect the breadth and nature of the programs funded by the Grants Program. The programs include a range of geographical and sociological settings, diverse student populations and project types. The problems confronted and overcome by these schools clearly demonstrate that these skills can be taught and that dramatic results can be achieved with students, teachers and the entire school community.

NEWPORT MILL MIDDLE SCHOOL

City: Kensington

Jurisdiction: Montgomery County

Grades: 6-8

Students: 665

Situated in the middle class neighborhood of Kensington, Maryland, Newport Mill Middle School is comprised of a diverse population largely from the Wheaton-Silver Spring area. The student population is 46% Hispanic, 24% African American, 18% Caucasian and 11% Asian, with 55% participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. Over the last three years, staff introduced a series of conflict resolution projects aimed at building a stronger cultural climate of tolerance, one that offers students, teachers and parents strategies for solving some of the common middle school problems.

As a result of the grant, the school initiated a Peer Leadership Program in 2005-2006. The program was designed to promote the reduction of teasing and bullying in the school community. The grant supported the attendance of five staff members at a 2 ½ day conference in Arizona on middle school hate crime prevention and awareness and reduction of conflict stemming from diversity. These staff returned and trained the rest of the staff in understanding the problems of bias, teasing and harassment, and offered practical skills for intervening at the earliest levels. Instead of a peer mediation program, Newport Mill Middle trained peer leaders. Forty student peer leaders received monthly trainings through an after school program. In particular, students learned practical skills for intervening in low key ways when they heard/saw other students using degrading language or putdowns toward others. Additionally, seven Parent Workshops were offered throughout the year, in both English and Spanish, designed to improve communication between parents and their middle school children.

- Staff members stated that “they felt better equipped to handle teasing/bullying that they observed.”
- Parents consistently rated the workshops informative and worthwhile and stated their intention to use the strategies presented.
- Student peer leaders indicated they had gained knowledge in statements like the following: “I didn’t always feel like what I did was successful, but I know it helped the victim and made him feel better.”

In 2006-2007, Newport Mill Middle School expanded their efforts through the support of a CRE Partnership Grant designed to establish an after-school program targeting Latino male students identified as at risk for negative outcomes including delinquency and gang involvement. This work was conducted in collaboration with the Montgomery County community-based non-profit organization, Identity. Survey results of participating students indicate that a large percentage of participants believed that they acquired skills needed to avoid engaging in specific risk behaviors and gained enhanced feelings of self-efficacy.

Survey Results

Acquisition of Skills	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Learned how to avoid conflict with others (N=36)	2.80%	2.80%	27.80%	66.70%
Learned how to avoid joining a gang if do not want to (N=36)	2.90%		34.30%	62.90%
Learned how to say No to sex if not ready (N=34)	2.90%	2.80%	29.40%	64.70%
Learned how to say No to sex without protection (N=36)	2.80%	2.80%	27.80%	66.70%
Perceived Self-Efficacy				
Feel that I learned to be a better listener (N=34)	2.90%		32.40%	64.70%
Feel more confident with my peers (N=36)		5.60%	33.30%	61.10%
Feel more confident to communication with my parents (N=36)		13.90%	25%	61.10%

Also, in the beginning of 2006-2007, plans were being developed to present a Bullying Prevention Program to the 6th Grade. When a school-wide assessment form highlighted that bullying/harassment existed as a school-wide problem, the counseling staff and administration expanded their plan into an extensive school-wide approach. Using materials gathered at the conference subsidized by the 2005-2006 grant, the school team conducted a Leadership Program for the entire school that taught skills for becoming an ally in bullying/harassment situations. The School CRE Team developed school wide follow-up activities that included staff role plays broadcast throughout the school in which teachers serve as the actors dramatizing bullying and harassment situations (an idea from their Mediation Clinic student liaison). The activities occurred every Tuesday and became known as “Take a Stand Tuesday.”

2006-2007 survey results show:

- 67% of all 6th and 7th graders believe “they had changed the way they treated people in a positive way since the beginning of school” as of December.
- 76% of the 6th graders surveyed agreed with the statement “I treat people more respectfully than I did at the beginning of the year” as of March.

Data from the school years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 indicated:

- 39% reduction in discipline referrals.
- 50% reduction in suspensions.

Although, this may not be purely a result of the character education and conflict resolution programs, counseling staff recognized that this work contributed to the change in percentages.

PERRYVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

City: Perryville

Jurisdiction: Cecil County

Grades: 6-8

Students: 730

In 2005-2006, Perryville Middle School in Cecil County observed a growing number of violent incidences, its first gang situation, and instances of racial unrest. As a result, the school decided to develop a comprehensive conflict management program during the following school year. Components of the comprehensive program included a peer mediation program, parent workshops, curriculum infusion and an Advisory program that included training in conflict management, bullying prevention and character education.

The Advisory sessions presented an opportunity to reach every child in the school. To avoid duplication of information, Perryville Middle developed a plan for each grade: Second Step Curriculum in 6th Grade, Bully Free Classroom Curriculum in 7th Grade, and Conflict Resolution Lessons from the Ohio Resource Guide in 8th Grade. The first year of the program resulted in significant accomplishments. According to the Assistant Principal, "Teacher surveys and candid conversations indicate that the climate in the building this year was much more positive and that the lessons added to the Advisory program were of high interest to students and stimulated important conversations."

First year results show:

- The overall number of referrals to the office decreased by 38%.
- Referrals for classroom disruption dropped 26%.
- Referrals for disrespect dropped 36%.
- Teacher satisfaction surveys indicate a decrease of 39% of staff who felt that disorderly student behavior is a problem as compared to the surveys from last year.
- 23 peer mediations were conducted between March and June 2007.

Perryville Middle School received a follow-up grant for 2007-2008, allowing them to expand their program, with an emphasis on staff development and the introduction of Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports (PBIS). In the first marking period of 2007-2008, results show:

- A reduction in office referrals by 20% from the prior year.
- A 57% decrease in the number of fights from 19 in the first marking period of 2006 to 8 in 2007.

Survey Results	2006	2007
Percent of staff who feel disorderly student behavior is a problem at PVMS	98%	59%
Percent of staff who do not feel safe while at work	92%	34%
Percent of student who state disorderly student behavior is a problem at PVMS	81%	74%

STEVENSVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

City: Stevensville

Jurisdiction: Queen Anne's County

Grades: 6-8

Students: 787

Stevensville Middle School is a medium sized suburban school with a majority of students from middle class families. Although fights and physical outbreaks are few, the school was seeing increased incidences of name calling, bullying, rumors and disputes.

In 2005-2006, the counseling staff submitted a grant proposal to support the development of a school-wide conflict resolution program including curriculum infusion and peer mediation. Citizenship Law Related Education Program for the Schools of Maryland (CLREP) partnered with Stevensville Middle to provide consulting assistance in the planning and implementation of the program and conducted a two-day peer mediation training. The School CRE Team met monthly and strategized on ways to encourage the peer mediation program to take root in the school.

In the first year of the program:

- 69 mediations were conducted.
- Office referrals were reduced from 425 to 356, a 16% decrease.

In 2006-2007, a second grant was received to support the growth of the program. An expanded cadre of peer mediators was trained by staff who used the materials from the previous year's training. Modeling the peer mediation newsletters of Prince George's County's Gwynn Park High School, received through C-DRUM's list serv, Stevensville Middle School developed its own newsletter to share mediation statistics and informative advice on dealing with conflict.

Beyond peer mediation, Stevensville Middle is using the Resource Guide throughout the school. In 2006-2007:

- Teachers implemented the conflict resolution lessons on early dismissal days without being prompted, an indication of teacher buy-in.
- Approximately 25 teachers taught conflict resolution lessons.
- 40 successful mediations were conducted.

A Law School Mediation Clinic student assisted in training the peer mediators and also facilitated different contests to help promote the Peer Mediation Program. One initiative involved staff members identifying students who handled conflict in an appropriate manner. Their names were provided to the Conflict Resolution Team and three winners whose names were drawn out of a hat were provided gift certificates to local outlets.

"Peer Mediation has helped me a lot in the past year...I have learned to be a lot more patient with people. I've also learned that talking about someone because they have done something to you won't help. You have to be able to stay patient, calm...I also know that you can't just tell people how to solve their problems. You can help them and help them figure out a solution."

--Stevensville Middle School peer mediator essay

REDLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

City: Kensington

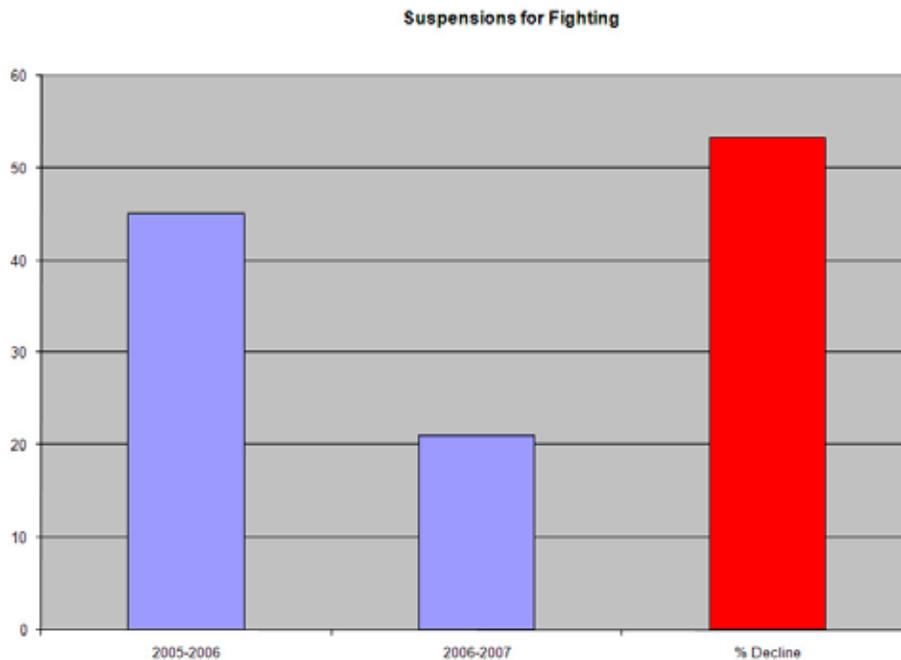
Jurisdiction: Montgomery County

Grades: 6-8

Students: 710

Redland Middle School is a diverse suburban middle school on the outskirts of Rockville Maryland, comprised of students from around the world. From 2004-2005 to 2005-2006, the school suspensions almost tripled with more than half of the suspensions being a result of aggression between students. The decision was made to seek a grant to assist them in launching a peer mediation program.

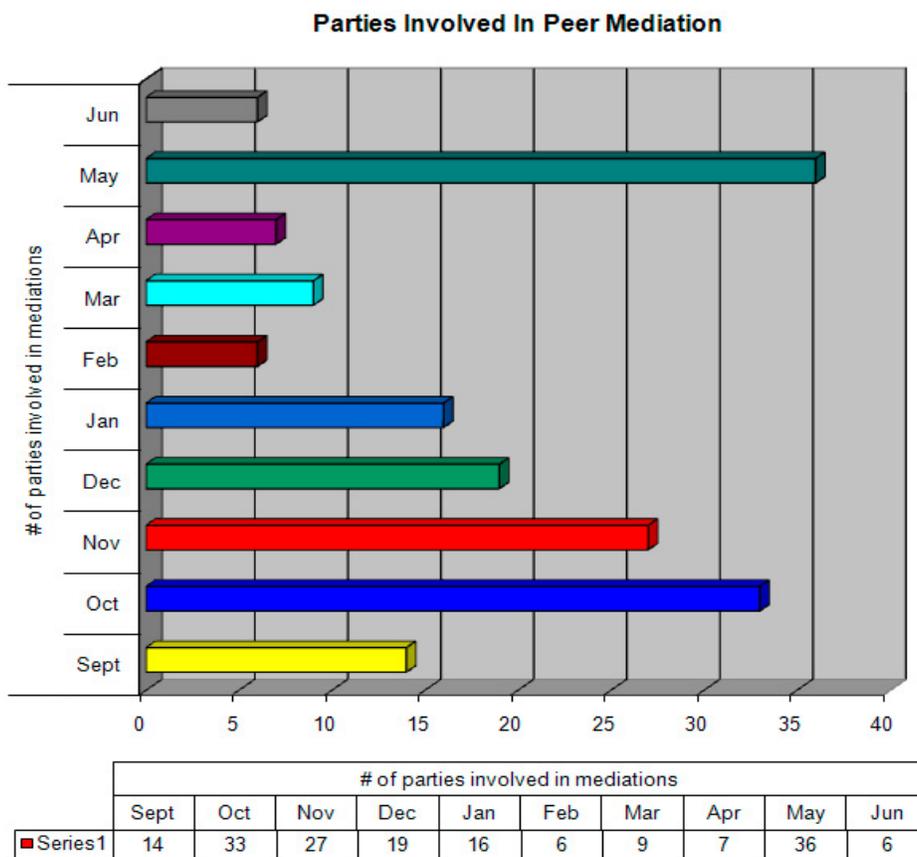
With support from the Conflict Resolution Center for Montgomery County (CRCMC), Redland Middle School applied for and received a grant for the 2006-2007 school year. Peer mediation training was provided over the summer, and in the fall students and staff worked together to market the program school wide. They held a "Meet Your Peer Mediator Day," which allowed students to get to know the peer mediators and generated a greater interest from the student population. A peer mediation brochure was produced, and students made a presentation to the PTSA/Principal's Coffee to parents and community stakeholders. Referrals to peer mediation came from students, administrators and teachers, a sign of a well functioning peer mediation program.



Results were evident:

- 69 mediations were conducted.
- 98% of the mediations reached agreements.
- 100% of the students participating indicated they were satisfied with the peer mediation process in their evaluations.
- The school showed a 53.5% decrease in suspensions for fighting from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007.

Expanding into the larger educational community, Redland has formed connections with its feeder and exit schools. In the spring of 2007, peer mediators conducted a program about peer mediation at feeder elementary schools. At the same time, the local high school was working with Redland to launch peer mediation, so there will be some continuity for Redland Middle School students who matriculate to the high school.



In 2007-2008, Redland Middle School received a second grant to support the continued growth of the peer mediation program and expansion into greater conflict resolution curriculum and staff training. In November, a school wide Peace Day provided team building activities and conflict resolution education exercises.

“Two students with “chronic” conflict issues arrived in my office after the completion of conflict resolution lessons in their classroom. They brought another student, who felt she was always “stuck in the middle.” The students in conflict asked to use the “win-win” game, posted in my room...At least for that day, they worked their way through a solution to what had really seemed to be a never-ending battle. The third student actually cheered for them.”

--School counselor of a K-8 Frederick County public charter school

CATONSVILLE CENTER FOR ALTERNATIVE STUDIES

City: Baltimore

Jurisdiction: Baltimore County

Grades: 9 – 12

Students: approximately 250 students transition through the school during the year

The Catonsville Center for Alternative Studies provides an alternative high school program for students who are unsuccessful in a traditional high school setting, the majority having been suspended or expelled from their home schools. Identified by the Governor's Task Force as one of the exemplary alternative educational programs in 2000, the school was experiencing a significant increase in incidents involving students displaying violent, threatening and disruptive behavior. In 2006-2007, the school received a grant to redesign and enhance its personal development curriculum through the implementation of a cognitive behavioral anger management program in partnership with the Center for Alternative Dispute Resolution.

In August before students arrived, teachers, administrators, counselors and school resource staff participated in on-site anger management facilitator training so that all school staff understood the cognitive behavioral elements at the core of the **Dispute Resolution And Managing Anger (DRAMA)** program. Each student entering the school during the year received instruction in conflict resolution and anger management skills. Daily conflict resolution lesson plans were taught using the Resource Guide materials distributed during the summer training, and anger management skill instruction was taught to each student using the DRAMA materials. The program placed significant emphasis on classroom instruction and support of the classroom facilitators in using the new cognitive behavioral approach.

The CRE Program data indicate a significant and positive impact on school climate and conflict resolution skill acquisition among the students who participated in the program during the first semester of 2006 (note: students attend this school for up to one semester before being mainstreamed back into their home school):

- 57% reported that when they get angry now, they find themselves thinking about some of the material they've learned in this program.
- 67% reported that since taking this program, they find themselves solving problems with people better.
- 71% reported that since starting this program, they have a better understanding of their anger and their anger responses.
- The average number of times they got angry in a week decreased from 4.0 to 3.2.

Teacher surveys highlight exciting change in both student behavior and their own responses:

- “Our students handle anger in appropriate ways.”
Pre-program – all 19 teachers disagreed/strongly disagreed with statement.
Post-program – 70% (14 of 20) teachers agreed with statement.
- “Our students positively solve problems among themselves.”
Pre-program – 94% (18 of 19) disagreed.
Post-program – 76% (16 of 21) agreed.
- “When angry, students positively respond to staff intervention.”
Pre-program – only 18% (3 of 16) agreed.
Post-program – 90% (18 of 20) agreed.
- 89% of the teachers (17 of 19) agreed that the program led to a better learning environment.
- Teachers reported on average a 25% improvement in their own intervention/resolution skills post training.
- 85% (18 of 21) agreed that the training helped them work more effectively with students.
- 76% (16 of 21) indicated that the training helped them better manage their own anger with students.

In 2007-2008, Catonsville Center for Alternative Studies received a second grant to support the continued implementation of the school wide program.

“It is amazing to see students with the quickest tempers and shortest fuses use “I messages” and identify what triggers their angers.”

--Alternative High School Teacher



BENNETT MIDDLE SCHOOL

City: Salisbury

Jurisdiction: Wicomico County

Grades: 6-8

Students: 1100

Bennett Middle School represents a school that started with a small program and expanded it as a result of the grant. Located in Salisbury, the largest town on the Eastern Shore of Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, Bennett Middle School has a student body that represents 24 countries speaking approximately 15 different languages. During the school years 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, the school received grants to support the expansion of its existing conflict resolution program under an umbrella program called "Make Wise Decisions." Bennett Middle School has a CARES (Children At Risk Educationally and Socially) office out of which its peer educators, peer mediators, peer mentors and SMART Club (Students Motivated and Acting Responsibly Together) work.

During 2004-2005, Bennett Middle School worked to expand its existing bullying prevention/intervention and peer mediation programs with an emphasis on classroom lessons and intervention strategies. A staff manual was produced documenting intervention strategies and resources for use by staff, and staff training was held throughout the year. On the student side, peer mediators were trained and the program was broadened to include the use of peer educators.

Established as a community for creative students who do not necessarily fit in with other student groups, the SMART Club wrote, directed and performed a play both in 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. The 2004-2005 play was organized by an AmeriCorps worker who was partially funded through the Grants Program. The play celebrated the diversity of the student community and stimulated a great deal of discussion among the larger community.

With a second grant received in 2005-2006, 20 peer educators were trained. During the year, in teams of two or three, the peer educators taught three lessons in anger management to the students in each of the school's activity periods. In addition, all 6th Grade classes were taught 3-5 lessons on bullying prevention by the project coordinator. The SMART Club created art work about conflict resolution themes and displayed it in some of the school's bathrooms, since bathrooms were identified as a trouble spot for vandalism and bullying behaviors. Project Wisdom materials, a collection of school-wide announcements, were purchased through the grant and used to promote conflict resolution themes.

The Conflict Resolution Program permeated the school and brought significant awareness to students, staff and the larger community about techniques for countering teasing, harassment and bullying.

GWYNN PARK HIGH SCHOOL

City: Brandywine

Jurisdiction: Prince George's County

Grades: 9 – 12

Students: 1550

Gwynn Park is an unusual school in that it has the privilege of a full time staff member dedicated to its peer mediation program. Despite the existing program, the school identified the need to work on the acceptability of the program, especially among male students and teachers. The 2005-2006 grant funded the school's efforts to expand the peer mediation program.

Results show:

- 50 peer mediators showed enhanced self-esteem and pride in being identified as peer mediators, donning new sweatshirts and shirts with the school peer mediation name identified.
- 401 successful mediations were completed in 2006-2007.

Through the Grant Program, the Peer Mediation Coordinator has connected with numerous other school Project Managers. She has shared information and answered questions and currently serves as a mentor for staff at Westlake and Thomas Stone High Schools. The Gwynn Park Peer Mediation Newsletter is often shared via the Schools List Serv and has inspired the creation of school peer mediation newsletters in other counties.

Be H.I.P.P. (Help Increase the Peace Program)

There's not a day that goes by that we can't help
There's not a day that we don't wish we was a hero
Because in a bad thread it's a peace sign that we sew
So think about it
Because we help any problems that you admit
So join our team
Be H.I.P.P.

We listen, talk, share and play
We share a little peace everyday
We make people feel like they belong by what we say
Because we are with you when you need a friend
Even when we go on missions or go our separate way
We are a peace army joined of young women and men
So think about it
Be H.I.P.P.

*Written by Erin Scofield
Member of H.I.P.P. Program 2006
Digital Harbor High School*

GATEWAY SCHOOL (ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL)

City: Westminster

Jurisdiction: Carroll County

Grades: 9 – 12

Students: Approximately 120

Gateway School is an alternative school for those students who have been unsuccessful in their comprehensive high schools. In the Gateway Seminar/Advisory required for all students, students' behavior indicated greater need for conflict resolution activities and strategies. Gateway used the Resource Guide lessons from the summer and infused them into the Seminar/Advisory. The impact of this change led one teacher to comment:

“I have always felt that Gateway Seminar/Advisory could potentially be the most important class our at-risk students take. Now, with the infusion of conflict resolution into every possible lesson, students see that conflict resolution can be incorporated into every part of their lives.”

The lessons were also distributed to each content area teacher and the in-school suspension facilitator.

In 2005-2006, results show:

- There was a dramatic shift in the amount of time students spent in school, due to a shift toward more in-school suspension than out-of-school suspension for chronic disrespect, disruption, etc. Students completed conflict resolution activities to evaluate the behaviors that resulted in the consequence, and also identified more appropriate ways of dealing with the conflict in the future.
- There were 126 peer mediations conducted—98 identified as successful—which was a 78% increase over the 2004-2005 school year.
- 111 out of 123 high school students reported an increased comfort level when dealing with conflict and anger.
- Conflict-based suspensions decreased 34% from the prior year.
- 14 out of 17 students on work-study programs during the spring semester reported feeling more confident using conflict resolution strategies in the workplace and at home.

In 2006-2007, Gateway School applied for and received a second grant focused on implementing two projects: Capturing Kids' Hearts and Teen Leadership. Capturing Kids' Hearts emphasizes the importance of relationship building and trust within the classroom. Through the program, each person in the building creates a social contract that describes a commitment to work together to handle situations that occur within the school. Teen Leadership, a new class, uses role plays to expand experience with conflict resolution skills. These two programs build upon the foundation from the previous year and are showing results. One teacher commented: "I have seen a dramatic reduction in the number of referrals sent to the office. Students catch themselves and each other when they violate a term of the contract."

The school also participated in "No Name-Calling Week", an idea conveyed through the Schools List Serv. A number of teachers used lessons shared through the website www.nonamecallingweek.org. One morning announcement shared throughout the school stated:

Many of our students really seem to be more aware of how they address each other and of what is being said about them.

2006-2007 results show:

- Teachers reported improved classroom climate due to the school-wide social contract.
- Students reported developing meaningful relationships with school staff more this year than in previous years.
- Students reported more confidence in themselves.
- There was an increase in the number of students using "I statements" and other strategies of effective communication.
- Gateway staff reported improved staff morale as a result of the social contract developed among the staff.

"Strategies for Implementing Capturing Kids' Hearts", the Handbook developed through the grant at Gateway School was so well-received at a county-wide principals' meeting that it was distributed electronically to principals for dissemination throughout Carroll County.

"I think I was able to save two good friendships this year that I would have lost before...all because I learned how to stand up for myself, listen to what my friends were saying out of hurt, and I learned how to say I'm sorry and not hold grudges."

--A Gateway student

MALCOLM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

City: Waldorf

Jurisdiction: Charles County

Grades: K-5

Students: 620

A semi-rural/suburban school, Malcolm Elementary School was the first elementary school to develop a peer mediation program in Charles County 17 years ago. In 2005-2006, the school received a grant to support the expansion of its existing peer mediation program into a comprehensive school-wide conflict resolution program. After attending the summer training, the School Grant Committee decided to utilize the Resource Guide. Specifically, teachers were given in-service training by their colleagues serving on the School CRE Team, and a grade level binder of lessons from the Resource Guide. A local non-profit organization partner, Shabach Ministry, also used conflict resolution lessons from the Resource Guide in its after school mentoring program.

Results show:

- 25 classroom teachers taught classroom lessons on conflict resolution topics. Teachers indicated in surveys a belief that conflict resolution lessons had improved classroom climate and tolerance.
- 158 peer mediations were successfully completed.
- Bullying surveys among primary students reflected a shift from October to May, with a reduction in friendship issues (the biggest cause of bullying tactics among this sector).
- Teachers and students involved in the after school Shabach Ministry indicated the conflict resolution lessons were successful in helping students handle conflict in a positive manner.

“Students today have so much drama in their lives, and many have such fragile egos that it doesn’t take much to set them off! Adults are a big part of their problem, and the last people they want to turn to for help. It may be unfortunate, but the best person for them to talk to may be a peer. That is why it is critical that we have students trained in listening skills and conflict resolution techniques.”

--Counselor in a Prince George’s County high school

MUTUAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

City: Port Washington

Jurisdiction: Calvert County

Grades: PreK-5

Students: 666

Mutual Elementary School staff observed that “students generally made good choices in the presence of staff, but showed certain disrespectful behavior like name-calling, teasing, intolerance, etc.” To address these concerns, Mutual Elementary School initiated a conflict resolution program in 2003-2004 that involved parents, teachers, and students. Classroom instruction included the use of videos, role-playing exercises, teacher and guidance counselor instruction, cooperative group lessons and daily reinforcement activities. They scheduled monthly grade-level assemblies reinforcing the lessons and hired Bridgework Theatre to give a performance incorporating conflict resolution education. Student-led morning announcements offered related “Words of Wisdom,” and a monthly column in the school newspaper on conflict resolution shared some of the concepts with the parent community.

In 2004-2005, a second grant expanded the program with the purchase of Second Step Program materials (an integrated conflict resolution curriculum). The materials served as the basis of monthly guidance classroom lessons titled “Empathy Training” and “Impulse Control and Problem Solving,” among others. Again the school used a variety of methods to address conflict resolution education. Conflict resolution books were purchased to create the “Mighty Mustang” library of story books. Currently, the library serves as a resource for teachers to read aloud and for students’ recommended readings.

“Without the funding and support, I do not believe we would have ever progressed beyond bemoaning our challenging students.”

--Baltimore County Administrator and Project Manager in a comprehensive middle school conflict resolution program

Conflict Resolution Education in our Schools is Making a Difference

The impact of the Maryland Schools Conflict Resolution Grants Program demonstrates how important this work is in changing cultures and teaching new skills. Teachers and students alike have affirmed the cultural shift in their school communities, not only with respect to the interaction between students but also in the way teachers and administrators deal with conflict.

With the enormous problems schools face and the pressures to provide “safe” learning environments amidst communities struggling with violence and unresolved conflict, it’s time to contemplate doing things differently. As it currently exists, the CRE Partnership is only able to support limited number of schools in Maryland. With the resounding proof of the benefits of this work, increased conflict resolution education initiatives in all schools must be the next step.

How to Apply

Historically, grant applications have been distributed to all Maryland public school principals and Directors of Student Services in February with a deadline for submission in April. Decisions on grant awards are determined by the middle of May, and contracts are processed over the summer. Information about past programs and grant offerings are posted on the web at www.cdrum.org under Schools Initiatives.

Generally, the grant application involves defining a set of project goals and objectives that are consistent with the areas identified in the Grant Announcement, and describing the proposed project, time line and budget plan. Letters of commitment from the school principal and partner organizations are required. If a school has not received the Grant Announcement and Grant Application either through the school principal or local Director of Student Services by early March, the school may contact C-DRUM for more information by sending an email to cdrum@law.umaryland.edu, phoning Barbara Grochal at 410-706-3143, or contacting the University of Maryland School of Law Clinic at 410-706-3295.

Supporting Conflict Resolution Programs in Maryland Schools

For those interested in financially supporting the development of Conflict Resolution Education in Maryland public schools, consider making a tax-deductible contribution through C-DRUM. To find out more, contact:

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