NATIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY CENTER

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The taming of the crew

By Ronald D. Stephens
NSSC Executive Director

According to a report released by the Senate Judiciary Committee, the United States is now considered to be the most violent and self-destructive nation of the industrialized world. Domestic violence, assault, homicide, child abuse and neglect have become common characteristics of American life.

In recent weeks, the National School Safety Center, in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control and the U.S. Department of Education, has begun a study of violent deaths that have occurred on public school campuses. The purpose of the study is to determine what common characteristics and what factors, if introduced, might have prevented the incidents. For the past two years, NSSC has tracked school homicides in a limited sample market. The 1993-94 school year witnessed a 25 percent increase in school-associated deaths over the previous year.

School crime and violence can be viewed as the tangible expression of unresolved conflict. If we empower young people and the adults who serve them with more effective conflict management skills, a more productive learning climate will result. When young people develop and apply nonviolent problem-solving skills, campus violence and the likelihood of homicides can be reduced, and the quality of campus life can be dramatically improved.

When teachers and administrators train students in nonviolent problem-solving techniques, the working atmosphere among colleagues and staff is often enhanced as a program by-product. When youth-serving agencies utilize these same skills and practices, a spirit of community cooperation and goodwill can emerge. Good conflict resolution skills, like violence, are contagious.

Educators are looking for new ways of reducing campus violence. At John Muir Elementary School in Seattle, Washington, students with complaints about peers write down their concerns and place them into a mailbox in the classroom. Later in the day and without using names, the entire class discusses alternative ways of responding to the problem. When challenged to come up with nonviolent alternatives, kids can be very creative. The process may be as valuable as the product or outcome.

The state of Michigan has recognized the need to teach relationship skills and has sought to implement a series of "success skills" into the state curriculum. Recommended components include:
* *Classroom survival skills,* focusing on developing good listening techniques, study skills and competency in classroom interaction;
* *Friendship-making skills,* including learning how to introduce yourself, make conversation, ask for or offer help, give and accept a compliment, share, and apologize;
* *Dealing with feelings,* focusing on identifying and expressing feelings, dealing with anger and fear, and rewarding oneself;
* *Alternatives to aggression,* teaching students to use self-control, ask permission, respond to teasing, solve problems, accept consequences, deal with accusations and negotiate;
* *Dealing with stress,* including discussions about sportsmanship, contructive criticism, causes of certain problems, and handling boredom, loss and/or failure, being excluded, embarassment and peer pressure.

Many of these skills are seldom taught in school. Most children used to learn these skills at home. Unfortunately, many home environments are not teaching children these crucial skills. Schools have a tremendous opportunity to fulfill this need. It can be argued that schools should not place an emphasis on social skills. But if schools cannot first create an environment of peace and respect, education's academic goals cannot be achieved.

Schools in areas such as Nashville, Honolulu, Los Angeles and various regions of Pennsylvania have added another dimension to conflict management training: a parent component. Many of the children who are at risk of violence come from families where parents are not well skilled in disciplining or managing their children. These promising programs invite parents to the school to focus on effective discipline techniques and ways to spend more enjoyable and quality time with their children.

Infusing conflict management training into the curriculum offers hope to students and staff alike. Conflict management programs help children develop better behavioral skills, minimizing their opportunities for trouble and maximizing their opportunities for positive social interaction.

By intervening early, we stand a much better chance of providing young people with positive educational experiences that can provide the foundation for ongoing success. Educators no longer have a choice as to whether or not schools should be made safer and better for young people. It is imperative that we do everything in our power to create a climate that supports the safety, success and development of all children.

School Safety

Cover photography
by the Stock Market/Mug Shots.

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BY JIM STOTT AND ROBBIE MONSMA

Conflict resolution training is one of the newest responses to the rising tension and violence on school campuses. The authors present some important
~~principles to consider when shopping for a conflict resolution curriculum.~~

Equipping children to succeed

Current discussions about conflict in schools throughout the country contain a common thread — fear of rising tensions and violence on campus — and a sense that the problem is too pervasive and institutionalized to be corrected on a national scale. How do we restore our schools to their proper function — equipping our children to succeed in a less than perfect world?

One of the hottest responses today to this issue is conflict management and resolution training, particularly focused on peer mediation programs. School districts and curriculum planners across the country now publish materials and train both teachers and students in a variety of tension-defusing and problem-solving skills.

A good conflict resolution training program provides participants with both the theoretical understanding and practical experience necessary to become effective, balanced, flexible adults. Many schools report dramatic reductions in classroom conflicts attributable directly to specialized skills training.

However, some educators report frustration when such programs falter or do not produce the expected behavioral

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changes in students. When actual mediation sessions do not go as predicted in the training curriculum, no one, including the teacher, knows what went wrong or how to fix it.

This article addresses some of the background issues missing from traditional school-based conflict resolution curricula. It also sets forth some basic components recommended for the success of any conflict resolution or peer mediation training.

Management vs. resolution

Learn to think in terms of "conflict management" instead of "conflict resolution." The difference may be subtle, but the recognition that not every conflict can be solved 100 percent will build flexibility and creativity into your approach. Traditional curricula do not always differentiate between "problems to solve" and "problems to manage" so that all possible solutions can be examined. If we seek only a complete solution, we will not be open to interim steps. Worse, we may miss partial solutions that can defuse tension immediately and set up a framework for future, more complete problem-solving sessions.

Carefully examine personal responses to conflict. Many adults rely on the conflict response modes learned during childhood. These modes include avoidance, accommodation, compromise, competition and collaboration. Although

adults usually mask their conflict responses in mature, intellectualized words and tones (and their internal responses may feel less intense than they remember from their youth), the basic patterns of seeking approval and retaliation continue on some level in everyone.

While adults usually have more sophistication and options in their behavioral responses than young people do, the horrible fear of exploitation remains somewhere within all of us. Accordingly, when major conflicts arise on campus, many teachers do not really know what to do. All students or adults, at some level, fear conflict, react defensively and have difficulty negotiating acceptable solutions.

Negotiation is the key

Like most adults, educators do not always have a sound theoretical understanding of conflict, nor do they understand that the conflict management process is essentially one of negotiation. If one does not understand how people, including children, negotiate in our culture, then one will miss vital keys to de-escalating tension and creative problem-solving opportunities.

Most adults highly value the concepts of justice, personal accountability and mutual respect. When faced with personal disputes, adults usually desire both personal reconciliation and the just settlement of substantive issues. The

ideal is difficult to achieve, because communication during conflict is complicated by the emotions of both sender and receiver. People are afraid to negotiate cooperatively. People fear manipulation. Simply put, most are afraid of being exploited. A related response to conflict for both children or adults is to decide that "justice" is the answer.

Both responses, fear of exploitation and revenge in the name of justice, can lead to abuse, confusion or pent-up anger. For children and adolescents, who are just forming their own definitions of justice and respect, conflict is both a manifested cause and a result of this confusion. Conflict is often used to work out these norms. If success is defined, measured and rewarded (or punished) primarily by peers, it is no wonder that teacher and student perspectives in fast-moving, tense conflict situations are so different.

Educators may need to rethink and systematize what they already know about conflict based on the principles presented in this article. Such consideration will help educators view conflict from a different, more informed and less passionate perspective, so that affirmative, appropriate modeling and intervention can be provided to students. Educators and students can learn to consider conflict as a positive event!

Important principles to consider
No matter which conflict resolution curriculum is adopted, teacher/administrator and student conflict resolution training programs should address the following principles.
• *When conflict management is considered as stages along a continuum, chances for resolution are greater.* Peer mediation should be an option in any school-based system. Children need to learn, however, that they have the power to resolve conflicts long before resorting to peer mediation. They need to learn to make considerate, thoughtful choices about how to respond (not react) to conflict. Sometimes conflicts can be solved through acts of kindness or mercy done freely by choice (not under teacher or

The Continuum of Conflict

Adult Rendered Decisions

War

Self-Help

Litigation
District Hearing

Arbitration -
Teacher or Principal decides

Child Rendered Choices

Mediation

Negotiation

Discussion

Avoidance

Denial

Choose to Forget

Costs*

Costs*

*Money
Time
Health
Family
Energy
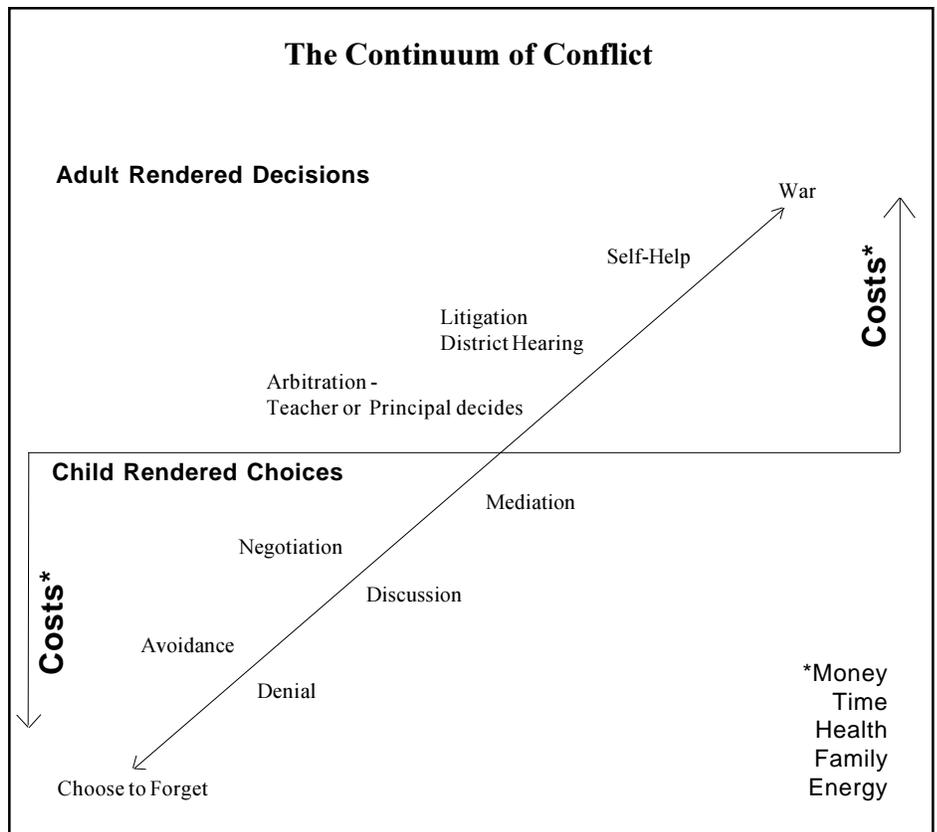
Figure 1

peer pressure). At other times, conflict requires constructive confrontation and a clear request for restitution or other resolution. (See Figure 1.)

The empowerment of students to engage in private dialogue between themselves is a preferable first step in resolving conflicts. If student dialogue does not work, it may be necessary to involve trained peer counselors who can help coach the student through an analysis of the conflict and an examination of various ways of restoring peace. If that approach is unsuccessful, then peer mediation would be the next step. If mediation is unsuccessful, adult intervention should be considered.
• *Begin to think about conflict resolution skills in terms of negotiation skills.* Some programs focus primarily on communication skills in their approach to mediation. Others offer a negotiation-based training. While either approach is valid, both are necessary for participants to thoroughly understand the mediation process. Most educators receive training in communication skills, but they rarely

have a theoretical or practical background in negotiation. Much conflict arises from inept, misinterpreted attempts at negotiation.

Although learning through experience is ideal, many excellent books about negotiation can be found in the library. Look not only for books on cooperative negotiation, but also on traditional tactics. Learn enough about negotiation to enjoy buying a car! The idea is to learn enough yourself so that you can teach students how to recognize when negotiation techniques are being used on them. They deserve to know how to respond effectively to others' tactics with confidence.
• *Develop a thorough understanding of the nature of conflict.* A teacher must learn to analyze what he or she sees from a conflict perspective and recognize when there is more going on than meets the eye. Is the conflict really over a particular jacket, or is it about a need to win? Is it about socio-economic values, misunderstood intentions or faulty assumptions? This is another area that

standard conflict resolution curricula do not usually define in great detail. Assisting kids to understand the "why" of their conflict will go a long way toward resolving it.

• *Consider the concept of "durable agreements."* Although this may sound like a legal term, it is not. Once you are able to recognize the negotiation process in the broad sense, you also will begin to recognize and diagnose a major source of conflict — dissatisfaction with one of three separate aspects of reaching negotiated agreement. These include substantive dissatisfaction, emotional dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction with the process.

Much conflict arises over misguided attempts to satisfy one of these very different aspects of agreement by seeking more of another. An obvious example is a lawsuit for money (an expression of apparent substantive dissatisfaction) when the issue really is wounded pride (emotional dissatisfaction) or anger over how an employee layoff was accomplished (process dissatisfaction). (See Figure 2.)

• *Teach negotiation and mediation through controlled, modeled experience.* Conflict resolution is skills-based. It cannot be taught as a recipe. Training for students or adults should combine lecture, role-play and group exercise. Do not hesitate to experiment. The field is new enough that new ideas are tried out all the time with great success! It is a good idea to arrange a follow-up session about 14 to 30 days after the initial training to evaluate how well the program is going.

• *Think about customizing existing training programs or curricula for your school or district.* This includes peer mediation programs. The training or curriculum should be designed specifically for schools and must also be appropriate for your particular school. Ideally, both conflict-specific negotiation and communication skills should receive equal emphasis.

In one case, an excellent printed core curriculum was enhanced by specialized teacher training, which focused on some of the practical negotiation issues. This training helped to identify techniques not found in the otherwise valuable curriculum. Afterward, the teachers agreed that negotiation training was a significant factor in the usefulness of the core curriculum.

• *Learn to recognize conflict as early as possible.* Kids in conflict send mixed messages, since they have not fully organized their thoughts or feelings in a way that even they understand. Asking a few questions designed to assist the child in articulating his or her real reasons for conflict makes it possible for everyone to move more quickly and with better focus into the problem-solving mode.

Conflict management skills training should help keep tension from becoming the accepted norm. The ability to recognize the kind of conflict and why it happened is crucial to resolving conflict effectively or preventing it altogether.

• *Understand the different types of conflict response and where each is appropriate.* Learn to identify various modes of response: avoidance, compromise, competition, accommodation and collaboration. Also learn the differences between unilateral and joint response to conflict. This is where your new-found appreciation of negotiation will open new worlds of insight to you.

• *Learn how to examine your own part in the conflict.* This includes actions as well as attitudes, assumptions, motives and intentions. Conflict provides an opportunity for emotional and cognitive growth. It helps us to see where we need to change our own attitudes. Growth takes place when we accept responsibility for our own contributions to a problem before pointing out what others have done wrong.

This approach requires an understanding of "rights-based negotiation" — prevalent in our society at large, as well as in the schools — and an ability to anticipate how holding on to rights may be more destructive than choosing collaborative problem solving to get the results you really want. The problem with negotiating from a position of rights is that the remedies available are sometimes narrow and inappropriate.

• *Understand and value forgiveness.* Peacemaking involves a commitment to restore damaged relationships and develop agreements that are fair and satisfactory to everyone involved. Including mutual promises of forgiveness in any conflict resolution agreement, even between adults, is extremely important. Beyond spoken words, a written contract that identifies the specifics of the agreement accentuates the intended finality of the settlement. Sincere promises not to talk to others about the incident can keep tension defused.

• *Know if you are negotiating cooperatively or competitively before seeking to uncover the "real reasons" for the conflict.* Again, if we cannot recognize the real reasons why we fight, efforts to find solutions will be ineffective, confusing and produce anxiety. Some students are innately cooperative negotiators, while others are naturally competitive. Teachers also have an inherent style. A cooperative teacher is often stymied by a creative, competitive kid.

Teachers can learn a few simple techniques for facilitating change from competitive to collaborative modes without devaluing the competitor's natural gifts and style. Unfortunately, conflict is often recognized too late by the teacher and is handled by reaction rather than as part of a response to the particular needs of the child.

• *View conflict not as a single event, but rather as a long process, sometimes involving an entire community.* Frequently, a teacher is brought into a conflict between students after it is well under way. Often, the teacher has not developed the analytical skills necessary to approach the situation confidently and with full understanding. A teacher who arbitrates a dispute between students usually does not have the big picture. The forced resolution not only disempowers the students, but also may create unnecessary resentments as well. If a teacher acquires personal conflict management skills, he or she can spend less time resolving stu-

dent conflicts and produce better-equipped citizens in the process.

Do not expect overnight change as a result of any new skills program. Teachers and students will be trying to overcome training they have received all their lives. Students will possibly continue to be exposed to less-preferred conflict resolution systems in their homes and social lives. In response, some districts are now making efforts to educate parents as well as students in basic conflict management skills.

• *Just and fair resolution of conflicts should be a community goal.* Think about both individual and group empowerment. When challenged in the safe and structured environment of mediation, most students value fairness for everyone. However, mediation and conflict resolution curricula tend to focus on solving individual conflicts within a specific process model. This is appropriate, but incomplete.

Mediation is designed to empower the individual to solve his or her own problems. In classic peer mediation, however, some power tends to be exclusively appropriated by a special class of peer mediators. Unless clear connections and transitions to life outside the mediation session can be made, this approach may take personal responsibility from non-mediators.

Student-designed systems

After learning individual conflict resolution skills, students should design a conflict resolution system, incorporating a continuum of conflict for their class. Ideally, the system includes a traditional peer mediation process, plus a variety of other methods that involve everyone. For example, students could give each other permission to intervene at any time they sensed a conflict between peers. Having each one responsible and empowered to "call out" conflict will allow for earlier intervention and diffusion.

Discussions about conflict communication and what to do if the lowest level student-to-student interventions are ineffective fuses personal responsibility with

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Durable Agreements

Process: Fairness
Substantive: Money, Time, Things
Emotions: Feelings and Fears

Process Satisfaction
Did the process offer me a safe forum to express my concerns?
Did I understand the process?
Did the process help or hinder the negotiation process?
Would I use the process again?
All things considered, did I win or lose?

Emotional Satisfaction
How do I feel about this negotiation?
Was there recognition of my interests?
Were all my interests addressed?
All things considered, did I win or lose?

Substantive Satisfaction
Did I get what I came for?
Was the time, money, effort expended acceptable to me?
All things considered, did I win or lose?

Figure 2

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responsibility to community in a powerful way. It also may authorize, from the students' view, adult intervention at earlier stages. A combination of peer mediation, classroom-based conflict resolution alliances, and other consensual, collaborative approaches teaches process and personal fairness in a way that really takes hold.

A written charter that is signed by everyone in the class and displayed on the wall can serve as a gentle reminder of mutual commitments. A charter also can serve as a background for occasional teacher-guided group assessment, fine-tuning and rededication to concepts.

These are life skills at their most fundamental.

Potential for differences in opinion or perspective exists whenever people interact with one another. If the difference is important enough, one or both may identify the disagreement as a "conflict." Training young people to effectively manage conflict through a continuum of conflict resolution options and to use basic negotiation skills will increase their chances for success in a less than perfect world.

BY WILLIAM DeJONG

By creating a "peaceable school," a safe environment where students are encouraged to experiment with peaceful ways of resolving conflict, RCCP teachers strive to give their students a new image of what their world can be.

Creating a more peaceful world

A variety of school-based programs have emerged in recent years to teach young people new ways of channeling their anger into constructive, nonviolent responses to conflict. The best school-based violence prevention programs seek to do more than reach the individual child. They instead try to change the total school environment, to create a safe community that lives by a credo of nonviolence and multicultural appreciation.

One such program is the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP), a school-based conflict resolution and mediation program started in the New York City Public Schools and jointly sponsored by Educators for Social Responsibility — Metro (ESR). This K-12 program, which has expanded to four other school systems across the country, is now in place in 250 elementary, junior high and high schools, with 4,000 teachers and 120,000 students participating.

Started in 1985, RCCP is one of the most promising violence prevention programs now in operation. What most distinguishes RCCP from other programs is its focus on creating school change. By creating a "peaceable school," a safe environment where students are encouraged to experiment with peaceful ways of resolving conflict, RCCP teachers strive to give their students a new image of

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what their world can be.

For this to happen, the teachers themselves must change. They must learn and apply a new set of skills for heading off and resolving conflict. Even more difficult, they must adopt a new style of classroom management, one that fundamentally involves a sharing of power with students so that students can learn how to deal with their own disputes.

RCCP also seeks to ameliorate racism and other root causes of violence through lessons on multicultural appreciation and bias awareness. Teachers help their students to become aware of their prejudices and to see that stereotypes are based on inaccurate or incomplete information. Differences among people are acknowledged, but RCCP urges that these differences be seen as a cause for celebration rather than as an excuse for prejudice.

Lessons in peace

The RCCP curriculum stresses the modeling of nonviolent alternatives for dealing with conflict, teaching negotiation and other conflict resolution skills, and demonstrates to students that they can "play a powerful role in creating a more peaceful world." The lessons involve experiential learning strategies, all of which require a high degree of student participation and interaction.

RCCP concentrates on teaching several key component skills: active listening, assertiveness (as opposed to aggres-

siveness or passivity), expressing feelings, perspective-taking, cooperation, negotiation and how to interrupt expressions of bias. Learning these skills requires weekly practice, so teachers are encouraged to do at least one "peace lesson" a week, to use "teachable moments" that arise because of what is happening in the classroom or the world at large, and to "infuse" conflict resolution lessons into the regular academic program.

Teacher training and support

RCCP uses both formal training sessions and one-on-one work to teach regular classroom teachers how to present the conflict resolution curriculum. Equally important, the teachers are led to re-examine how they handle conflict in their own lives, particularly in their relationships with students. With a strong commitment from the principal to make the school violence-free and with changes in the teachers' style of classroom management, students are provided with a supportive environment for working on their emerging conflict resolution skills.

RCCP instructors first provide 24 hours of introductory training in a series of after-school sessions. The training introduces the RCCP philosophy and the curriculum; teaches communication, conflict resolution and intergroup relations skills; and demonstrates "infusion" strategies for integrating these concepts

and skills into social studies, language arts and other academic subjects.

Training also covers teaching techniques, in particular, the use of role playing, interviewing, group dialogue, brainstorming and other experiential approaches. The teachers are also encouraged to utilize cooperative learning groups — assigning teams of students to study, work on projects and learn together. Such teams can be used to provide diverse groups of students with a common purpose, which can lead to new friendships and a reduction of prejudice.

A key to RCCP's success is the follow-up support that teachers receive. Each new teacher is assigned to an RCCP staff developer who visits between six and 10 times a year, giving demonstration lessons, helping the teacher prepare, observing classes, giving feedback and sustaining the teacher's motivation. The staff developer convenes bimonthly follow-up meetings after school so that the teachers can receive additional training, share their experiences, discuss concerns and plan schoolwide events. During a teacher's second year, the staff developer visits two or three times.

ability to improvise.

RCCP embraces the concept of "principled negotiation" outlined by Fisher and Ury in their best-seller, *Getting to Yes.* With this approach, mediation is not a contest of wills to see whose position will prevail, but an opportunity for mutual problem-solving. The goal of mediation is not to force one of the parties to give up something, but to forge a "win-win" solution that meets the underlying interests and needs of both parties.

RCCP initiates this peer mediation program only in schools that have been participating in RCCP for at least a year and have a group of teachers who regularly use the curriculum. In RCCP's view, school mediation programs are best implemented as part of a larger effort to train staff and students in conflict resolution, a significant strength over

difficulty finding the time to be involved. As RCCP looks to the future, parent education will be a top priority.

RCCP staff recently launched a Parent Involvement Program, which they piloted and are slowly expanding in Community School District 15 in Brooklyn. With this program, a team of two or three parents per school is trained for 60 hours to lead workshops for other parents on intergroup relations, family communication and conflict resolution. To date, nearly 1,000 parents have received training nationwide.

Evaluation
Metis Associates, Inc., has conducted several evaluations of the RCCP program. Uniformly, these evaluations have shown high enthusiasm among RCCP teachers, who have reported decreases in name-calling and physical violence among their students.

Student achievement tests have confirmed this view, showing that most RCCP students learn the key concepts of conflict resolution and are able to apply them in responding to hypothetical conflicts. In addition, the RCCP students themselves have reported having fewer fights and engaging less frequently in name-calling compared to a matched control group.

RCCP annually costs just over $33 per student. To educators accustomed to buying packaged curricula that sell for a few hundred dollars, this might seem expensive. It should be remembered, however, that RCCP is much more than a curriculum. Rather, it is an intensive program of school change, with a strong emphasis on teacher training and professional development. More information about the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program can be obtained by writing to: RCCP National Center, 163 Third Avenue, Box 103, New York, NY 10003.

The ultimate goal of mediation is not to force one of the parties to give up something, but to forge a "win-win" solution that meets the underlying interests and needs of both parties.

Student mediation
A key component of RCCP's plan for school change, the student mediation program provides strong peer models for nonviolent conflict resolution and reinforces students' emerging skills in working out their own problems. Mediators are selected with student and staff involvement to represent a cross-section of the student body, defined by gender, race, class, achievement level and placement (e.g., special education). To be certified, mediators must demonstrate a complex set of skills in a role-played conflict, showing both a working knowledge of the mediation process and an

mediation-only projects conducted elsewhere.

Remember that student mediation is not a substitute for an effective school discipline policy. If strictly enforced sanctions against fighting are not in place, students are unlikely to turn to the mediators for help.

Although the mediation program is an important part of RCCP's approach, funding limitations have prevented its widespread implementation. RCCP estimates an average cost of $10,000 per year to run an elementary school mediation program, which covers training of faculty coordinators, faculty time for supervision and support, ongoing consultation by RCCP staff, and various supplies.

Parent training
If students are to use their emerging conflict resolution skills outside of school, they must have family support. Unfortunately, parents who are busy making a living and raising a family often have

BY BARBARA SARKIS

Resolving Conflict Through Mediation, a program developed as a public service by Aetna Life and Casualty Company, is a new resource for middle schools interested in implementing or expanding conflict resolution training.

Helping kids to handle conflict

While conflict has always been a part of school life, schools today are increasingly troubled by the escalation of mismanaged conflict. And, the consequences are disturbing. Learning is blocked, teaching time is wasted and school violence is on the rise as ordinary confrontations become incidents much nastier than a shouting match.

The underlying causes of turmoil in our schools are many and complex. Consequently, no single approach provides a complete antidote. However, too often, driven by feelings of frustration, anger or powerlessness, students act out, lash out or withdraw simply because they lack an alternative — the skills to constructively manage the conflict.

In response, many educators are working to establish conflict resolution training programs within their schools. By teaching youngsters skills and procedures to effectively resolve social conflict, educators foster a climate that is more cooperative and conducive to learning.

Although several models of conflict resolution training programs have evolved, an effective approach combines

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a conflict resolution curriculum with a peer mediation program. Mediation is a process in which a neutral third party helps disputants — the kids in conflict — find their own solution to the problem.

Mediation works because it creates a setting that helps disputants control their anger, express their feelings and needs, and brainstorm for solutions. The self-empowering aspect of the process appeals to adolescents and fosters self-esteem and self-discipline. When students come up with their own solution to a problem, they are happier and more inclined to live with it.

RCTM — a tool for middle schools
Resolving Conflict Through Mediation (RCTM), a program developed as a public service by Aetna Life and Casualty Company, is a new resource for middle schools interested in implementing or expanding conflict resolution training. Using a variety of activities and role plays, RCTM introduces the process and skills necessary for mediation to students within a classroom or small-group setting. It aims to give students some basic tools to help them resolve everyday conflicts more productively.

A compact three-part program
As an introductory program, RCTM requires from five to seven hours of instructional time. It includes a teacher's

guide with detailed instructions for implementing the program as well as worksheets and a classroom poster.

"Responding to Conflict," the first part of the program, helps students understand some of the underlying causes of conflict, identify various conflict resolution styles, and distinguish between "win-win" and "lose-lose" or "win-lose" outcomes. Then, mediation is introduced as a way of achieving a "win-win" solution to conflict.

The communication skills essential to problem solving and mediation, such as active listening, identifying shared needs and dealing with hidden agendas, are introduced in part two of RCTM. Youngsters are taught to stop the name-calling and the blaming and to see the problem from the other person's viewpoint. They learn to work together to find a mutually acceptable solution.

Finally, students learn how to use the mediation process through the role plays presented in section three. A classroom poster, "Go for the Win-Win," reminds students of the mediation process steps and ground rules.

In 1993, Aetna offered RCTM, free of charge, to over 7,000 schools in 13 pilot states. Finding RCTM to be relevant and practical, many middle schools immediately incorporated the training into their programs — with very positive results. RCTM fits easily within the framework of a middle school program and can be

adapted to meet particular needs.

Getting started
Sandy Springs Middle School in Atlanta had no previous conflict resolution training program in place, but was very interested in getting started through RCTM. Ninety-three students were trained through the program, including a group of 15 selected to serve as student mediators under the direction of the resource officer. By intervening in student disputes, these peer mediators helped to reduce the number of office referrals by about 40 percent. Many of the problems mediated stem from rumor and hearsay. These kinds of problems may start small but frequently escalate into more serious problems.

Enhancing an existing program
Bair Middle School, an urban school in Broward County, Florida, had peer counseling and peer tutoring programs in place for several years. Eager to add peer mediation to the menu of student-provided services, Bair used RCTM to train the peer counselors in mediation. The counselors responded well to the interactive nature of the training.

At Bair, peer mediation has helped prevent common adolescent problems from escalating into fist fights. A typical conflict mediated by students is described as a "clique problem," one group of girls versus another group of girls, with name-calling and lots of "she said, you said" types of accusations. A typical solution reached through mediation is a written agreement to "ignore each other." Bair follows up with the disputants a month after the mediation to check on progress.

"Win-win" solutions appeal to adolescents' strong sense of fairness. Bair is finding that referrals to mediation are beginning to come from the students themselves —not just from teachers or administrators.

Reaching a targeted audience
School district policy in Riverside, California, requires students who are truant to make up missed hours of school on Saturday. Detention alone, however, was not working — counselors were seeing the same kids week after week. Consequently, Sierra Middle School designed a multifaceted program to address the underlying causes of truancy.

Since truancy and related problems often stem from conflicts at home, Sierra used RCTM with both students and their parents to help them improve their communication skills. Feedback from participants verified the program's usefulness. Consequently, Sierra plans to extend the program to include more students.

South Scranton Intermediate School, Scranton, Pennsylvania, also used RCTM with a targeted group. When the program arrived, teachers were asked to submit the names of students who might benefit the most from such training. From a longer list, 10 students were selected. All of the students had difficulty getting along with peers, most suffered from poor self-esteem and many had learning problems.

Two teachers worked with the group, taking the training very slowly and supplementing it with material from "Children's Creative Response to Conflict." Not wanting to participate in role playing, many of the students resisted at first. As time went on, however, they "loosened up" and became more involved. Classroom teachers reported an improvement in behavior, noting that fighting had decreased.

Keys to success
As with any educational effort, teaching skill and commitment have been critical to the success of RCTM. Although they have used the program in a variety of ways, these educators share some fundamental qualities — creativity and dedication. And, since youngsters need ongoing experiences to internalize new skills, most of these schools are using RCTM as part of a comprehensive program or plan to expand by introducing additional training.

Aetna hopes that these experiences will encourage others to incorporate conflict resolution training into middle school programs in new and meaningful ways.

Educators may obtain a copy of RCTM by writing to: Barbara Sarkis, Manager, Aetna, RE4C, 151 Farmington Ave., Hartford, CT 06156.

BY BETSY WALKUP

Helping children learn problem-solving skills to handle conflicts with others is the goal of this curriculum, which teaches children to STOP, THINK, CHOOSE, DO and CHECK.

The Hugs Hollow way: Problem solving together

Some school days never seem to end. One such day, four parents had to be called for behavior problems. One child erupted violently when he was hit by a piece of chalk and teased about his father — the child tried to strangle the instigator. Another student shouted abusive insults at me when not permitted to use the computer. To further annoy me, when I was not looking, she put chewing gum into the door lock.

At dismissal, the violence escalated in the lunchroom. Dangerous behavior lurked at every table, with children grabbing book bags, punching, snatching belongings. One boy ran out of the building. Others ran into the hall. The most immature ran around tables, hoping for a game of hide and seek.

I hesitated to break up any fights. The week before, I had tried to calm a child and was bitten by the 10-year-old. That evening I sat in the clinic, waiting for a physician to prescribe penicillin.

I am staggered by the depth of my students' problems. No day passes without hearing news that makes me pause:

"Mike said he is going to beat me up after school."

"My 15-year-old brother was killed in a hit-and-run, and his eyeballs were kicked out of his head."

"My after-school program got shot at

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Friday. We had to duck for cover. They caught two men, but the rest got away."

"My dad beat my mom up yesterday. Her eye is all swollen."

For an answer to some of these problems, I spent years reading journals and interviewing parents, teachers, psychologists and state education officials. I wrote stories and developed teaching units for elementary-school age children about how to solve problems using an interpersonal cognitive approach. This program had to be educational as well as fun if it was to reach children.

Presented here are some of my first year's experiences using this problem-solving cognitive approach in a classroom of third- and fourth-grade children who have learning disabilities.

Getting started

In 1993, I completed *Problem Solving the HUGS HOLLOW WAY,* © 1993, a handbook to teach children problem-solving skills. It includes 13 lessons using stories about 11 characters of psychological depth living in a land called Hugs Hollow. Each story is about characters dealing with life issues. One character fears physical harm. Another does not have the self-esteem to do certain things, and yet another character is often teased. Follow-up activities include art projects, role playing, puppetry, drama, class problem solving and evaluation.

The course begins with a unit on self-

esteem, followed by a lesson on goal setting. Problem-solving steps are taught, one lesson per skill. Colored drawings illustrate the concepts: stop, plan, select the best choice, do, check and self-talk.

In the fall, I tested the children using the AGS *Social Skills Rating System.*[1] Each child answered a Social Skills Questionnaire. (The test was read to the children.) I also scored a teacher form Social Skills Questionnaire for each child.

Following the testing, the program began during a weekly health period. Some lessons dictated extra periods because of excitement or need for reinforcement. Children reviewed their goals monthly with prizes awarded to successful goal achievers. Problem solving for bullying and teasing was reintroduced several times due to conflicts in the class.

The lesson format often began with a story from Hugs Hollow. During the story, a volunteer would manipulate paper puppets around the scenery board. For example, Snooter, the monkey, teased Barb, the porcupine, about her weight. Barb, after several false starts, made the best choice of behavior for her problem: She ignored Snooter. "You can't change someone else, but you can change how you feel about something."

Following a story, we discussed its application to life using volunteers. Then we would do an art project, role playing or drama related to the story.

Once the skills were taught, the children seemed to enjoy working on individual problems the most. Many times, we never got to the art or drama activities because the children demanded that their problems be addressed.

Problem solving together

One morning while I was reading the story, a little boy ran up to me and tugged on my jacket. I promptly told him to return to his seat because he was disturbing the class. Charles (names have been changed) would not let me finish the story. He jumped back up and thrust a paper into my hand. It read, "I have a big problem."

Brushing the lesson plan aside, we listened to Charles' problem. Charles blurted out that when he went home from school, big boys from the junior high would bully him. He was frightened. "I can't get in my house. They have guns. I saw them!" he said. We used the entire period discussing Charles' problem and brainstorming solutions. The children suggested ideas such as telling a teacher, fighting back, calling the police. Interestingly, my children always vetoed telling a teacher. "Telling a teacher never works. Teachers say the same thing: Stay away from him. Teachers don't care. They tell us that because they don't want to bother."

After further discussion, the class decided that the best choice for Charles was to go right home. They also suggested that I call his parents. So, with his approval, I called his parents that night to tell them of the problem. The very next day, Charles arrived at school with a new possession — a door key. His parents acted immediately and decided to equip their child with a key so that he no longer had to be a victim on the street. To this day, Charles proudly wears his key around his neck. He also reports that he has never had any more problems with the street bullies even though he reports seeing them often.

Another time, a child new to the school blurted out that he was a victim of bullying on the playground. Sam admit-

ted that he felt lonely and did not like it one bit. The class responded with concern; the other children were aware of Sam's problem and wanted to help him.

To my chagrin, the class decided that the best choice for Sam was to teach him how to fight. I had to gently help the children select a better choice than fighting back, but I wanted them to reach this conclusion themselves.

The next day a classmate, Mike, arrived with his karate gear — boxing gloves and fancy shoes. I had promised that several of the children could come to class during recess to help Sam.

Realizing the procedure was unorthodox, I still permitted Sam to dress up in the karate gear. Sam stood up and took a punch at Mike. He slipped and fell. Using this "teachable moment," I questioned the children gently. "Have you noticed that Sam has slipped and fallen trying to do something that does not come naturally? Do you really think this will help him with a bully who is bigger than Sam?"

They paused and thought about this for a moment. Sam took another swipe at Mike and again slipped. I reminded them again that perhaps this was not the best choice.

Then my angel unaware appeared. Jane piped up and said, "You know, Sam, you look scared. Your face. You look like you are going to cry."

This opening helped me suggest to Sam that perhaps he needed to work on his body language. This idea caught on. Each child in the group outdid the other to show Sam how not to look frightened. The issue became one of feeling stronger inside and believing in himself. I was pleased.

Toward the end of recess, the children returned to the playground. As I approached a little later, an angry-looking teacher grabbed a boy in one hand and Sam in another and proceeded to escort them to the principal. I quickly offered to handle it. The schoolyard bully had immediately run up to Sam and punched him in the stomach. Sam punched back.

When we returned to the classroom, I

reminded the children that fighting back was not the best choice. What happened? They both got into trouble, and it did not help Sam. The bully would be back tomorrow.

For the next few weeks, we worked on problem solving with Sam. He realized that the best choice for him was to not look such like a victim.

Many times during the next months, Sam would bring in a new but similar problem of dealing with bullies. Sam felt comfortable sharing because he had some allies in the other children and in me. One day he reported that a kid with a gun threatened to take his book bag. Sam said he thought about the best choice and chose to run to the safety of an after-school program. After the program, he ran home and told his mother. She in turn called the boy's parents.

Another time, Sam told me of his fear of going home. I told the bus driver, who then notified the mother. Upon investigating, the bus driver found Sam's house wide open when he came home from school. Both of us warned the mother. Fortunately, Sam does not report any more incidents and has seemed to handle school social problems well. He was even nominated for a peer leadership position.

This method works for more than bullying behavior. One little girl, Alice, was accused of being insolent on the phone to the mother of a classmate. Her own mother punished her by not letting her play outside and not permitting her to go on a trip to Florida. The real problem for Alice was that she felt unjustly accused. In tears she argued that she never said the things of which she was accused.

Six children brainstormed solutions. Whenever someone suggested getting the mothers together, Alice flatly shook her head, saying that her mom was sick and could not come to school. The children voted about the best choice: Alice should strengthen her friendship with friends who believed in her. They also wanted me to call the two mothers. Believing in the process, I decided to stick my neck out and make the two calls. The accusing mother told me about two phone calls. It

was the second call in which the accused child was out of order on the phone. After talking to Alice's mother, it became clear that Alice had only called once — another child made the second call. Alice appeared at school the next day with her privileges back.

Promising results
The objective of learning problem-solving skills has been realized within this small group. The children now appear to understand the concepts of stopping and selecting the best choice. We had to work very hard on these concepts. Learning to stop is very difficult for the learning disabled population. They become confused and often are distracted.

One boy came up to me quite angry following a class on "stopping first." "This plan doesn't work. When I tell someone to stop, they don't stop. See, it doesn't work."

This was a perfect lead-in. I told him, as well as the whole class, that "you cannot control another person, but you can control yourself. Yes, he was right. He could not stop someone else. The point is to stop yourself and think through the best choice for that situation."

The children have also learned about getting to the best choice. In the lunchroom, two boys got into a fist fight. One of the teachers broke it up and told each one to sit and think about it. Chuck confided to me that now he knew what he was supposed to think about. Previously, when teachers told him to sit in the corner and think, he never knew what to think about. Now he did. He realized that the best choice was to be a friend of Mark. "And you know, Mrs. Walkup, he picked the same best choice too! At the same time, we looked to each other and shook hands."

Short words are easy to remember: Stop. Think. "Looking for the best choice" sinks in. The students are proud of having these tools at their fingertips. They have told me that other people do not know the curriculum's problem-solving technique: stop, plan, choose, do, check. They wish others did. One even

thought that the Civil War would not have happened if people had known this approach.

Ongoing adult guidance is the key to help children arrive at the best choice. It does not come automatically. Children need help to think through consequences. They need someone to help them think of different alternatives, to check whether a choice will really work. Simply telling them the best choice is not enough. They need to learn to decide by themselves.

Angry tools also help. When Jake had a lot of pent-up anger, I saw him hitting his hand into his fist, trying to blow off his anger. He was imitating Corbo, the crow from Hugs Hollow, who beat his wing against his body to cool off. Children are quick to suggest ways to cool off. One afternoon, my class suggested writing something, drawing, staying in the corner, exercising, looking at pictures or something beautiful, reading a book, petting a cat, taking a shower. Children seem relieved to know they have options in handling anger.

I have found that the stories and art projects are really jumping-off points. When the children incorporate the ideas from the readings into their daily lives, they appear to learn. Simply reading the story and doing the art for art's sake does not help learning to occur. What really works is taking real problems, generating several solutions and voting on the best choice.

Not everything turned out roses. Children receive different messages from home. One girl proudly told the class that her mother taught her to act one way at school and another way at home. "My mother tells me to wait until after school to beat up someone who bothers me." Other parents have even told me that they want their child to hit back. I have also found that using this approach is not enough for severe behavior problems.

After seven months of training, behavior scores reflect an increase in cooperation, assertion, empathy, social skills and self-control. Of my class of 15 children, 13 demonstrated improvement in social

skills; 11 showed more cooperation; 14 exhibited increased assertion; 11 reflected more self-control. There was a decrease in problem behaviors for 13 children.

While this article attests to the success of the program in a limited setting, once *Problem Solving the Hugs Hollow Way © 1993,* is published, I hope to conduct a more formal research process to determine its effectiveness with a wider population.

Why problem solving?
One particular classroom moment has great meaning for me. After a story, Mike asked, "Why do we work on problem solving? None of the other teachers do problem solving."

I did not want to tell him we were doing research. I did not want to tell him that I had written the materials and was trying them out. I did not want to tell him that I had problems with bullies when I was a child and that I did not want my students to have the same problems. So I tried to answer by first saying, "I care about you kids."

I sensed that my answer was not good enough. From the back of the room, David spoke up. "If you fight you get into trouble. You get suspended. Maybe the police come. You let the problem get bigger and bigger."

Then from the other side of the room, 10-year-old Jane said, "If you beat up someone, he will hunt you down. Then guns, knives, glass. Then more guns, more knives, more glass and then more people. And then you end up getting killed."

The answer came from the children. For many, learning problem solving in the classroom could keep one from ending up getting killed. Certainly that is a

Endnotes
1. Gresham, Frank M. and Elliott, Stephen N. *Social Skills Rating System Manual* (1990), American Guidance Service, Inc.

good enough reason.
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BY GEORGE BUTTERFIELD

Is there a role for mediation in a comprehensive, school-based, anti-gang strategy? Can mediation be used to teach gang members constructive conflict manage-ment?

To mediate or not to mediate?

The existence of groups that engage in violent, illegal activity is not new. The magnitude of the problem in today's communities and schools is new. Several factors such as urban sprawl, population growth, high unemployment and urban recession "pockets" have moved some street gangs out of the inner city into new settings, including rural towns and suburban communities.

The presence of gangs in communities usually means that gangs and gang activity are in the schools as well. Gang-involved students play a disproportionate role in the number of acts of violence, vandalism, extortion and threats on school campuses.

The gangs of today are very different from the "West Side Story" gangs of 30 years ago. Today's typical street gang member has been likened to a "domestic terrorist," having little regard for the rights of others. But not all gang members are hardened criminals; many of them are fringe members who can be positively influenced.

Schools have used a variety of strategies to keep gangs from totally disrupting the educational mission of the school. These strategies range from highly suppressive, enforcement-oriented approaches to preventative measures, such as finding jobs for gang members or

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involving them in specially designed sports programs. Is there a role for mediation in a comprehensive, school-based, anti-gang strategy? Is mediation a tool that can be used to teach gang members that conflict can be constructive?

Students as mediators
In the early years of the school-based peer mediation movement, it was commonly suggested that gang disputes could be resolved through peer mediation. That approach has recently been called into question.

The literature of the late 1970s and early 1980s presents a picture of gangs that is far removed from the reality of gangs in 1994. Many school safety experts scoff at the idea of using peer mediators for gang disputes, believing that it puts too much pressure on the mediators and places them at risk as well. The power imbalance between the mediator and the gang members is simply too great.

Some school districts are concerned about the liability involved with using students as mediators between potentially violent individuals. As a result, some districts no longer use peer mediation beyond the elementary school level.

Mediation models have differing goals. Some models are based primarily on improving communication; others aim to resolve conflicting substantive issues between the parties.

Not all gang-oriented conflict is caused by misinformation or miscommunication, where opening up the lines of communications will likely solve the problem. Much gang-related conflict is a result of negligence or fault. In other words, it is intentional, and many gang members thrive on it.

When considering the use of school-based mediation with gangs, important questions should be asked: What motivation do gang members have to come to the mediation table? What benefits does mediation offer to gang members?

Many adults can be motivated to try mediation as a means of avoiding litigation. Typically, mediation results in both a better relationship and a chance to maintain control of the outcome. Mediation is also less expensive, takes less time and involves less emotional conflict than litigation. Unfortunately, these benefits do not often appeal to gang members. Mediation with gang disputes is an alternative that many gang members may find unacceptable.

Many gang members believe that they are invincible and that nothing bad will ever happen to them. Still others maintain a sense of hopelessness — if something bad does happen, then it is fate and nothing can be done about it. With either of these philosophies, mediation is pointless.

The one factor that can work to motivate a gang member to choose mediation

is the gang's desire to maintain control. Within a setting in which there are sanctions for noncompliance, gangs can maintain a certain amount of control over their environment (the school) through cooperation with the administration. Mediation thus provides one way of developing a cooperative approach to mutual co-existence.

Robert Tafoya, principal of California Middle School in Sacramento, California, has had success with getting gang leaders to mediate school disputes between rival gangs. He believes that anyone on campus can be a mediator as long as he or she is a natural leader of a group. This includes gang leaders.

Tafoya strongly believes that the conflict management benefits to this approach outweigh the risks. These benefits include fewer student conflicts, a reduction of fear and disruption and more administrative time for serious problems.

Tafoya's approach, however, cannot be considered to be peer mediation. He works closely with gang leaders in mediating their disputes and then works further with these gang leaders to help them resolve many of their own personal problems.

Mediation implies that two equals (with obvious allowances for power imbalances) sit down together and negotiate a settlement with the help of a third party. Some school administrators believe that mediation should never be attempted with gang members because mediation places gangs on a par with those in authority. In essence, mediation gives gangs power that they should not have.

Using gang leaders as peer leaders in any kind of peer program is problematic. Many practitioners believe that gang-affiliated youth should never assume leadership roles in school-based peer programs unless no other leaders are forthcoming. And, if gang leaders do serve in a leadership capacity, it should only be with close adult supervision.

While it is appropriate to recognize and reinforce pro-social behaviors of gang members, adults must discourage any reward that is related to gang status.

It is counterproductive to the school environment for gang-involved students to enjoy adult approval, status and influence despite continued criminal or delinquent behavior in the community.

School employees as mediators
Another approach in mediating gang disputes on campus uses school employees as mediators. Teachers and coaches who are assertive and have firsthand knowledge of the individuals are the most effective in this role.

Can school employees mediate gang disputes if they are viewed as one of the participants in the dispute? Gang-related problems at school are not always as simple as a disagreement between two individuals. Several gangs may be contending with each other and be in conflict with teachers or the school administration at the same time.

A participant in a dispute cannot serve as a mediator to resolve it. School officials should distinguish between gang-related disputes in which the school is

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The most important quality of the adult mediator is faithfulness — the mediation must establish loyalty. Gang members tend to be extremely distrustful. Thus, it is a good idea for school employees acting as mediators to caucus with the gang leaders for a long time before trying to get them to sit down together. Gang disputes take more preparation time than any other type of dispute.

The most significant agreement a mediator can negotiate with gang leaders is to get them to agree to meet. A lot of mediation attempts end before this ever happens. According to Tafoya, the most difficult part of mediation is determining the exact nature of the problem; this is seldom accomplished when gang leaders are together.

A combination of two types of mediation is used in some schools. With this approach, teachers and staff are trained first. They, in turn, train students. Students then work in teams of two or more, mediating a wide range of disputes. Problems of a more serious nature are handled by teachers and school administrators. This strategy addresses liability issues and the risk associated with students trying to mediate disputes between violent gang members.

This approach raises a critical issue:

one of the parties and those which are primarily between rival gangs or gang members.

Can school employees mediate school-based conflicts even if they are not considered to be parties to the dispute? A mediator must be an agent of reality. A certain detachment from the parties and the substantive part of the dispute makes this possible in a typical mediation situation. In a school setting, most mediators cannot be truly neutral and unbiased. The perception that they are biased may make things worse.

Even when they are not perceived as a party in the dispute, school administrators have a stake in the mediation. A parallel example is involving a mediator in negotiating a settlement in a dispute that has ramifications for the community in which the mediator lives. Although the mediator may not be directly involved in the dispute, how can he or she be neutral if there is even an indirect influence resulting from a settlement by the parties?

Another problem with the use of school employees centers on the issue of confidentiality. Confidentiality is critical in gang disputes. Gang members must be able to "save face." Can the school employee who mediates maintain confiden-

tiality? Does the employee have a duty to share information with the administration and/or law enforcement? Putting a school employee in such a situation is dangerous. Information can get out in too many ways. If this happens, the mediator may become a target.

It would also be difficult for a school administrator to mediate a gang dispute; gang members would be extremely hesitant to say anything that could bring further sanctions from the school.

Outside mediators

Opinions differ regarding the use of outside mediators to negotiate disputes that involve gangs on campus. Gang members may not feel comfortable with outsiders and may refuse to negotiate.

Tafoya believes that adults who are respected in the neighborhood can mediate, but they must have knowledge of the gang and be respected by the gang leaders. Tafoya also emphasizes that knowledge of the language and the gang members is not enough. People who mediate need training, and people who mediate gang disputes need additional training.

There are a number of additional issues that must be considered if the school brings in a mediator from the outside. Much gang behavior is illegal, so using a police officer as a mediator is questionable at best. The gang member may fear saying something to the officer that could have legal implications.

How about the use of social service providers or psychologists? Once again, anyone who has the respect of the gang leaders may be able to mediate. But some cross-cultural issues must be considered. Many of the "soft" disciplines are looked upon with disdain by gang leaders. It would be a sign of weakness to come to the table.

Members of the clergy can be effective mediators in these types of disputes. They tend to be highly respected in many cultures. They are often leaders in the community who know all of the youth involved. They also tend to have more experience in methods of facilitating communication. Many are "priests of forgive-ness" for the person and can distinguish the despicable acts from the person.

A related issue is the scope of the mediation. Should the mediator try to reach a settlement that deals with the problems between the gangs that impact the school alone or should the mediator broaden the scope to include a gang truce in the community? The current approach in most schools is to declare school turf to be neutral and to focus on getting the gangs to keep the warfare off campus.

One of the main difficulties with broadening the scope of the mediation to include gang activity in the community is that the gang leadership is subject to a great deal of change. Gangs are not highly structured organizations. Leadership is largely defined by who is present for a particular event, be it a drive-by shooting or a robbery. The leaders of the gang on the school campus may not be the leaders in the community at large.

The school might be able to mediate a settlement with the gang members who attend school. To broaden the scope of the mediation to include gang leaders who do not attend the school is to take on a task that is impractical for the school itself.

Coercive mediation

School mediation can be inherently coercive. What occurs in most schools may actually be arbitration using a very collaborative arbitrator.

Some schools link their peer mediation program to the school's disciplinary channels. A negotiated settlement between students keeps the problem from coming before an assistant principal. If the students cannot settle it, the assistant principal will.

Although this situation may be similar to the motivation in staying out of court, there is a significant difference. A party that litigates may lose, but the chance remains that he or she might win. The pressure to settle is great in this situation, but not as great as the pressure in the type of peer mediation frequently used in schools. In the latter situation, there is nearly always a negative result tied to the failure to settle the problem — some type of punishment. Under these conditions, who is *not* going to settle the problem? This type of "settlement" is just a whitewashing of the problem. The problem is really not settled at all — the students just say that it is so that they will not be disciplined.

Some settlements are easily made but impossible to enforce because one of the parties does not really agree. Policies become divisive unless all the interests are represented when the policies are established. For example, schools have responded to the problem of gang activity at school by banning the wearing of gang paraphernalia. Here is where school personnel fail to understand that they are creating many of their own problems.

Students can be forced to follow rules that they perceive to be unfair, but their displeasure will surface in other ways. If some interested parties are left out of a settlement on these types of issues, they may react against persons who were called to the table. Thus, backlash is certain to occur if issues are settled without all particular interests being represented during the negotiations.

Working it out

There are facets of campus life that are not a matter of school policy, rules or regulations. These aspects are simply a part of the world in which juveniles live, but they can be a source of disruption and violence. An example of this is music. A decision to play one kind of music to the exclusion of types that appeal to other groups on the campus will cause problems. In this example, mediation could help students learn to work together and demonstrate respect for other people. Schools should look for opportunities to demonstrate and teach collaborative problem-solving strategies.

Nothing about the use of mediation with gang members is easy. And the fruit of the mediation may be temporary at best. But many young gang members can be drawn back from gang involvement, and the use of collaboration to empower and influence young, impressionable minds may be well worth the effort.

NSSC Publications

The National School Safety Center (NSSC) serves as a national clearing-house for school safety programs and activities related to campus security, school law, community relations, student discipline and attendance, and the prevention of drug abuse, gangs, weapons and bullying in schools.

NSSC's primary objective is to focus national attention on the importance of providing safe and effective schools. The following publications have been produced to promote this effort.

School Safety News Service includes three editions of *School Safety,* news-journal of the National School Safety Center, and six issues of *School Safety Update*. These publications feature the insight of prominent professionals on issues related to school safety, including student discipline, security, atten-dance, dropouts, youth suicide, character education and substance abuse. NSSC's News Service reports on effective school safety programs, updates legal and legislative issues, and reviews new literature on school safety is-sues. Contributors include accomplished local practitioners and nationally recognized experts and officials. ($59.00 annual subscription)

School Safety Check Book (1990) is NSSC's most comprehensive text on crime and violence prevention in schools. The volume is divided into sections on school climate and discipline, school attendance, personal safety and school security. Geared for the hands-on practitioner, each section includes a review of the problems and prevention strategies. Useful charts, surveys and tables, as well as write-ups on a wide variety of model programs, are included. Each chapter also has a comprehensive bibliography of additional resources. 219 pages. ($15.00)

Set Straight on Bullies (1989) examines the myths and realities about schoolyard bullying. Changing attitudes about the seriousness of the problem are stressed. It studies the characteristics of bullies and bullying victims. And, most importantly, it provides strategies for educators, parents and students to better prevent and respond to schoolyard bullying. Sample student and adult surveys are included. 89 pages. ($10.00)

Child Safety Curriculum Standards (1991) helps prevent child victimization by assisting youth-serving professionals in teaching children how to protect themselves. Sample strategies that can be integrated into existing curricula or used as a starting point for developing a more extensive curriculum are given for both elementary and secondary schools. The age-appropriate standards deal with the topics of substance abuse, teen parenting, suicide, gangs, weapons, bullying, runaways, rape, sexually transmitted diseases, child abuse, parental abductions, stranger abductions and latchkey children. Each of the 13 chapters includes summaries, standards, strategies and additional resources for each grade level. 353 pages. ($75.00)

Developing Personal and Social Responsibility (1992) is designed to serve as a framework on which to build successful school and community programs aimed at training young people to be responsible citizens. 130 pages. ($9.00)

Gangs In Schools: Breaking Up Is Hard to Do (1992) offers an introduction to youth gangs, providing the latest information on the various types of gangs — including ethnic gangs, stoner groups and satanic cults — as well as giving practical advice on preventing or reducing gang encroachment on schools. Already in its seventh printing, the book contains valuable suggestions from law enforcers, school principals, prosecu-tors and other experts on gangs. The concluding chapter describes more than 20 school- and community-based programs throughout the country that have been successful in combating gangs. 48 pages. ($5.00)

School Crime and Violence: Victims' Rights (1992) is a current and compre-hensive text on school safety law. The recently revised book offers a historical overview of victims' rights, describes how it has been dealt with in our laws and courts, and explains its effect on America's schools. The authors cite legal case histories and cover current school liability laws. The book explains tort liability, sovereign immunity, duty-at-large rule, intervening cause doctrine and foresee-able criminal activity, as well as addressing their significance to schools. The concluding chapter includes a "Checklist for Providing Safe Schools." 127 pages. ($15.00)

Educated Public Relations: School Safety 101 (1993) offers a quick course in public relations for school district public relations directors, administrators and others working to achieve safe, effective schools. This newly revised book explains the theory of public relations and successful methods for integrating people and ideas. It discusses how public relations programs can promote safe schools and quality education and gives 101 specific ideas and strategies to achieve this goal. 72 pages. ($8.00)

School Discipline Notebook (1992) will help educators establish fair and effec-tive discipline policies. The book reviews student responsibilities and rights, including the right to safe schools. Legal policies that regulate discipline methods used in schools are also explained. 53 pages. ($5.00)

The Need To Know: Juvenile Record Sharing (1989) deals with the confiden-tiality of student records and why teachers, counselors, school administrators, police, probation officers, prosecutors, the courts and other professionals who work with juvenile offenders need to know and be able to share information con-tained in juvenile records. When information is shared appropriately, improved strategies for responding to serious juvenile offenders, and for improving public safety, can be developed. The second part of the book reviews the legal stat-utes of each state, outlining which agencies and individuals are permitted ac-cess to various juvenile records and how access may be obtained. A model juvenile records code and sample forms to be used by agencies in facilitating juvenile record sharing also are included. 88 pages. ($12.00)

Points of view or opinions are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Education or Pepperdine University. Prices subject to change without prior notification.

Resource Papers

The National School Safety Center (NSSC) has produced a series of special reports on a variety of topics related to school safety. Each NSSC Resource Paper provides a concise but comprehensive overview of the problem, covers a number of prevention and intervention strategies, and includes a list of organizations, related publications, and article reprints on the topic.

Safe Schools Overview offers a review of the contemporary safety issues facing today's schools, such as crime and violence, discipline, bullying, drug/alcohol trafficking and abuse, gangs, high dropout rates, and school safety partnerships.

Alternative Schools for Disruptive Youth thoroughly covers the historical background of alternative schools and the academic research that has been done on their effectiveness.

Corporal Punishment in Schools outlines the arguments for and against corporal punishment. It also discusses the alternatives to corporal punishment that have been developed by schools and psychologists.

Drug Traffic and Abuse in Schools, after summarizing students' attitudes and beliefs about drugs, covers drug laws and school rules; the legal aspects of student searches and drug testing; and the connection between drug use and truancy, crime and violence.

Weapons in Schools outlines a number of ways to detect weapons on campus, including using searches and metal detectors, establishing a security force, and eliminating book bags or lockers where weapons can be hidden.

Role Models, Sports and Youth covers a number of programs that link youth and sports, including NSSC's urban school safety campaign that uses professional athletes as spokesmen; several organizations founded by professional athletes to help youth combat drugs; and a number of programs established to get young people involved in school or neighborhood teams.

School Bullying and Victimization defines bullying, offers an overview of psychological theories about how bullies develop, and covers intervention programs that have been successful.

School Crisis Prevention and Response identifies principles and practices that promote safer campuses. It presents reviews of serious schools crises — fatal shootings, a terrorist bombing, armed intruders and cluster suicide. Interviews with the principals in charge also are included.

Student and Staff Victimization, after outlining schools' responsibility to provide a safe educational environment, covers strategies for dealing with victimization.

Student Searches and the Law examines recent court cases concerning student searches, including locker searches, strip searches, searches by probation officers, drug testing, and searches using metal detectors or drug-sniffing dogs.

Increasing Student Attendance, after outlining the problem and providing supporting statistics, details strategies to increase attendance by preventing, intervening with and responding to students who become truants or dropouts.

Display Posters

"Join a team, not a gang!" (1989) — Kevin Mitchell, home run leader with the San Francisco Giants.

"The Fridge says 'bullying is uncool!'" (1988) — William "The Fridge" Perry, defensive lineman for the Chicago Bears.

"Facades..." (1987) — A set of two, 22-by-17-inch full-color posters produced and distributed to complement a series of drug-free schools TV public service announcements sponsored by NSSC.

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BY JEAN B. JENKIN

Developed over a number of years and recently tested with Australian school personnel, the "Coping with Violence" approach ensures that all members of the school community commit to resolving violence through education.

Coping with violence in Australian schools

Shortcomings in effective data collection, resistance to the documentation of incidents, and unnecessary focus on a small number of serious incidents have contributed to a distorted picture of life in Australian schools. Current media interest, as well as government inquiries, recent funds allocation and discussion at all levels of society, centers on the apparent upsurge of violence, particularly in schools.

More confusion than clarity exists on this issue, and any related discussions should include documented and systematic research. While problems of interpersonal violence within schools are evident, it is nevertheless also apparent that schools function effectively and successfully for the most part.

In examining the issue, it is not appropriate to attribute blame to one group — especially students. All members of the school and wider community must examine their contribution to the problem and take responsibility for prevention. Adults within the school and the community must begin to assume greater responsibility for supervision, support, direction and management of school-age persons and to indicate through their own behaviors a rejection of violence as a solution

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to problems.

The "Coping with Violence" approach developed from the fundamental belief that all members of the school community need to make a commitment to nonviolence and that this should be recorded in formal policy, reflected in practice and evidenced through evaluation. A nonviolent philosophy and practice must be accepted by students, parents, teachers, executives and all other contributing community members if a genuine attempt is to be made to cope with violence in school.

Adopting the strategies incorporated into the "Coping with Violence" program reflects a proactive approach on the part of school community members and reflects a corporate commitment to establishing and maintaining morale for all. It also demonstrates a willingness to address the unequal power relationships between parties and to ensure that all concerned have their legitimate physical, psychological and emotional needs met in a safe, nurturing and predictable environment.

Information is lacking
Statistical information regarding the incidence of violence in Australian schools is incomplete, fragmented and scant. Nevertheless, it seems, on the surface, to indicate an increased involvement of students in violent incidents.

An Australian Institute of Criminology

report asserts that only .04 percent of students are ever involved in violent incidents.[1] The number of recorded offenses in New South Wales (NSW), however, increased 71.5 percent between 1986 and 1992, according to the Australian Board of Statistics.[2]

A paper issued by the NSW Legislative Council reported that, during the first half of 1993, 59 incidents of school violence occurred.[3] However, teachers in Western Sydney, when consulted about this figure, enquired, "which school and on which day reported the 59 incidents?" — evidently a major indication of underreporting.

This problem is acknowledged both in Australia and overseas. For example, in the United States, the fact that two-thirds of all school crime is not officially reported was first established in the 1978 *Violent Schools — Safe Schools: The Safe School Study Report to Congress.* The lack of reporting is attributed mainly to the negative publicity such reporting brings and the consequent loss of school status, students and staff that follows.[4]

It is clear that some decision must be made at the macro-system level to protect and support schools that report violent incidents. An efficient, confidential and cumulative mechanism needs to be established to facilitate research into the problem.

At present the statistics that are recorded in New South Wales are inflated

because all incidents on school grounds are included, not just those involving school students or those occurring during school hours.[5] The information is an inaccurate reflection of the true incidence of what could reasonably be termed "violence in schools."

Violence in schools defined

Some definition of the term needs to be stated. For the purpose of determining the severity of the problem of violence *in schools* the definition should confine itself to these parameters:

Violence in schools refers to violent, assaultive or aggressive acts resulting from the interaction of teachers, students or school community members with each other, or with school property, which occurs within normally accepted school hours and within normally accepted school boundaries and situations.

The Australian Teachers Union suggests a similar definition:

Violence in schools is present in any situation where a member of the school community (teacher, student, other education worker, parent, or visitor) is intimidated, abused, threatened, or assaulted or their property deliberately damaged by another member of that community or the public in circumstances arising out of their activities in a school.

If these definitions were used, it could be readily shown that the level and incidence of violence in schools is remarkably low.

This definition specifically excludes acts of violence that occur outside the normally accepted bounds, situations and times or that represent acts perpetrated against the school by persons outside of the school community. In particular, it cannot be argued that community-based gangs who enter school premises during or after school hours to engage in acts of violence or vandalism should be represented in the statistics or definition of "school violence."

This type of violence has its origins in the community and is a community responsibility — schools are merely the victims. Just as domestic violence would not include intruders who entered a home to commit acts of violence, so this definition confines itself specifically to the interactions between school members, in the school environment, during school hours.

Examining the school's responsibility

Schools need to delineate categorically the parameters of their responsibility. Media reports that refer to "schoolboy crimes" often fail to clarify whether in fact the crime occurred within school hours, schools grounds or during school-based supervision. Indeed, the reference to "school" in many reports merely reflects the child's age (which will obviously be "school-age"), and it is somewhat misleading of the media to continue to insinuate that all criminal or violent acts perpetrated by children are in some way linked to school. Their after-hours misdemeanors have little or nothing to do with the function of the school.

It would seem appropriate for schools to determine the extent of their supervisory responsibilities and to state these. For example, travel by public transport to and from school may not be viewed as requiring school supervision. Gang conflicts outside school grounds, even between students of the school, are probably beyond the jurisdiction of school authority. Certainly acts of violence or criminal behavior engaged in after school hours, even if students are still in school uniform, are probably the responsibility of the community, not the school.

Since a good deal of confusion seems to exist in this regard, it is important to record the agreed parameters for public scrutiny.

Further, some examination of the corporate culture of schools is likely to reveal policy and processes which, in certain circumstances, reinforce and maintain violent interaction patterns. A belief that older students require less supervision may be unfounded, since students engage in violent behavior during unsupervised periods.

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Teachers whose preferred management style is authoritarian, hostile or excessively punitive are likely to escalate rather than defuse potentially violent situations. It is also possible that the image of female teachers as subordinates to male executives, vulnerable and dependent on supportive intervention, is maintained through school structures. Female teachers, in particular, need to be seen as effectively managing behavior and demanding appropriate responses from students if sexual victimization is to be halted.

Nonviolent response options

In determining an appropriate response to the management of violence in schools, a multifaceted and comprehensive approach is desirable. The "Coping with Violence" workshops presented over the past few years by J. Jenkin and V. Bowie represent an amalgamation of educative theory and practice with social welfare concepts. The approach involves all members of the school community and is thoroughly described in the soon-to-be published text, *Resolving Violence Through Education — A Handbook for*

Schools.

The "Coping with Violence in Schools" approach comprises four parts, each of which represents a comprehensive methodology for informing and training participants in nonviolent response options and attitude development. The four parts include:

Part A   Strategies for school personnel

Part B   Structuring a policy for a non-violent school

Part C   Resolve 1 — Anti-violence curriculum for primary and secondary students

Part D   Intervention for identified or potentially violent students

In Part A, all professional members of the school, including teachers, executives, administrators, assistants and support personnel, receive thorough in-service training that examines the school's responsive and preventative readiness. Participants develop individual skills and strategies while contributing to the overall corporate structure or restructure.

This part of the program comprises several modules that are delivered over 12 hours of in-service instruction. Modules cover perceptions and origins of violence with background information related to statistics as well as intervention strategies at the organizational and interpersonal levels. A comprehensive needs analysis is incorporated to facilitate the mobilization of resources and efforts in the areas of greatest need within the particular school.

In Part B of the program, all members of the school community, including parents and students, are involved in the development of an active policy of nonviolence. This is in contrast to the passive model, which sees policy measured in length of pages. The active policy approach incorporates evaluation measures that reflect changes in the day-to-day conduct of school members at all levels.

In particular, Part B addresses key considerations related to:
• the philosophical aims and mission of the policy;
• the recruitment, training and support

of appropriate personnel;
• development of relevant and specific programs, including curricular, responsive and preventative programs;
• an examination of organization structures as they impact implementation, monitoring and review of the processes used; and
• a discussion of resources acquisition and deployment.

In Part C, the Resolve Curriculum (*Resolving Violence through Education*) is introduced as a generic program of information and skills for coping with violence, applicable to primary and secondary students. The curriculum has been specifically designed to address gender differences in the experience of violence, an area that has been ignored or neglected in previous curricula, particularly those developed overseas. The format for presentation follows a partially segregated delivery mode, with several modules presented to integrated groups of males and females and other modules presented to segregated groups.

Part D has been specifically devised to assist students who already manifest violent behaviors or who are identified as potentially violent. The focus of this part of the approach is to develop individualized academic, behavioral and social-skills programs through the systematic application of resolution strategies and instructional goals.

Two main features of this part are the Resolve II curriculum and the Suspension Support methodology. Students who qualify for inclusion in this part manifest behaviors that place them at risk of suspension and often-repeated suspension. The methodologies acknowledge that students need instruction to facilitate the development of a more appropriate repertoire of behaviors.

A thorough program of intervention for pre-suspension, in-school suspension and support during out-of-school suspension is also needed in order to reflect a remedial rather than punitive orientation to the procedure. The curriculum offers individuals the opportunity to discuss be-

haviors which may be the triggers to trouble in the classroom and instructs these persons in goal setting and self-monitoring. An improved prognosis for success in school is anticipated if the students' attempts to reform are acknowledged by teachers and some re-examination of teacher responses are undertaken.

Responding to violence: teacher's role
Fundamental to the implementation of this approach is an acceptance by teachers and school administrators that responding to violence is part of the role of the teacher. Many teachers do not accept behavior management and program development as part of their responsibility; rather, they view the development of appropriate behaviors as a family responsibility. As long as this view prevails, major and increasing problems of violence in schools will continue.

While the impact of home and family life, as well as media and peer influences, cannot be ignored, teachers cannot renege on their responsibility to teach children how to behave in school. It is pointless to attempt to deliver well-planned content lessons to students who do not possess the most basic skills that will equip them for learning — attending, accepting and responding in class.

Endnotes
1. Weatherburn, D. Australian Institute of Criminology Report, 1993.
2. Schools Australia. Australian Bureau of Statistics (Catalog No. 4221.0), 1992.
3. "Youth Violence." Issues paper NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues, 1993.
4. Violent Schools - Safe Schools: The Safe School Study Report to Congress. National Institute of Education, 1978.
5. "Youth Violence."

For more information about the Resolving Violence Through Education — A Handbook for Schools *or the "Coping with Violence" workshops conducted by J. Jenkin and V. Bowie, write Jean B. Jenkin, Faculty of Education, University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, P.O. Box 555, Campbelltown NSW 2560, Australia.*

Defend, argue, confront and attack

Most stories about rising violence in our schools routinely cite poverty, drugs and crime in the community spilling over into our schools as the primary causes. A closer look reveals that these factors are really not causes. They are conditions, and without challenging this false conclusion, programs developed by our schools to deal with violence will be frustrated.

Students are not violent at school because they are poor and exposed to drugs and crime. Students become violent because they have learned conflict as their primary means of interaction, and violence is a frequent outcome of conflict. Engaging in conflict has become a need these children seek to fulfill in order to preserve their sense of identity and status.

Programmatic attempts to reduce conflict naively presuppose that students do not desire conflict but have not learned better alternatives. However, most of the students who generate conflict in the schools not only thrive on, but depend on conflict as a lifestyle. Efforts to reduce conflict directly compete with the reinforcing value of conflict by which these children are powerfully conditioned. Engaging in conflict, even if only playful and ritualistic, earns these children their autonomy. Many of these students measure their self-worth not on academic success, but on their performance in the conflict arena.

We have also been building programs for at-risk students on the speculative premise that children act out because of low self-esteem caused by poor academic skills. Perhaps we should challenge this assumption and regard conflict, which is almost always a part of acting out, as a learned behavior and a way of life for many children.

Many students learn conflict and defensiveness from an early age. It is modeled by the adults in their lives and sustained by the expectations of their peers at schools. The children learn that a high value is placed upon defending oneself verbally and physically. A challenge from any source is immediately met with a defensive counter-challenge. Not to respond in kind is a mark of inadequacy and weakness. Autonomy is achieved by the ability to defend, argue, confront and physically attack, usually in that order.

These children habitually play at conflict. When conflict assumes a more confrontational form, a ritualistic "facing off" is often sufficient to abate the dispute. In such instances, dominance is subtly established, and life goes on. Other times, aggression and violence prevail. The probability that the dispute will result in violence is often a function of the number and strength of the peers who have orchestrated the conflict.

This learned defensiveness is not limited to peers. Adults can pose a threat to a student's autonomy. A teacher at my school recently asked a student to sit down, and the student fired back, "I'll sit down when I g--d--- well please." The response was logical if you consider how the student has learned to defend herself. Staff/student boundaries no longer apply. Immunity is not enjoyed by anyone. The progression of *defend, argue, confront and attack* can apply to any threat.

One response has been to build conflict resolution programs which are based on the belief that conflict is not bad, but is a normal dynamic which occurs when people are together. We present appropriate responses as alternatives to acting out conflict aggressively. But when conflict escalation is a response reinforced from infancy, it remains the appropriate and often the only alternative to that student. In sum, when students prefer, enjoy and thrive on conflict, we fall short of convincing them of a better way.

While we would rather not admit it, we have begun to accept the inevitability of increasing conflict, and our standards have become more tolerant. In the face of this powerful competitor it is tempting to yield, accommodate and hope to assimilate these conflict-driven students. But rather than acquiesce, we should zealously respond in four ways:

- Support community early-intervention programs that include parent education regarding conflict and aggression.
- Include conflict resolution training in the primary grades.
- Build our school programs on the belief that a "learned defensiveness" model provides more insight and promise than models that regard poor self-esteem as the culprit.
- Support our intervention programs by a tenacious regard for the value that aggression as a response to verbal conflict is wrong and enforced by an equally strong determination not to let conflict prevail, even if it means challenging a way of life for many of our students.

Dan Shearer is a counselor and peer mediation coordinator at McClintock Middle School in Charlotte, North Carolina. This article originally appeared in The Charlotte Observer, *April 12, 1994.*

NSSC Documentaries

School Crisis: Under Control
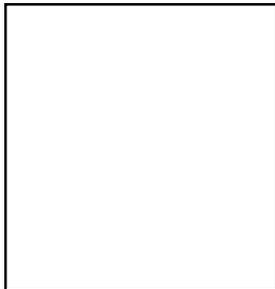
"Imagine a gunman invading your school. Or terrorists planting a bomb. Or a classroom of students held hostage. These situations may seem unreal — even impossible.... Every school — urban, rural or suburban — is vulnerable. When will a crisis strike your school? And will you be ready?"

These words, spoken by acclaimed actor Edward James Olmos, combine with news footage of actual school crisis events to provide an eye-opening introduction to "School Crisis: Under Control," a 25-minute, award-winning documentary on school crisis prevention, preparation, management and resolution. This informative videotape is designed to help schools and communities prepare for the unexpected by designing crisis prevention and response plans. These plans will improve the community's ability to overcome such disasters and also will help schools avoid potential liability.

"Feeling good about yourself can't be bought on a street corner. It must be built from within. But there are dangers you should know about. Those pressures we call '*risk factors....*'"

This powerful message to America's troubled children is presented in "High-Risk Youth/At The Crossroads," a 22-minute, award-winning documentary on youth drug abuse prevention hosted by actor LeVar Burton.

By combining real-life profiles and commentary from nationally renowned authorities, the documentary provides a compelling case to look beyond current drug abuse intervention strategies exemplified by the "Just Say No" campaign. Researchers have identified individual, family, peer, community and school-related problems that make kids more prone to use illegal drugs. The focus on positive response suggests that the most promising approach to "high-risk youth" and drug abuse is one of *prevention,* not simply *intervention.* This important theme is reinforced throughout the fast-paced program.
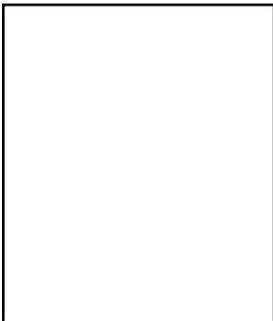
Principals play pivotal roles in keeping their schools safe and effective places of learning. But, without the support of parents, teachers, law enforcers and other legal, government and community resources, they cannot fulfill their responsibility.

A recipient of eight national and international awards of excellence, "What's Wrong With This Picture?" is designed to encourage dialogue between school principals and their community resources. It presents the critical issue of school safety in a frank and straightforward way, dramatizing real-life incidents of school-related crime and violence, drug abuse and suicide.

Whoever thought bullies were all talk and no action needs to view the film "Set Straight on Bullies," produced to help school administrators educate faculty, parents and students about the severity of the schoolyard bullying problem. The message is clear: Bullying hurts everyone.

The 18-minute, Emmy-winning educational film tells the story of a bullying victim and how the problem adversely affects his life as well as the lives of the bully, other students, parents and educators.

"I'm always scared. I'm scared to come to school. ... I don't want to be afraid anymore," the bullying victim says. In fact, NSSC based the film on research indicating one in seven students is either a bully or a victim of bullying.

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"What's Wrong With This Picture?" ($40 VHS) _____ copies

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"School Crisis: Under Control" ($65 VHS) _____ copies

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BY STEPHEN THOM

The collaborative efforts of diverse groups of students and adults combine with the practical use of problem-solving techniques to break down barriers and build positive rela-tionships.

Building bridges among diverse students

In 1985, the Western Regional Office of the Community Relations Service began experimenting with a problem-solving process for reducing racial tension among high school students. CRS, an agency of the U. S. Department of Justice, uses techniques similar to those used in labor mediation. In the labor mediation model, homogeneous labor units are grouped together to identify issues prior to forming an integrated team of union representatives for negotiations.

CRS hypothesized that labor units could be compared to racial and ethnic groups of students within a school population. Thus, placing students in homogeneous racial and ethnic groups to identify specific perspectives and issues would be an initial step in solving problems in a racially diverse school.

The issues identified by these student groups are candid, in-depth, insightful and ethnic-specific. The process recognizes the unique perspectives of racial and ethnic groups, prompting a sense of ownership and student buy-in to the process.

The major goals of the program are to foster communication among ethnically diverse students and to help principals gain an understanding of the concerns

Stephen Thom is a former educator and current mediator with the U. S. Department of Justice's Community Relations Service, Western Region.

and perceptions that impede students' education. Most importantly, the program provides a means of empowering students by allowing them the opportunity to provide input and thereby assume responsibility for the goals and objectives of the school.

The labor mediation model

In the original program, students were placed, using the labor model, in small homogeneous groups of 15 to 20 to identify perceived problems on campus. During the second phase, students were randomly reassigned to heterogeneous groups to identify possible solutions.

Integrating students during the process of brainstorming solutions resulted in a redefinition of their identities to students working together to make a difference. This enabled students to move away from racial/ethnic differences toward finding common solutions for improving the school environment. As students became better acquainted with each other and learned how others think, they began to see how students are often more alike than different.

CRS then presented the students' specific concerns along with their list of feasible solutions to the principal. This enabled the principal to prepare for meetings with the elected student representatives from each racial/ethnic group to discuss results and address the issues.

CRS continued to use this early ver-

sion of the problem-solving process, which eventually became known as the Student Problem Identification/Resolution (SPIR) Program. Through continued review and evaluation, several modifications were made. For example, in 1988, the length of the SPIR Program, which originally required three days, was shortened to two days.

By 1991, the SPIR Program had been conducted in approximately 20 schools and was modified by adding a specific ice-breaker activity that complemented the goals of the program. Parts of the program, including the introduction and discussion of students' roles as leaders, were enhanced, and student participation in the program was increased by having students report on small outcomes during the wrap-up sessions each day.

The program has been further enhanced by incorporating specific techniques into the curriculum and consolidating the program into two half-days, but the fundamental process of homogeneous groups for problem identification and heterogeneous groups for problem resolution remains the same.

More emphasis is now placed on the principal's commitment to work with the students toward implementing a more structured work plan for addressing students' concerns. As a prerequisite to CRS conducting the SPIR Program, the principal must agree to meet with a student advisory committee of elected repre-

sentatives at least once a month.

Another change occurred when CRS recognized that if natural leaders from all segments of a school were involved, the program would influence a larger number of students. As a result, faculty members are asked to identify student leaders who represent the diversity of the school, including students from academics, athletics, student government, gangs and taggers, and students who are at-risk or disciplinary problems.

Until 1991, the SPIR Program was specifically used at schools that had experienced or had the potential for racial violence. Because of the high demand for SPIR Programs from schools throughout the Western Region, CRS began to train local facilitators to assist in conducting programs. The use of outside facilitators led to the development of the "Student Problem Identifying and Resolving It Together Program" (or SPIRIT Program).

SPIR to SPIRIT

After a high school shooting incident in Sacramento, California, CRS worked with the Sacramento Police Department, the Sacramento Unified School District, the Minority Advisory Committees to the Sacramento Police Department and several community agencies that were seeking to end the interracial violence in schools. The police department convened several meetings to discuss the concerns of the community.

During these meetings, several significant factors were identified:
· Students must be an integral part of any solutions.
· The community must be committed to supporting any efforts to curb violence and want a direct role in any such efforts.
· The police are valuable stakeholders and must work with the school district in preventing school violence.

CRS and the police department arranged a series of facilitator training sessions for volunteers from the Minority Advisory Committees, community agencies, the police department and the

school district. Within two weeks, CRS had trained 60 facilitators.

Meanwhile, the principal of the school agreed to the prerequisites and identified 15 to 20 student leaders from each of the school's major ethnic groups. Facilities and refreshments for each of the meetings were arranged through community organizations.

On March 23, 1993, this collaborative group joined together to conduct a SPIR Program, laying the foundation for the expanded SPIRIT version.

The benefits of the collaborative SPIRIT approach developed in Sacramento are worth noting:
· The community was left with the ability to conduct future SPIRIT Programs, without further CRS involvement;
· Community and police volunteers were available to serve as a resource group to the student advisory committee as they implemented their work plan;
· Police and youth relations were enhanced as everyone worked together to solve student problems; and
· The cooperative spirit that evolved in the relations among community, police, schools and other service agencies established a proactive group for addressing school violence.

In Long Beach, California, racial violence was not necessarily high or even occurring in some of the schools. The school district, police and community representatives recognized the value of the SPIRIT Program as a means of building bridges among diverse students as well as between police and students. The program also redirects at-risk students toward constructive goals.

The focus of the Long Beach SPIRIT Program was mainly to prevent racial conflicts or violence rather than to reduce existing tension or conflict. Although the focus was different, the process for organizing the program in the Long Beach high schools followed a similar process as in Sacramento.

Promoting communication

Although not always unique, the strate-

gies identified by students and implemented by their schools as a result of using the SPIRIT or SPIR programs seem to make a difference. When the identification of both the problems and the solutions belongs to the students, the solutions have a much better chance of being accepted and supported on campus.

One student-generated work plan called for the SPIRIT participants to have lunch together every Friday in the center of the campus to display their support for racial harmony. Representatives from the police department and the community also attended these activities.

In another school, negative student-teacher relations led to the development of a series of steps to promote communication between the two groups.

The student advisory committee met with the faculty to share some of the student concerns identified at the SPIRIT Program. Students felt that this provided a meaningful response to their concerns. Teachers received candid, honest feedback about student perceptions.

SPIRIT student participants were then asked to teach a class and handle classroom discipline under teacher supervision. Based on this experience, students developed a list of "fair" student expectations for teachers. Teachers received this list and were asked to look for areas for self-improvement.

CRS has consistently witnessed students from all races, ethnicities, cliques, gangs, clubs and student organizations meet together to resolve problems. In nearly every case, barriers are broken and positive relations are developed that ultimately reduce racial tension. Integrated into the programs are the practical use of problem-solving techniques and the collaborative efforts of diverse students and adults, including police, educators and other community leaders.

For more information, contact Stephen Thom, CRS/DOJ, 888 S. Figueroa Blvd., Suite 1880, Los Angeles, CA 90017, 213/894-2810 or Barbara Greenberg, CRS/DOJ, 211 Main Street, Room 1040, San Francisco, CA 94105, 415/744-6565.

BY BRIAN E. HUCKABEE

A Lake City, South Carolina, school teacher seized the opportunity to bring diverse students together to build relationships, gain self-esteem and curb violence at school.

Kimmie's Kids: Face to face

Last fall when a campus fight resulted in the cancellation of the annual homecoming events at Lake City High School, the idea of a student-led effort to curb violence in Florence County School District No. 3 was born. That incident planted a seed that soon blossomed into a project known as "Kimmie's Kids."

When the long hours of work planning activities such as the homecoming parade were quickly wasted, all because of a senseless fight, teacher Kimmie Tomlinson was as disappointed and frustrated as the students.

Tomlinson surmised that if students caused the problems that resulted in the cancellation of many school activities, perhaps the students could do something to prevent it from happening again.

In order to win over the entire student body, the real student leaders had to be reached first. These student leaders were not necessarily the class president or the captain of the football team, but those who had the respect and admiration of their peers. Tomlinson started by informally polling the student body, asking groups of students who they considered to be the

Brian E. Huckabee is the public information officer for Florence County School District No. 3 in Lake City, South Carolina.

leaders in the school. After identifying the "silent" leaders, their help was solicited in a unique way.

During the school's student awards program, the group of identified leaders was called from the gymnasium stands to be recognized by their peers. Cheers and shouts from the student body confirmed that the right students had been selected to help in the effort to curb violence at Lake City High.

Identifying the issues

Following the awards program, the unofficial student leaders were invited to a "lock-in" — to spend the remainder of the day together with Tomlinson talking face to face about anything that was on their minds.

The students talked about their feelings — how they felt about themselves and their relationships with their peers and families. There was often laughter, as well as tears, hugs and moments of tense silence. What these students learned from each other was that people cannot be judged by where they live, the clothes they wear or the grades they make.

Friendships between teen-agers who earlier thought they had absolutely nothing in common were formed that day. As the group emerged from the room, they left as "Kimmie's Kids."

The program has changed the way many of the participants think. It

made them realize that there are two sides to every problem and that they can talk to resolve their differences. As one senior stated, "Sitting down and talking openly had a major impact on students and school staff. It sent a positive message to everyone in the school. If we can all just come together, we can accomplish our goal of eliminating violence in our schools."

Another student commented that the program changed a lot of people's attitudes about fighting and violence. "Now students are excited about nonviolence and being safe in school," she said.

Sharing common bonds

Charter members of Kimmie's Kids have shared what they learned that day with their peers. They have also conducted an assembly program for the entire school, performing skits and singing songs that emphasized the theme of getting along with and appreciating each other. An invitation was also extended to the entire student body to become members of Kimmie's Kids. The response was incredible.

Members of Kimmie's Kids run the gamut of diversity. Some members are from wealthy families and are frequently on the honor roll. Other members are already parents. Still others come from broken homes or have been neglected or abused. The common

bond that draws these students together is that they all have problems that are often overwhelming.

One student in particular has inspired other members of the group. She always seemed happy — without a problem in the world — and was very active in extracurricular activities. None of the other students ever thought she had any serious problems. Yet, at the first lock-in, she opened up and told everyone that her father is an alcoholic and, as a result, cannot keep a steady job.

This student's story really opened the eyes of many of the other students that day. A lot of them assume that those who excel in the classroom and who have a positive outlook "have it made." Such a story helped them to realize that is not always the case.

The principal of Lake City High gave Kimmie's Kids and the rest of the student body additional incentive to eliminate violence in the school. He offered them an opportunity to earn time for a field day at the end of school year. For each week in which

there were no fights or other violence, students earned 10 minutes toward a possible three-hour field day. Last May, the school's students and faculty enjoyed three hours of fun, games and fellowship.

Making a difference

Since its inception, the group has expanded from focusing solely on curbing violence in the school to helping students gain self-esteem and build relationships. Plans call for further expanding the program to include opportunities for students to discuss issues that concern them the most.

Every nine weeks during the coming school year, Kimmie's Kids plans to hold a student assembly. Each time they will have a different group of members conduct the program. The student body will be surveyed to determine what issues interest them. Possible subjects include alcoholism, drug abuse and teen suicide. Plans also include inviting local business executives to come and talk to the students about possible careers and what they need to do to prepare for certain pro-

fessions.

Kimmie's Kids has received a $1,000 Youth Violence Prevention grant from the "A Community's Choice ... Let's Silence the Violence" committee sponsored by the South Carolina Bar, South Carolina Department of Education, South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice, South Carolina Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services and Visions for Youth. Kimmie's Kids plans to use the grant to establish a conflict resolution center in the school. The center will be staffed five days a week by three student mediators who will help students resolve conflicts.

Students, teachers and even parents will be able to refer students with conflicts to the resolution program. Anyone can come to the center to report students who are having problems with each other. Rather than waiting for them to solve their differences with their fists, Kimmie's Kids will offer to mediate and help find a solution.

Kimmie's Kids has received attention from U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley. In a recent letter to

Suggestions for initiating a student-led effort to resolve conflict

- Identify the powerful, silent leaders on your campus. Draw from all social groups. Use your principals, teachers and organized student government leaders to compile the list.
- Invite these leaders to spend the day in a relationships workshop. Have them sign a contract agreeing to participate. Provide meals, snacks, restroom facilities, name tags, etc. for the meeting.
- Begin your lock-in by having all participants agree to leave any bad attitudes outside. Let them know that they are safe and that they can say anything that is on their minds without fear of being put down by others in the group. Remind everyone to respect the views of others and not to laugh or make negative comments when someone speaks. Stress that all opinions are valued.
- Sit on the floor or in chairs in a circle. This gives a casual atmosphere and makes everyone feel equal to each other.

- Separate the group into pairs and give five minutes for each person to learn as much as they can about their partner. Then have each person introduce their partner to the group.
- Begin the discussion by telling the group about yourself including personal information — mistakes your have made, events that have caused you pain, etc. This helps the students see you as a person and also helps them to open up.
- Ask questions that allow the participants to look into each other's hearts and minds. Be sure to include humorous questions to inject laughter to break the tension when needed. Go around the circle and allow each person time to respond.
- Keep in mind that the process is the product.

For more information about Kimmie's Kids and how to start a similar program, write to Kimmie Tomlinson at Lake City High School, P.O. Box 1157, Lake City, South Carolina 29560, 803/394-5119.

BY JOSEPH B. CLOUGH

Changes in the way young people think about guns must occur if America is to reduce gun violence in our schools and communities. This curriculum seeks to minimize the gun-prone attitudes of elementary-age students.

Solutions without guns

The use of handguns as a "solution" to problems is a growing menace to the safety and well-being of young people throughout the country, not just in urban areas, but in suburban and rural environments as well. The number of injuries and deaths by handgun violence among youngsters is staggering:

- Authorities estimate that more than 100,000 children bring guns to school each day, and that another 160,000 children stay home each day out of fear of guns and violence.
- Each year, some 4,500 children are killed by guns through suicide, homicide or accident.
- Six out of 10 homicide victims are killed by a relative, friend or acquaintance as a result of some sort of dispute or conflict, which is not crime-related.
- Homicide is the second leading cause of death among American young people between the ages of 15 and 24.
- The majority of young people involved in handgun injuries or deaths do not intend to harm or kill their victims.

The menace on a local level
The results of a study conducted under the auspices of The Gun Safety Institute, in cooperation with the Child Guidance Center of Greater Cleveland and the Cleveland Public Schools, underscore the

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magnitude of the handgun menace in our schools.

The Guns Safety Institute survey was administered to more than 450 fifth-, seventh- and ninth-graders in 12 schools within the Cleveland Public School system during March, 1992.

Among other facts, survey results indicated that:

- 87 percent of the students knew someone who had a gun;
- 48 percent knew about a gun in their homes;
- 52 percent had held a gun themselves;
- 11 percent owned a gun;
- 89 percent had heard shots in their neighborhoods;
- 41 percent had seen someone shot in real life;
- more than 50 percent had a family member who had been shot; and
- 5 percent had been shot themselves.

Truly, our public school students live in a gun-infested environment.

Handgun proneness
The extent to which many societal ills, such as joblessness, lack of education, divorce, drug and alcohol abuse, poverty, and so forth, contribute to the increasing level of violence in society can make the problem of gun violence among the young seem bewildering and insurmountable. However, through its study, The Gun Safety Institute has identified

four gun-proneness factors which are proximate motivators of gun proneness among youth.

The four gun-proneness factors, with a sample response from the study which exemplifies each factor, are:

- Guns and the people who use them are exciting.
  "I bet it would feel real cool to walk down the street with a loaded gun in my pocket."
- Guns provide both safety and power.
  "If I carried a gun, I wouldn't have to be afraid of people out on the street."
- Aggression is a response to shame or disrespect.
  "If someone disrespects me, I have to fight them to get my pride back."
- Children are comfortable with aggression.
  "The only way to solve problems is by fighting or hurting others."

Study results indicate that children who demonstrate a tendency toward these attitudes are prone to see guns as a solution to their problems, disagreements and disputes. The presence or absence of these factors motivates the choices children make when faced with a problem or dispute which could escalate into the use of handguns.

Neutralizing these factors through education may significantly reduce the perception among young people that handguns are an acceptable solution to

the conflicts and problems which they encounter in their daily lives.

Solutions without guns

The *Solutions Without Guns* program is a multi-media educational curriculum designed to address these four proximate gun-proneness factors.

The *Solutions Without Guns* program is different from other conflict resolution or violence avoidance curricula. It is designed to address the four specific gun-proneness factors in the belief that these factors are the main cause of handgun violence and that they contribute to the idea of guns as a solution.

The program is based on the view that students, teachers and parents must understand what these factors are and that the children must learn to choose positive alternative behaviors when faced with situations which have the potential to result in gun violence.

It is important to note that *Solutions Without Guns* does not attempt to resolve or eliminate the negative socio-economic and other environmental factors which may be present in a child's life. Indeed, no school curriculum can do so. Its only purpose is to minimize or eliminate those guns-proneness factors which have been shown to be the proximate motivators for a child to choose guns as a solution.

The program's goals are geared toward prevention, not interdiction, providing students with skills to:
• identify the four gun-proneness factors in themselves and others;
• identify and choose alternative positive behaviors;
• resist negative peer pressure in regard to the four gun-proneness factors; and
• practice appropriate pro-social behavior themselves and encourage the same in others.

To this end, *Solutions Without Guns* is addressed to the great majority of students, and not to the violently anti-social child, with the intent to intervene before the student chooses guns as a solution.

Solutions Without Guns targets fifth-graders who perceive the dangers of guns and violence and who do not participate in the kinds of behaviors that lead to gun proneness. These students may not have the skills to identify and implement alternative pro-social behaviors in themselves and in others. Equipped with such skills, these same children may be able to exert pressure on their more gun-prone classmates to reduce their anti-social behavior.

Solutions Without Guns is not directed at the seriously anti-social, violent youngster in the classroom who is most likely beyond the scope of any classroom intervention curriculum. Although the possibility exists that such a youngster may gain new insights through *Solutions Without Guns*, a more realistic result is that the program will deprive such gun-prone youngsters of their associates and audience. Without peer approval, gun-prone youngsters are far less likely to hurt someone else.

Empowering children

Nearly every completed act of violence contains points in the progress of the act where alternative pro-social choice or choices by the perpetrator and/or the audience might have led to a different conclusion. A considerable part of the *Solutions Without Guns* curriculum is devoted to discovering these opportunities for positive alternative choice in order to neutralize a situation's drive toward a violent ending.

Children who have learned that they have a range of choices in a potentially dangerous situation feel empowered. An empowered child feels assured and is less likely to participate in gun-prone behaviors, many of which stem directly from a sense of powerlessness, fear and shame. The empowered child is less likely to panic and tends to think and act more rationally. In addition, the empowered child can affect others, empowering the group and often times, depending on the child's age and situation, the perpetrators of the violence themselves.

The role of the "audience" in promoting violence cannot be overlooked. Of-ten, others wittingly or unwittingly egg the participants on toward a violent end by encouraging their anti-social, gun-prone behavior. Audience members who choose appropriate, positive alternative behaviors will, at best, neutralize the violent situation by removing their support, thereby dampening the enthusiasm of the perpetrators as well.

Solutions Without Guns curriculum is meant to be integrated into daily classroom lessons, through academically oriented activities and exercises. *Solutions Without Guns* is language arts-based, with suggested activities and exercises in other subjects as well (i.e., social studies, health). This orientation allows the classroom teacher to utilize the *Solutions Without Guns* curriculum as a method of fulfilling other educational obligations and objectives.

The *Solutions Without Guns* program consists of:
• an information and training session, designed to acquaint staff and parents with the curriculum;
• a *Gun Proneness* pre- and post-test;
• an opening and closing videotape;
• a *Solutions Without Guns* reader, containing four stories, each addressing one of the gun-proneness factors;
• a teacher's guide containing suggested lessons derived from the *Solutions Without Guns* reader, suggested activities and lists of necessary supplies and materials, other available resources, and support organizations;
• a classroom poster;
• student award certificates; and
• a program binder.

(Solutions Without Guns *was piloted in six elementary school classrooms in Cleveland, Ohio, during April and May 1994. The program is being evaluated through the use of student pre- and post-test questionnaires and interviews with teachers who administered the curriculum. From these evaluations,* Solutions Without Guns *will be further refined and developed.) For more information, contact the Gun Safety Institute, 320 Leader Building, Cleveland, OH 44114, 216/623-1111.*

An environment for learning
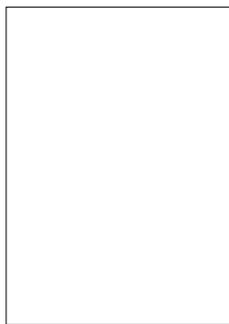
The *National Education Goals Report 1993* continues charting the progress of national education renewal begun at the Charlottesville Education Summit in 1989.

Four years ago, the nation's governors and the president formulated six national goals for American education to be achieved by the year 2000. These national goals, with additions stressing continuing professional development for teachers and school/parental partnerships, were recently put into law in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act.

Goal Seven directly addresses school safety: Every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

According to the report, if learning is to occur in an environment free of fear and violence, then any percentage of students who bring weapons to school is intolerable. Current data indicates that 9 percent of 8th-graders, 10 percent of 10th-graders and 6 percent of 12th-graders have done just that at least once a month. Habitual weapon-carrying percentages, defined as 10 or more days in the previous month were lower: 2 percent for 8th-graders, 4 percent for 10th-graders and 3 percent for 12th-graders. For purposes of this survey, a weapon was defined as a gun, knife or club.

Data also indicates that students are aware of considerable gang activity among their peers. One-third of all students in 6th through 12th grade report that other students in their schools belong to fighting gangs.

Despite widespread decline in student drug use over the past decade, nearly one in four 12th-graders disclosed being approached at school last year by someone trying to sell or give them an illegal drug.

National efforts for drug-free school zones began several years ago. Still, more than one-fourth of all students in 6th through 12th grade reported that beer or wine, liquor and marijuana are easy to obtain at school or on school grounds. Breakdowns for students who report easily obtainable substances are:
• For beer or wine, elementary schools, 8 percent; middle or junior highs, 19 percent; senior highs, 42 percent; and combination schools, 22 percent.
• For liquor, elementary schools, 7 percent; middle or junior highs, 15 percent; senior highs, 39 percent; and combination schools, 21 percent.
• For marijuana, elementary schools, 6 percent; middle or junior highs, 16 percent; senior highs, 45 percent; and combination schools, 20 percent.
• Further, about one-third of 6th- through 12th-graders reported witnessing other students drunk at school.

Sizable proportions of students and their parents reported that they take one or more precautions to ensure students' personal safety at school or on the way to or from school. Staying in a group and staying away from certain places at school were precautions most frequently cited by students. Talking about ways to avoid trouble and setting limits on the amount of money taken to school were precautions cited most often by parents.

Many students disclose that teachers frequently have to interrupt class to deal with student misbehavior. In 1992, the majority of 8th- and 10th-graders revealed that disruptions were fairly common in their classes. About half of the students estimated that disruptions occurred only occasionally (five times a week or less), but 11 percent to 15 percent of the students reported that teachers interrupted class at least 20 times or more per week to deal with inappropriate student behaviors. Apart from classroom disruptions, about 5 percent of 8th- and 10th-graders revealed that other students interfered with their personal learning 20 times or more per week.

Schools that are not safe and orderly provide barriers to learning. Since students are required by law to attend school, those who want to learn should have the expectation of optimal learning conditions. But schools do not exist in a vacuum. Safe, disciplined and drug-free schools cannot be a reality without families that nurture healthy living and communities that provide positive environments with ample opportunities for recreation and personal growth.

The 1993 goals report states, "Young people have an obligation to be serious about school. But schools, helped by their surrounding communities, also have an obligation to create the conditions necessary for teaching and learning to take place. Only then can students be expected to take responsibility for learning."

FERPA: Not a bar to information sharing
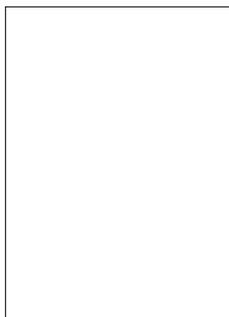
Safety is a motivating factor behind recent models for interagency communication that involve schools. These interagency links have helped to shorten the response time of local governments to delinquent activities by juveniles.

The Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act[1] serves as a major limitation to the degree to which schools can share information about students with other agencies. Unfortunately, there is probably no federal privacy law more misconstrued than FERPA.

Recent amendments to FERPA and its companion regulations shed new light on just how far schools can go to cooperate with local agencies that share a common interest in serving juveniles. Although a network provides valuable insight for the educator, FERPA violations regarding education record privacy result in the loss of education funding.

FERPA protects the privacy of a student's educational record primarily by requiring that educators obtain written consent before disclosing information contained in the education record to agencies outside of the school district. But not all discussions between schools and other agencies trigger the prior written consent rule. The most pertinent exceptions are summarized below.[2]

- Schools can share information with "other school officials, including teachers, within the [school] whom the agency or institution has determined to have legitimate educational interests."
- Schools can share information with "officials of another school, school system, or institution of post-secondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll."
- Schools can share directory information with other agencies. Directory information is information "which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed." It includes, "but is not limited to, the students's name, address, telephone listing, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, degrees and awards received, and the most recent previous educational agency or institution attended." Parents must be given prior notice when schools adopt a policy of releasing directory information. Parents who object to directory information disclosures may prohibit them by requesting so in writing.
- Educators can communicate orally with other agencies based on their personal knowledge and observations of a juvenile that do not derive from the educational record. Communications based on independent knowledge of a student are outside of the reach of FERPA.
- A school may communicate without obtaining prior written parental consent when it shares the content of records of its law enforcement unit. Under the new amendments and regulations, a school may designate "any individual, office, department, division, or other component of an educational agency ... to enforce any local, state, or federal law, or refer to appropriate authorities a matter for enforcement of any local, state or federal law." Under the regulations, a law enforcement unit "does not lose its status as a law enforcement unit if it also performs other, non-law enforcement functions for the agency or institution, including investigation of incidents or conduct that might lead to disciplinary action or proceedings against a student." The exempt records include only records that are created and maintained by the unit for the purpose of law enforcement. Internal disciplinary records are not included in this category.
- Schools may share information with other agencies without obtaining prior written consent when acting in compliance with a court order or lawfully issued subpoena. The regulations do require that schools make a reasonable effort to notify the parent prior to compliance with the court order.
- Schools may share information with other agencies without obtaining prior written consent when acting "in connection with an emergency if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals."

FERPA is thus evolving into a law that strikes a delicate balance between the privacy of education record information and the needs of modern educators to be aware of the relationship between certain juveniles and the local jurisdiction.

It is desirable and likely that future amendments to FERPA will include a general intergovernmental sharing exemption to promote both prevention and intervention strategies. But for now, schools that seek to share more information with local agencies have a variety of tools to accomplish this purpose.

Endnotes
1. 20 U.S.C. §1232g (1994).
2. The discussion considers C.F.R. §§99.31; 99.34; 99.37; 99.30; 99.80; and 99.36.

Prepared by Bernard James, special counsel for NSSC.

Academic freedom: a source of conflict
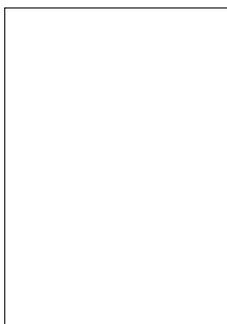
Great interest exists in developing new approaches to school violence. Different programs, curricula and models line the paths of those who wish to find something that works. In some ways, those who dare to innovate with new curricula and classroom methodologies provide natural leadership for others to follow.

It should come as no surprise, however, that occasionally the innovator comes into conflict with colleagues with whom he or she shares a common interest in teaching juveniles. In such a conflict, the bold search for new models often gives way to conflict resolution and the need for standardization and order.

This message was never clearer than in the case of *Murray v. Pittsburgh Board of Education,*[1] when two teachers from a big-city school system lost their jobs and found themselves in court fighting over the right to innovatively address the perceived needs of their students. The teachers, Diane Murray and Earl Bradley, developed and taught what they characterized as "a classroom management technique" known as "Learnball" in an alternative school and high school respectively.

The "Learnball" classroom technique is built on an informal but democratic model designed to maintain effective classroom discipline and good morale. The teachers apparently sought to accent the teamwork model familiar to the students in a sports context and utilize this model to create an atmosphere of good sportsmanship and teamwork.

The teachers would divide their classes into teams; by electing team leaders, the teams played a role in creating and maintaining class rules of conduct and grading course work. There was a marked informality to the "Learnball" classroom in comparison with the traditional model; teachers used a whistle to direct student's attention, newspapers were used in place of textbooks, radios were played during class and students were permitted to eat in class.

School officials did not approve of "Learnball," and the ensuing battle focused on who could control the classroom. The teachers argued that the interference of school administrators violated their academic freedom under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. They also argued that they had a right to structure their classes as they saw fit because there was no policy concerning general classroom management techniques. Moreover, the teachers argued that "Learnball" was a useful vehicle for communicating the content of traditional school subjects.

The court rejected the academic freedom argument. The court held that teachers had no right to choose their own curriculum or classroom management techniques when these choices conflicted with school officials. The court cited other cases in which this view was followed.[2] These cases clarified the law on teaching style and academic freedom.

- The First Amendment guarantee of academic freedom provides a teacher with the right to encourage a vigorous exchange of ideas within the confines of the subject matter being taught.
- The First Amendment guarantee of academic freedom does not require school officials to tolerate any manner of teaching method the teacher may choose to employ.
- Schools have a right to require conformity with what it deems to be acceptable teaching methods.
- Teachers have some freedom in development of classroom techniques, but teachers do not have unlimited liberty as to structure and content of the courses.

The "Learnball" case is instructive to educators who are looking for solutions to violence in school through new teaching methods and curricula. Teachers and administrators should share responsibility for matching solutions to the needs of students who exhibit symptoms of violence in schools. No teacher should have to pave the way to solutions alone.

In most instances, a teacher who is looking for support for a new approach should document his/her assessment of student behavior before and after the approach is introduced. The teacher and the school officials should agree upon a trial period within which the teacher can experiment with the approach and work through problem areas.

While it is true that ultimate responsibility for both the classroom and the curriculum vests in administrators, the search for pedagogical solutions to violence should not itself end in conflict over methodologies.
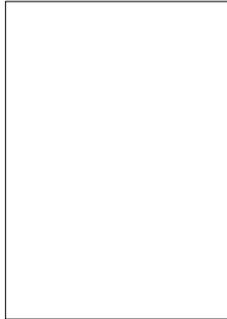
Endnotes
1. Bradley v. Pittsburgh Bd. of Educ., 913 F.2d 1064 (Third Cir. 1990); Bradley v. Pittsburgh Bd. of Educ., 910 F.2d 1172 (Third Cir. 1990).
2. Hetrick v. Martin, 480 F.2d 705 (6th Cir.) (pedagogical methods in classroom are not a protected form of speech), cert. denied, 414 U.S. 1075, 38 L. Ed. 2d 482, 94 S. Ct. 592 (1973); Adams v. Campbell County School Dist., 511 F.2d 1242 (10th Cir. 1975) (dismissal of high school teachers for discussing current events and playing records in class at the expense of finishing the curriculum); Ahern v. Board of Educ. of Grand Island, 456 F.2d 399 (8th Cir. 1972) (high school teacher discharged for introducing methods very similar to Learnball had no right to use methods or teach certain topics in contravention of school policy).

Prepared by Bernard James, special counsel for NSSC.

Conflict, anger and choice

Waiting for Mr. Stone: Interpersonal and Institutional Responses to an Intercultural Dispute, *by Pamela Moore and Annette Townley, a video and curriculum guide for staff training, National Association for Mediation in Education, 1993.*

Staff as well as students reflect at school what they learn elsewhere. Each member brings a complex system of values into the schoolhouse. Within these individual psychological makeups are traditions that form the core of personal identity and prejudices born of attitudes, experiences and opinions.

The ability to recognize and deal with conflicts based on bias and misperception is not inborn, but it can be taught. Teachers and staff can learn, and *Waiting for Mr. Stone* is an excellent starting point.

The video scenario is realistic. Mr. Stone, a teacher, has made a comment in class about South Africa to which Jamal Jenkins, a student, takes exception. This teacher-student difference gives rise to a conflict that ultimately involves the principal, the faculty, parents, the school board and a student demonstration complete with press coverage. Video quality could be better, but the overall potential benefits of the curriculum outweigh this drawback.

Facilitators of this curriculum should be committed to conflict resolution theory. This program does depend upon high caliber leadership for the workshops. The exercises and discussions need a guide who has spent time examining his or her personal prejudices and bi-

ases. Dealing with racism in the school setting will evoke emotional reactions from some workshop participants. The facilitator must be able to handle the challenges of leading a group with members that may not wish to face the issue on either a personal or collective basis. The group will benefit best from a presenter with extensive prior preparation.

Group activities center on settling disputes constructively through negotiation, conciliation, mediation, fact finding and arbitration. The principles are applicable to a wide range of conflicts, especially cross-cultural ones.

Personal differences will occur — that is a given — but conflict need not be a continuing source of bitterness or a breeding ground for prejudice. *Waiting for Mr. Stone* provides constructive means for dealing with the challenges of conflict resolution in a setting of racial, ethnic and cultural diversity.

Anger Management for Youth: Stemming Aggression and Violence, *by Leona L. Eggert, National Educational Service, 1994, 156 pages.*

A constructive response to anger is one of the most useful "tools" to possess for use with interpersonal relationships. Anyone who deals with students has seen situations in which unmanaged anger has led to the destruction of classroom harmony or peer relationships or contributed to escalating violence.

Anger Management for Youth: Stemming Aggression and Violence focuses on anger-management techniques that

can be taught to small groups of adolescents. The material is organized into several modules: group introduction and group behavior, self-assessment for recognizing personal anger sequences, methods for controlling anger responses and expressions, and the application and practice of anger responses.

Step-by-step lessons cover techniques for improving behavioral and verbal responses. Students learn that anger does not need to be suppressed or ignored, just expressed appropriately. With skillful and empathetic group management, students can learn to control their anger so that it does not destroy themselves or others.

"From Fists to Guns," *a 40-minute video produced by First Take Video, Inc., 1993.*

Some potential conflicts are better avoided, and belonging to a gang can certainly contribute a generous share of troubles to a young person's life. "From Fists to Guns" tries to discourage opting for the gang lifestyle by presenting reasonable arguments against such a choice.

The speaker is a guest lecturer in a classroom. Although there is some interaction between the guest and the students, the video is mostly information delivery. The cautions to kids are good, as are the examples of what happens to those who join gangs.

Diagrams presented in the video are also in the teacher's guide, but the guide itself is on the thin side. There is not a lot of extra material for teachers to draw upon to lead the discussions that inevitably follow video viewing.

Classroom use depends upon the students' needs. For groups with a short attention span, the speaker's lecture style may not be appropriate. For students who can absorb background history of gangs, "From Fists to Guns" furnishes solid, basic information.

Prepared by Sue Ann Meador, associate editor of School Safety.