

Policy 5138: Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation

To promote student safety and contribute to the maintenance of a positive school climate, the Governing Board encourages the development of school-based conflict resolution and peer mediation programs designed to help students learn constructive ways of handling conflict. The Governing Board believes that such programs can reduce violence and promote communication, personal responsibility, and problem-solving skills among students.

Conflict resolution and peer mediation programs may be considered as part of each school's comprehensive safety plan and incorporated into other district discipline procedures as appropriate. Such programs shall not supplant the authority of district staff to take appropriate action as necessary to prevent violence, ensure student safety, maintain order in the school, and institute disciplinary measures.

Such programs may incorporate peer mediation strategies in which selected student volunteers are specifically trained to work with their peers in resolving conflicts. This training may involve effective communication and listening, critical thinking, problem-solving processes, and the use of negotiation to find mutually acceptable solutions. Additionally, the training may address the ethical and social development of students, respect for diversity, and interpersonal and behavioral skills.

Participation in a peer mediation program by a student engaged in a conflict shall be voluntary and kept confidential by all parties involved.

In developing a conflict resolution and/or peer mediation program, school-site teams shall address, as appropriate:

1. The grade levels and courses in which the conflict resolution curriculum shall be delivered
2. Staff development related to the implementation of the curriculum and modeling of appropriate behaviors and communication skills
3. The selection of peer mediators involving, to the extent possible, a cross-section of students in terms of grade, gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, and including some students who exhibit negative leadership among peers

4. Training and support for peer mediators, including training in mediation processes and in the skills related to understanding conflict, communicating effectively and listening
5. The process for identifying and referring students to the peer mediation program
6. The types of conflicts suitable for peer mediation
7. Expectation for confidentiality regarding who participated, what was discussed, and how any conflict was resolved
8. Scheduling and location of peer mediation sessions
9. Methods of obtaining and recording agreement from all disputants
10. The appropriate involvement of parents/guardians, the community, and staff, including counseling/guidance and security staff
11. Communications to students, parents/guardians, and staff regarding the availability of the program
12. Methods of following up with students to determine the effectiveness of the process
13. Development of assessment tools to periodically evaluate the success of the program including, but not limited to, measurements of whether there has been a reduction in violence at the school and whether the school's suspension rates have fallen since the program has been introduced
14. Selection of and requirements to train as peer mediators