Evaluation of Project PROUD

1999-2000 School Year

June, 2001

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# Table of Contents

Executive summary.................................................................................................................................................. ix

Introduction .......................................................................................................................................................... 1
  Description of the project ................................................................................................................................. 1

Design of the evaluation ................................................................................................................................... 2

Results of the evaluation .................................................................................................................................. 3
  Teacher training ............................................................................................................................................... 3
  Implementation by teachers ............................................................................................................................ 4
  Implementation by the students ...................................................................................................................... 7
  Implementation by security monitors ............................................................................................................. 9
  Impact of the project on the school ............................................................................................................... 10

Summary and recommendations ...................................................................................................................... 13

References ......................................................................................................................................................... 15

Appendix A: Workshops related to Project PROUD offered by the district

Appendix B: Survey of Principals

Appendix C: Survey of Teachers

Appendix D: Project PROUD Student Questionnaire

Appendix E: Selected items from the School Climate Survey

Bureau Response/Plans of Action To Address Evaluation Findings ................................................................. 43
List of tables

Table 1 Sources of data for the evaluation questions ................................................................. 2
Table 2 Respondents to the principal survey ............................................................................ 5
Table 3 Respondents to the teacher survey .............................................................................. 6
Table 4 Teachers’ use of project-related practices regarding “fouls” ........................................ 6
Table 5 Teachers’ use of project-related practices regarding responses to conflict situations 7
Table 6 Principals’ assessment of the effects of conflict resolution training and peer mediation ...................................................................................................................... 8
Table 7 Categorization of the experimental group’s responses on the pre-survey and the post- survey .................................................................................................................................. 9
Table 8 Principals’ assessment of the benefits of conflict resolution training for security monitors ................................................................................................................................... 10
Table 9 Schools designated high in implementation .................................................................. 10
List of figures

Figure 1  Distribution of trained teachers by school level ......................................................... 4
Figure 2  Proportions of school staff reported to have received training in conflict resolution 5
Figure 3  Median responses to select School Climate Survey items from middle schools with high and average levels of project implementation ......................................................... 12
Executive summary

Project PROUD has been operating in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools since December, 1992. The fundamental goal of the project is to reduce violence, and decrease anger and aggression through the training of staff members, students, and parents. The current evaluation addresses aspects of the project implemented during the 1999-00 school year.

The evaluation revealed that Project PROUD, which has been in operation in the district for nearly a decade, continues to train teachers in conflict resolution methods. Additionally, in recent years the training recipients have also included security monitors. For the most part, the school principals view the impact of these endeavors very favorably. They generally feel that the training has improved the students’ discipline, the teachers’ ability to manage students, and the security monitors’ effectiveness. But despite these favorable perceptions, the implementation of the project across the district has been limited. The data revealed that only 21 of the 240 schools responding to the principal survey had implemented the project to a level that was judged to be “high.” Additionally, controlled comparisons of the effect of the training on the students’ behavior and the impact of the project on indicators of student discipline and school climate did not yield encouraging results. The only exception occurred in the comparison of school climate. The analysis revealed that middle schools with a high level of project implementation exhibit a comparatively better school climate. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Concentrate the project’s resources at the middle school level, where the results of the evaluation are encouraging and conflicts among students are common.

2. Monitor the implementation of the project at the middle school level to either verify or refute the encouraging results of the evaluation.

3. If the project proves to be successful at the middle school level, accelerate the expansion to other school levels. The expansion, however, should be systematic, with preference being given to schools with a history of problems in student discipline.
Introduction

The issue of school safety has a prominent place on the national, state, and local educational agenda. It was the subject of a guide produced by a panel of experts convened by President Clinton (Dwyer, Osher, and Warger, 1998). It is Goal 5 in Florida’s System of School Improvement and Accountability. It is also an essential component of Goal II, “Effective Learning Environment,” of the Strategic Planning Goals of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS).

The MDCPS has undertaken numerous projects to ensure the safety of its students. Included among these is a district-wide violence reduction project entitled Peacefully Resolving Our Unsettled Differences (PROUD), which was initiated in December, 1992. At that time, the project was part of the Project Phoenix plan; as such, it was funded through monies the district received to cope with the effects of Hurricane Andrew.

Project PROUD has continued to operate in the intervening years, although it has not been as widely implemented recently. On April 15, 1999, the Department of Cultural Diversity/Intergroup Relations requested that the Office of Evaluation and Research conduct an evaluation of the project’s impact during the 1999-00 school year. The following report has been prepared to comply with this request.

Description of the project

The fundamental goal of Project PROUD is described in program documents in the following manner:

To reduce violence and decrease anger and aggression through the training of staff members, students, and parents to take leadership roles in the prevention and resolution of conflicts through non-violent means [utilizing a curriculum that] includes conflict prevention, management, mediation, and other resolution strategies (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 1992).

Such measures are in fact recommended by the aforementioned national panel of experts as promoting a climate of nonviolence (Dwyer, et al., 1998, p. 21). Furthermore, although research on the effectiveness of these measures has been scarce, recent studies have produced evidence that aggressive behavior declines among students exposed to such training (Grossman, et al., 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Indeed, among the studies yielding this favorable outcome is the district’s prior evaluation of Project PROUD (Hanson, 1996).

Over the years, selected school-level administrators, counselors, teachers, students, and parents as well as district and region staff have been instructed in the use of the PROUD curriculum and techniques. The instruction has been provided by the staffs of various MDCPS district offices including the Division of Student Services, the Department of Cultural Diversity/Intergroup Relations, the Division of Social Sciences, and the Teacher Education Center. The following specific components comprise the current implementation of Project PROUD:

$ Districtwide training for classroom teachers in the Student Conflict Resolution curriculum of the Peace Education Foundation, Inc.

$ School Centers for Special Instruction (SCSI) in selected schools that incorporate the Kingian Nonviolence Project, which provides students with conflict resolution training.
Selected schools participating in the Lawyers for Children Interface, a program where lawyers demonstrate mediation methods for the students

Districtwide training of school security monitors in conflict resolution methods.

**Design of the evaluation**

The evaluation of Project PROUD examines both the implementation of the project’s components and its impact on the schools. The following series of questions delineate the specific focus of the evaluation.

1. What was the extent of teacher training associated with Project PROUD during the 1999-2000 school year?
2. To what extent did the training affect the teachers’ methods of handling student conflict?
3. To what extent did the students who were trained in conflict resolution apply their knowledge?
4. To what extent did training affect the security monitors’ methods of handling student conflict?
5. What impact has the implementation of Project PROUD had on indicators of school climate and student behavior?

In order to address these questions, data were obtained from the following sources: (a) district records of teacher training, the results of the School Climate Survey, and disciplinary actions against students; (b) a survey of principals at schools where Project PROUD has been implemented; (c) a survey of trained teachers; and (d) a survey of selected students. A conceptual summary of the sources of data and the specific evaluation questions they address is displayed on a matrix in Table 1.

**Table 1**

**Sources of data for the evaluation questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation questions</th>
<th>Sources of data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District archival data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher training</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Implementation by teachers</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Implementation by students</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Implementation by monitors</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Impact of project</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions 1 and 2 deal with two basic aspects of the project. Respectively, the questions deal with the training received by the teachers, and the application of the training in the classrooms. To address question 1, the records of teacher training were analyzed to identify the teachers who had received training from January, 1999 through March, 2000.

In order to address question 2, two surveys were forwarded to school personnel. The *Survey of Principals* was sent to 309 principals at all regular schools, as well as alternative, special, and adult education centers. This survey included items that dealt with the schoolwide implementation of the components of Project PROUD, such as peer mediation. The *Survey of Teachers* was sent to 315 teachers and other professional staff who had received training in conflict resolution and were employed at a school site. The latter group included elementary and secondary school staff in the following categories: classroom teachers, ESE teachers, and counselors. This survey included items that dealt with the teachers’
satisfaction with the training, as well as with the application of their new knowledge in the classroom.

Question 3, which deals with the implementation of the PROUD training by students, was addressed by the *Project PROUD Student Questionnaire*. The survey was forwarded to four elementary schools and two middle schools. Half of those schools (i.e., two elementary schools and one middle school) had provided their students with PROUD training in conflict resolution during May, 2000. The balance of the schools had not. To gauge the survey responses of the students attending the PROUD schools, they were compared to those of comparable students attending the non-PROUD schools. The survey was administered at each of the six schools before and after the training period. The survey included a series of items that dealt with the students’ reactions to hypothetical conflict situations. In addition to the student survey, items on the survey of principals focused on the amount of training the students received and the impact of that training on their behavior.

The principals were also the primary source of data on question 4. They were asked about the benefits of training the security monitors in conflict resolution principles.

Finally, to address question 5, district records on school climate and student behavior at schools with higher levels of PROUD implementation were examined. To gauge the findings, they were compared to those of schools with comparable free and reduced-price lunch rates but lower levels of PROUD implementation.

**Results of the evaluation**

The evaluation of Project PROUD took place during the 1999-2000 school year. Data were collected that addressed the issues raised in the evaluation questions listed in the Design of the Evaluation section. These issues include: (a) the teacher training, (b) the implementation of the training by teachers, (c) the implementation of the training by the students, (d) the implementation of the training by the security monitors, and (e) the impact of the project on the school. Each issue will be individually examined.

**Teacher training**

Project PROUD training sessions for teachers are conducted each school year. The workshops introduce the teachers to conflict resolution skills that they can use in their interactions with the students, as well as methods they can use to teach such skills to the students. The district’s personnel databases were examined to determine the number of teachers who received master plan points for completing one or more of the conflict resolution workshops in anticipation of the 1999-2000 school year. The specific period under scrutiny ranges from January, 1999 to March, 2000. However, this tactic for estimating the number of teachers participating in training has at least one shortcoming. It is possible that some teachers completed the training but for some reason did not receive master plan points. Therefore, the number of teachers receiving training is probably underestimated. Despite this shortcoming, the personnel databases provide a viable estimate of the extent to which the 1999-2000 training goals of the project were accomplished.

Between January, 1999 and March, 2000, a total of 315 teachers attended one or more workshops for which master plan points were awarded. Over 91% (n=288) were assigned to a regular school site. The rest were assigned to alternative, special, or adult school sites (n=15), or region or district offices (n=10). Two teachers could not be identified with a particular school site, because they were day-to-day substitutes. The group of teachers assigned to school sites admittedly includes a number of counselors, paraprofessionals, and administrators, as well as classroom teachers. However, for the sake of simplicity,
the individuals in this group will generally be referred to as “teachers” in this report. The proportional
distribution of the group among elementary schools, middle schools, senior high schools, and
alternative/special/adult centers is portrayed in Figure 1. As can be seen from examining this figure, the
elementary teachers comprise the highest proportion of teachers who received training.

![Distribution of trained teachers by school type](image)

**Figure 1**. Distribution of trained teachers by school type

The teachers received an average of 10 master plan points for completing one or more of the four courses offered. Most of the teachers completed one course during the specified period. However, 30 of the teachers completed more, including one teacher who completed all four of the courses. The number of teachers receiving master plan points for each of the four courses is catalogued in Appendix A.

**Implementation by teachers**

Data on the implementation of Project PROUD were derived from questions included on the principal and teacher surveys. Copies of the *Survey of Principals* and the *Survey of Teachers* may be found in Appendices B and C respectively. The *Survey of Principals* was sent to 309 principals at all regular schools, as well as alternative, special, and adult education centers. This survey included items that dealt with the schoolwide implementation of the components of Project PROUD. Nearly 78% (n=240) of these surveys were returned. Many principals delegated the task of completing the survey to another individual at the school. The positions of those responding are summarized in Table 2.
A key factor in the implementation of Project PROUD is the provision of the training for staff. Items on the survey asked principals to report the proportion of their staff who had been trained in conflict resolution methods. Their responses are portrayed in Figure 2. They reveal that high proportions of administrators, teachers, and counselors have received at least some training in conflict resolution. This outcome is not surprising, given the number of years the project has provided training. Further analysis revealed that in schools where at least some of the teachers had received training, 67% of the principals either agreed or tended to agree that the training contributed to an overall improvement in the staff’s management of student behavior.

The Survey of Teachers was sent to the 315 teachers and other professionals who had received training between January, 1999 and March, 2000, and who were assigned to a school site. A total of 60% (n=189)
responded to the survey. The composition of the respondents by school level and position is summarized in Table 3. Incidentally, 20 of the respondents indicated that they had not received training in conflict resolution. Therefore, their responses were excluded from the analysis.

Table 3
Respondents to the teacher survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School type</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th></th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th></th>
<th>Adult/Vocational/Special/Alternative</th>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Targeted d</td>
<td>Targeted s</td>
<td>Targeted d</td>
<td>Targeted s</td>
<td>Targeted d</td>
<td>Targeted s</td>
<td>Targeted d</td>
<td>Targeted s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the survey, the teachers were asked about their use of specific practices introduced in the workshops. Table 4 presents the frequency of use of three classroom practices associated with “fouls.” This is a term used in the training to identify words or expressions that trigger angry reactions. A review of the table reveals that the teachers for the most part reported using these practices a few times during the semester. However, over 20% of the respondents reported utilizing each of the practices weekly.

Table 4
Teachers’ use of project-related practices regarding “fouls”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Frequency:</th>
<th>% of teachers</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class discussions regarding “fouls”</td>
<td>Never: 15</td>
<td>Once or twice: 9</td>
<td>A few times: 38</td>
<td>Monthly: 10</td>
<td>Weekly: 22</td>
<td>Not applicable: 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussions regarding replacements for “fouls”</td>
<td>Never: 14</td>
<td>Once or twice: 11</td>
<td>A few times: 36</td>
<td>Monthly: 10</td>
<td>Weekly: 25</td>
<td>Not applicable: 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities designed to help students correct “fouls”</td>
<td>Never: 14</td>
<td>Once or twice: 12</td>
<td>A few times: 37</td>
<td>Monthly: 11</td>
<td>Weekly: 21</td>
<td>Not applicable: 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. “Fouls,” according to PROUD training, are words or expressions that trigger angry reactions.

aPercentages may not total 100 because they are rounded. The most common responses are shaded.

bSee Appendix C for a full text of the activity items.

cTable 5 presents the frequency of the teachers’ use of practices that encourage students to handle their own conflicts with other students. A review of the table reveals that 66% of the teachers always ask the student what he or she has done to resolve the conflict with another student. Such a practice encourages the student to see his or her part in the conflict. In contrast, only 20% of the teachers always ask the student if he or she used the “I” statement, a practice of expressing feelings verbally when confronted with conflict. Similarly, only 19% of the teachers always provide a safe space where the students can resolve a conflict. A safe space is one where the students involved are free from interruption by their peers but where adult supervision is nearby. Although few of the teachers always use the latter two practices, they are used to varying degrees by three-quarters of the respondents. On the other hand, the practice of allowing students to meet with a mediator in another classroom is used to varying degrees by barely half of the teachers. A total of 40% indicated they never use this practice.
Table 5

**Teachers’ use of project-related practices regarding responses to conflict situations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Frequency:</th>
<th>% of teachers(^a)</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask the student what he or she did</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask the student if he or she used the “I” statement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a safe space where students can work out the problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow students to meet with a student mediator in another class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask the student what he or she did</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask the student if he or she used the “I” statement</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a safe space where students can work out the problem</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow students to meet with a student mediator in another class</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Percentages may not total 100 because they are rounded. The most common responses are shaded.

Finally, 51% of the teachers (n=87) reported that they had established daily or weekly “behavior contracts with individual students regarding specific goals for improving their social competence or problem solving skills. Of these respondents, the majority (n=44) regularly monitored the performance of the students on their contracts. In addition, they consulted their records of the students’ performance on the contracts when assigning conduct/effort grades.

In summary, most of the principals at the schools where at least some of the teachers had attended project workshops tended to agree that the training contributed to an overall improvement in the staff’s management of student behavior. Specific practices that most of the recently trained teachers reported using included those designed to improve students’ reactions to provocative words and expressions, as well as practices designed to encourage students to resolve their own conflicts. Finally, about one-fourth of the teachers established “behavior” contracts with individual students, monitored their performance, and then used the outcome in determining the students’ conduct/effort grades.

**Implementation by the students**

The results of the Survey of Principals was one of the sources of data on the students’ implementation of practices that are advocated by the project. According to the principals’ responses, 83% of the schools provide conflict resolution training to at least some of their students. With regard to peer mediation, 57% of the schools have teams of student mediators. This proportion ranges from 52% at the elementary schools to 73% at the senior high schools.

Principals were also asked if these project components contributed to an overall improvement in student behavior and a reduction in referrals for discipline. The principals’ responses are summarized in Table 6. The table illustrates that the strongest connection perceived by the principals is between conflict resolution training and improved student behavior. A total of 41% fully agreed with the statement linking the two. However, the principals for the most part only tended to agree with the remaining three statements in the table.
Table 6

Principals’ assessment of the effects of conflict resolution training and peer mediation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Response:</th>
<th>% of principals&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Tend to disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution training improves student behavior</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution training reduces disciplinary referrals</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer mediation improves student behavior</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer mediation reduces disciplinary referrals</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Percentages may not total 100 because they are rounded.

In order to more directly address the students’ use of conflict resolution practices, three schools known to be offering the training for the first time and three comparable schools not offering the training were identified. The Project PROUD Student Questionnaire was administered to 62 students (i.e., n=41 and 21 in grades 3 and 6 respectively), who had received training. They represent the experimental group. To gauge their responses, the survey was also administered to 63 students (i.e., n=38 and 25 in grades 3 and 6 respectively), who had not received training. They represent the control group. The administrations of the survey occurred in February and March before any training had been initiated (i.e., the pre-survey) and again in May and June after the training had been completed (i.e., the post-survey). Copies of the survey forms may be found in Appendix D.

The survey includes descriptions of four hypothetical conflict situations. The students are instructed to select from a list of possible options how they would react to each situation. Then, assuming their reaction is unsuccessful, the students are instructed to select another reaction from a secondary list of options. In the analysis of the survey results, the students’ reactions were categorized along the following progressive scale from aggression to cooperation:

1. Verbal or physical aggression, including threatening someone or taking something
2. Seeking help from an authority figure
3. Giving up, walking away or ignoring the conflict
4. Explaining one’s feelings or reasoning with the other person
5. Compromising or sharing.

The results of the categorization of the experimental group’s reactions are displayed in Table 7. The table includes both the results of the pre-survey and the post-survey. The percentages in each cell of the table are based on the sum of all of the students’ responses to the four hypothetical situations described in the survey. A review of the table reveals that in the pre-survey the largest percentage of grade 3 students selected compromising (category 5) as their initial reaction and giving up (category 3) as the secondary. Their responses are essentially the same or worse in the post-survey. Additionally, a review of the grade 6 results reveal the same pattern in both the pre- and post-survey. Consequently, the survey failed to show
that the training had influenced the experimental group’s reactions to conflict situations. Under the circumstances, the survey results of the control group become a moot point, since there is no change in the experimental group’s responses to gauge. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the control group’s responses are quite similar to those of the experimental group. This would be as expected, given the apparent failure of the training to influence the experimental group’s behavior.

Table 7
*Categorization of the experimental group’s responses on the pre-survey and post-survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>% of responses falling in each category</th>
<th>Group:</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>Post-survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeking help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giving up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reasoning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeking help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giving up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reasoning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages may not total 100 because they are rounded. The most common responses are shaded.

What prompted this disappointing outcome is subject to speculation. It may be attributable to the fact that teachers who are highly regarded taught both the experimental and control groups. Perhaps both groups of teachers routinely teach or model good conflict resolution skills. A second possible explanation for the outcome stems from the delay in implementing the project. Dependence on grant funds resulted in a postponement of the project’s implementation until the latter part of the school year. This may not have given the teachers sufficient time to adequately reinforce the lessons of the training.

In summary, principals generally tended to agree that conflict resolution training and peer mediation both improved student behavior and reduced student referrals. Nevertheless, a controlled study yielded no evidence of immediate improvement in the students’ conflict resolution skills as a result of the training.

**Implementation by security monitors**

A number of the district’s schools employ security monitors. They are occasionally the first members of the staff to deal with a conflict situation. As such, the issue of the monitors’ training was addressed by the Survey of Principals. According to the principals, 32% (n=77) of the schools employ at least some security monitors who have had conflict resolution training.

 Principals were asked if the training of security monitors in conflict resolution was beneficial. They were also asked if trained monitors were more likely to refer students with problems to the school’s professional staff. The principals’ responses are summarized in Table 8. A review of the table reveals that the principals tended to agree with both statements. However, it should be noted that there was a high proportion of “Not applicable” responses. This is primarily due to the fact that 68 of the schools have no trained security
monitors. Therefore, the respondents were not able to address these items.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>% of principals&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training is beneficial</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitors more likely to refer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Percentages may not total 100 because they are rounded.

<sup>b</sup>See Appendix B for a full text of the items

Impact of the project on the school

The impact of the project on indicators of school climate and student behavior was examined for schools at different levels of implementation. The degree of implementation was determined from an analysis of the following three items on the Survey of Principals: 1) the existence of a peer mediation team; 2) the number of teachers who had received training; and 3) the number of students who had received training. A school was designated as a “high implementation school” if it satisfied each of the following conditions:

1. There is an active peer mediation team.
2. The number of teachers at the school who have received training is greater than one standard deviation above the mean number of trained teachers for all the schools.
3. The number of students at the school who have received training is greater than one standard deviation above the mean number of trained students for all the schools.

In contrast, a “low implementation school” is one that has no peer mediation team and where none of the teachers or students have received training. The schools that had some level of implementation between these two extremes were designated “average.” The numbers of schools under each designation are presented in Table 9. As can be seen from the table, a total of 21 schools have a high level of implementation. Incidentally, with the exception of one senior high school, all of the schools implementing the smaller programs (i.e., the Kingian Nonviolence Project and the Lawyers for Children Interface) do not appear among the high implementation schools.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools designated high in implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level/Type of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comparison of the schools by their level of implementation utilized schoolwide indicators of school climate and discipline. Such aggregate measures were used since they provide more reliable estimates than
For school climate, the mean responses to selected items on the School Climate Survey (SCS) were used. These items address perceptions of: safety, student discipline, violence, gang activity, and overall school climate. Each item appears in the three forms of the SCS: Staff Form, Student Form, and Parent Form. See Appendix E for the full text of these items. For discipline, the ratios of Student Case Management System (SCMS) entries for fighting and outdoor suspension to the student population were used. In order to assess the impact of the project, the median responses to the SCS items and the median SCMS entry ratios for schools with a high level of implementation were compared to those of schools with an average level.

The comparison failed to identify any differences in the SCMS entry ratios at any school level. This was also the case with the SCS items, with the notable exception of the middle schools. The results of the middle school comparison are portrayed in Figure 3. The figure depicts the median responses of the high implementation middle schools versus the average implementation by SCS item and respondent group (i.e., staff, students, and parents). The response scale (i.e., the vertical axis) is based on the survey’s five-point Likert scale, which ranges from “Strongly Agree” (i.e., +2) to “Strongly Disagree” (i.e., -2). The mid-point of the scale is “Undecided/Unknown” (i.e., zero). All of the SCS items consist of positive statements, so the greater the degree of agreement (i.e., positive numbers), the more favorable the assessment. As can be seen by a perusal of the figure, the median responses from each of the respondent groups appear to be more favorable for high implementation schools than for average implementation schools. In fact, the differences in the responses for four of the items are statistically significant according to the Mann Whitney test. This is a nonparametric test based on the rank order of a measure taken on two populations (Freund & Wilson, 1993, pp. 567-8). The test revealed significant differences in the student items dealing with safety, discipline, and overall climate, and the parent item dealing with overall climate. This outcome cannot be explained on the basis of socioeconomic differences, since the groups of schools did not differ with respect to the proportion of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch. Therefore, it appears that the intensive implementation of Project PROUD does have a discernible impact on the school climate of the middle schools.
Figure 3. Median responses to select School Climate Survey items from middle schools with high and average levels of project implementation

*Statistically significant at p<.05 for a one-tailed alternative hypothesis.
Summary and recommendations

Project PROUD has been operating in the district since 1992. This evaluation addressed aspects of the project implemented during the 1999-00 school year. The specific focus of the evaluation was presented in the Design of the Evaluation as a series of six questions. These questions can now be addressed.

1. What was the extent of teacher training associated with Project PROUD during the 1999-2000 school year?

A total of 315 teachers earned master plan points for attending Project PROUD workshops between January, 1999 and March, 2000. Over 91% (n=288) of these teachers were assigned to a regular school site. Over the life span of the project, however, the total number of teachers who have been trained is considerably higher. Indeed, the principals from over 80% of the schools reported that at least some of their teachers had received training in conflict resolution.

2. To what extent did the training affect the teachers’ methods of handling student conflict?

Most of the principals tended to agree that the training contributed to an overall improvement in the staff’s management of student behavior. Specific practices that most of the recently trained teachers reported using included those designed to improve students’ reactions to provocative words and expressions, as well as practices designed to encourage students to handle their own conflicts peacefully. Additionally, about one fourth of the teachers established “behavior” contracts with individual students, monitored their performance, and then used the outcome in determining the students’ conduct/effort grades.

3. To what extent did the students who were trained in conflict resolution apply their knowledge?

For the most part, the principals felt that conflict resolution training and peer mediation both improved student behavior and reduced student referrals at their school. Nevertheless, a controlled comparison failed to show that the training had improved the project students’ reactions to hypothetical conflict situations.

4. To what extent did training affect the security monitors’ methods of handling student conflict?

The principals at about one third of the schools reported having security monitors who had been trained in conflict resolution. For the most part, these principals felt that the training had been beneficial. They also felt that trained security monitors were more likely to refer students with problems to the school’s professional staff.

5. What impact has the implementation of Project PROUD had on indicators of school climate and student behavior?

A controlled comparison was conducted to assess the impact of the project on indicators of school climate and student discipline. At each school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and senior high), measures of these indicators in schools with a high level of project implementation were compared to those in schools with an average level of implementation. The analysis of the data revealed no difference across the school levels with regard to student discipline. This was also the case with regard to school climate, with the notable exception of the middle schools. The analysis revealed that the middle schools with high project implementation had an advantage in school climate over the middle schools with average implementation.

In summary, the evaluation revealed that Project PROUD, which has been in operation in the district for
nearly a decade, continues to train teachers in conflict resolution methods. Additionally, in recent years the training recipients have also included security monitors. For the most part, the school principals view the impact of these endeavors very favorably. They generally feel that the training has improved the students’ discipline, the teachers’ ability to manage students, and the security monitors’ effectiveness. But despite these favorable perceptions, the implementation of the project across the district has been limited. The data revealed that only 21 of the 240 schools responding to the principal survey had implemented the project to a level that was judged to be “high.” Additionally, controlled comparisons of the effect of the training on the students’ behavior and the impact of the project on indicators of student discipline and school climate did not yield encouraging results. The only exception occurred in the comparison of school climate. The analysis revealed that middle schools with a high level of project implementation exhibit a comparatively better school climate. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Concentrate the project’s resources at the middle school level, where the results of the evaluation are encouraging and conflicts among students are common.

2. Monitor the implementation of the project at the middle school level to either verify or refute the encouraging results of the evaluation.

3. If the project proves to be successful at the middle school level, accelerate the expansion to other school levels. The expansion, however, should be systematic, with preference being given to schools with a history of problems in student discipline.
References


