
Excerpts from **CHANGING WAYS** / *Building Skills*

Vol 1, #2

Exploring conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Maine schools

Fall 1997

Opening Remarks *By Barbara Blazej*

Fall greetings to everyone. We hope your school year is off to a good start, with many interesting and exciting activities underway.

Your response to our first issue of *Changing Ways* last spring was overwhelmingly positive, with many of you commenting on the value of this type of publication. We thank all of you for your warm, encouraging remarks. Also, 60 of you returned the surveys, in which you reported on your various conflict resolution (CR) programs, policies, goals, and needs. Although this response was relatively small (7% of the 829 K-12 schools in Maine), we did get a sense of what is happening in every part of the state, and also what remains to be done in the area of CR education. We do plan to analyze the data we collected and report the results at a later date. Finally, the winner of the drawing for \$50 worth of CR resources was Julie Tselikis of Cape Elizabeth Middle School. Congratulations Julie!

In this issue we introduce two new columns: *Infusion Ideas*, which offers suggestions on how to integrate conflict resolution concepts into the curriculum; and *Best Books*, reviews of particularly noteworthy CR resources. If you have something to share in these or any other areas of conflict resolution education, please send us your ideas for inclusion in future issues of *Changing Ways*.

Again, we appreciate your support for this publication, and want to especially thank those who wrote articles for this issue. We hope *Changing Ways* will continue to serve as a useful tool for your peace building efforts in Maine schools.

“Climbing “Adventures in SAD #41

By Sue Eliason

The elementary schools in SAD #41 have been exploring diverse ways of integrating social skills curriculum into the classroom. One such effort is provided through the collaboration of health, physical education and guidance. All fourth and fifth grade students in the district participate in a special program entitled **CLIMBERS**. This is an interactive, experiential program in which students work together to solve challenges; in the process students have fun and develop their group work skills. Each group has the opportunity to utilize the uniquely creative power of the group to approach and solve their challenges. Along the way they discover that the skills of **Cooperation + communication, Leadership, Initiative, Motivation, Belief, Encouragement, and Respect** lead to **Success- hence CLIMBERS**.

The CLIMBERS program is facilitated by Dawn Russell, Physical Education and Health teacher, and Sue Eliason, guidance counselor, who both have an interest in adventure-based experiences for students. Over the past four years the program has grown from a 6 week experience within the physical education curriculum to a regular, full-year program for all fourth and fifth graders. This growth has been the result of inservice opportunities within both the physical education and school counseling fields as well as district emphasis on developing opportunities for students to learn and practice social skills. Students have responded with enthusiasm and constructive energy within the Project Adventure model. This process involves many important concepts. First, students must agree to

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abide by the *Full Value Contract* in which they agree to work together toward individual and group goals, to follow safety guidelines, to demonstrate respect for oneself and others, to give and receive feedback, and to work toward changing behaviors when appropriate. Key to the contract is the concept of **Challenge by Choice** in which students have the opportunity to try potentially difficult and challenging tasks in an atmosphere of support and caring with the recognition and respect for individual ideas and choices. The experience is organized using the **Adventure Wave** model; concepts are presented to the group in the briefing stage, a challenge or activity is experienced in which students must work together, followed by the de-briefing stage where students discuss what happened, how it happened, and what was learned. During **CLIMBERS** students have the opportunity to work with others in ways they never have before. This process makes the concepts of conflict and resolution very real. Facilitators are able to use the work and behavior of the students within the adventure to teach and reinforce teaching concepts, making it a very dynamic experience for all.

The S.A.D. #41 CLIMBERS program is based on the CLIMBERS model utilized in the Wiscasset Primary School District, developed by Chuck Saufler and Linda Hanson. For more information, call Sue Eliason at 943-2122.

Integrating Conflict Management Skills into the Classroom

By Paul G. Charbonneau & Associates

Curriculum Infusion Ideas According to Discipline:

I. Social Studies

- Conflict analysis of regional conflicts
- Policy issues - local, national, and international
- Historical analysis of conflicts using primary sources
- Constitutional issues and alternatives to litigation
- Exploring perceptions and stereotypes
- Using “Opposing viewpoints” series

II. Science

- Competition and cooperation in science project grouping
- Analysis of ethical dilemmas
- Interaction of technology, humanity, and nature
- Local issues relating to water and other environmental resources
- Impact of scientific discoveries on perception of universe

III. Arts

- Draw from point of view - compare and contrast perceptions
- Paint/draw image of conflict- positive or negative associations
- How does perception in art reflect the attitude of an artist?
- Colors- complimentary and non-complimentary
- Mixing colors creates new colors
- Light and dark gives form and meaning

IV. Language Arts

- conflict analysis in literature using framework

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- Intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts in literature
- Reframing
- Role playing
- All great novels have conflict- consider how novels would be altered if conflict was managed differently
- The language of conflict in the media-current events

V. Health

- Conflict as normal part of life
- Conflict management skills
- Impact on body and mind
- Communication skills for sensitive issues

Express Yourself Peacefully: Violence Prevention Project in Lisbon

By Betsy Norcross Plourde

Advocates for Children, Androscoggin County's Child Abuse Prevention Agency, is entering its third year in the Lisbon School Department under a Youth Violence Prevention Grant. Grants were also made to Penquis C.A.P. and the Waterville Boys and Girls Club through the Division of Community and Family Health, Bureau of Health, DHS. The goal of the grants is to prevent or decrease youth violence by increasing the awareness and practice of peaceful conflict resolution and by helping to foster safe and caring learning environments.

During Year One and Two the essential program elements included: Widespread awareness training in conflict resolution (CR) for students, faculty, and parents; more in-depth CR training and peer mediation skills training for smaller numbers of students at grades 4 and 5, as well as at the middle and high schools. The parent component focused on providing parents with CR education, because, as we know, though schools and peers have an enormous socializing influence on children and youth, parents and families are still the first and often most important educator for their children.

During Year One a group of key stakeholders organized a contest to establish a name for the project. *Express Yourself Peacefully* became the project name. The stakeholders also organized a Lisbon Community Fun Day which for the past two years has provided a no-cost, fun-filled event featuring CR activities, speakers, and safety information. A 6-hour CR awareness training was developed and implemented for K-12 staff. Peer mediation/CR skills were taught in all grade 4 and 5 classrooms. Mediation programs were established at both the middle and high schools. Five high school students attended the YWCA Peer Helper Conference in March. Each school received a box of CR resources which were placed in staff lounges for easy access and use by staff.

During Year Two, WMTW-TV 8 worked with the Sugg Middle School Mediators to develop and produce a 30-second PSA which aired this past summer. Twenty-four K-5 staff participated in Tribes training with additional CR training provided to K-12 staff. Students in K-5 also received CR training within their classrooms.

The third year of the grant will see a continuation and expansion of peer mediation at both the middle and high schools. Each elementary classroom, K-5, will receive CR instruction with major emphasis on the WIN-WIN model of problem-solving. K-5 students will also experience a multi-media CR program with classroom follow-up entitled "King of the Mountain". In hopes of reaching increased numbers of parents, programming will be

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offered through the Lisbon Adult Education. The fall will feature Adele Faber's "How to Talk so Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk". The spring will feature "Siblings Without Rivalry". Project staff will continue to work with the existing community groups to increase awareness and provide positive opportunities for students, families, and community members. The first event this fall will be a community dinner in conjunction with the YWCA's after-school program featuring "How to Deal With Bullies."

These are just some of the many things happening in the Lisbon community to provide positive opportunities for children and youth. For more information, contact Betsy Norcross Plourde, Advocates for Children at 783-3990.

Ask Ansley Anything

By Ansley Newton

My school is interested in Peer Mediation but we just don't know where to start?

I would suggest that one of the first things you do as a school is to form an Advisory Board made up of staff, administration, parents and students, (if age appropriate). The purpose of the Advisory Board will be to help develop the direction of the program and to promote the program to others in the school and the community. The Board should meet at least once a month and can provide great assistance to the program coordinator. The Advisory Board can also help with the training of the peer mediators and evaluating the progress of the program.

How do I get the staff at my school interested and supportive of my Peer Mediation Program?

Some techniques that have worked with other schools include:

1. Having resistant staff visit and talk with staff at other schools where a mediation program has made a difference.
2. Having the staff and students from other schools come to your school to talk about their programs. The visiting staff should always include classroom teachers if possible.
3. Educating staff about what kind of support you need from them and how this program will benefit them directly.
4. Ask staff to be on you Advisory Board or directly involved in related projects.
5. Ask staff to attend your mediation training for kids so that they better understand what the process is all about.
6. Include professional development for staff in the area of conflict resolution.