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FOURTH

SUMMER 2003

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A Publication of the
Association for Conflict Resolution
a Professional Organization Dedicated to Enhancing
the Practice and Public Understanding of Conflict Resolution

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EDUCATION SECTION

Welcome from the Education Section

by Jo Dee Davis and Nancy Kaplan

Dear Education Section members, This is an exciting time for ACR and for the Education Section. One of the main reasons for this is the commitment that ACR has made toward supporting conflict resolution education (CRE) in a variety of ways. The ACR Board of Directors established an Education Priority Task Force last year that made several powerful recommendations that are moving toward implementation. As ACR members interested in CRE and committed to promoting its teaching and use, we can support ACR's work by our own efforts, and in turn feel supported by the work of ACR and its staff and Board.

We invite you to think about how you might be involved in these initiatives, summarized from the Task Force recommendations, both in your own work and in your involvement with ACR and the Education Section, by:

Meet the Education Section Co-Chairs



Jo Dee Davis is an educator who is especially interested in conflict management. Thirty years of teaching and 40 years of marriage, children and grandchildren have made her passionate about teaching skills for peacemaking. She has been a consultant, trainer, and curriculum developer for the Interfaith Center for Peace, WinWin Inc, Opening Doors of Ohio, and the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution.

A mediator for 25 years, **Nancy Kaplan**, M.S.W., is Executive Director of the CRU Institute, a nonprofit organization that teaches mediation skills to students, faculty, and parents. Ms. Kaplan has developed curricula, produced videos, and directed CRU's nationally recognized peer-mediation program since 1992. In her "off hours" Ms. Kaplan uses her mediation skills with her husband and eight children.

- Infusing and reinforcing CRE throughout ACR by assuring that the perspectives of K-12 CRE professionals are integrated into ACR's conference planning, publications, membership development, fundraising, quality assurance and public policy efforts.
- Influencing public policy to help institutionalize CRE in K-12 education.
- Building relationships and partnering with other professional organizations.

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About The Fourth R

The newsletter of the Education Section, *The Fourth R* is a publication of the Association for Conflict Resolution, a professional organization dedicated to enhancing the practice and public understanding of conflict resolution.

Editorial Policy

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the various authors for the purpose of encouraging discussion. Unless expressly noted, they do not reflect the formal policy, nor necessarily the views, of the Association for Conflict Resolution.

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Welcome back, everyone, to *The Fourth R*. This is my first issue as editor, and it has been an exciting challenge. I am one of those people who like the adrenaline charge of a tight deadline, and believe me, this was a tight deadline. So, it's been fun.

What has made the experience even better has been the participation of my editorial board, Susan Armoni, Public Policy; Fernaundra Ferguson, Diversity; Mike Palmer, Training; and Anita Vestal, Research. Mark Sawchuk, Publications Manager for ACR, Nancy Kaplan and Jo Dee Davis, the Education Section Co-Chairs, and Tricia Jones, Editor-in-Chief of *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* have also guided us. And now, we seek information, guidance, and input from you, our Section and our readers. We are looking for feedback on this issue and ideas for future issues.

Bullying for First Theme

The theme for the first two issues is bullying. In this first issue Anita Vestal describes an anti-bullying program that is based on conflict resolution theory, and Mike Palmer brings us some down-to-earth tips on how to set up an anti-bullying program at a school. However, this is just the beginning. Now that you, our readers, know the theme for the next issue, I am hoping you will send in articles on bullying, ask people you know to send in articles, suggest names of experts on bullying who might write for us, and offer resources and references. Our next deadline is October 5. Also, in the next issue we will have a column on bullying that will include your reactions to this issue's

Meet the Editor of The Fourth R



Marcia Sweedler is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, at Nova Southeastern University, where she teaches both online and residential courses. Prior to that she was in charge of Conflict Resolution and Mediation Services for Fairfax County Public Schools, was an elementary school principal in FCPS, and a mediator for the Northern Virginia Mediation Service.

articles, as well as your ideas, references, etc. Our readers can benefit from shared knowledge. Please feel free to contact me at mweedle@nova.edu and put "bullying" in the subject line.

Future Themes

We are also interested in your ideas for other theme issues. Our readership incorporates all school levels from pre-K through post-secondary, so we have a broad range when considering themes. If you have an idea for a theme, please e-mail me and put "themes" in the subject line.

Our Mission

Our Section makes an important contribution to the field of conflict

resolution by educating and training today's students to deal with conflict with greater knowledge and more skills than preceding generations. Today's peer mediator may be tomorrow's president. We have an incredible opportunity to change the course of the world. It is my hope that our newsletter will provide resources, discussion topics, challenges, and information to our readers who have taken on this great task.

I am looking forward to hearing from you and to meeting you at our Education Section meeting in Orlando this October.

Enjoy,

Marcia Sweedler
Editor, *The Fourth R*

Call for Submissions to The Fourth R

Please submit unpublished articles that provide pertinent and engaging information, research results, practitioner tips, and/or examples of programmatic success in the area of conflict resolution education. The editor, Marcia Sweedler, will review submissions on a rolling basis, and will recommend for publication those entries that provide fresh ideas and perspectives. The author will be asked to provide a photo to accompany the article, preferably via e-mail. Authors

will also be asked to sign a Permission to Publish agreement.

News updates, Section information, calendar information, and letters to the editor are also welcome.

All submissions should be e-mailed with complete contact information (name, address, phone, fax, e-mail, professional affiliations) to Marcia Sweedler, Editor of *The Fourth R* at mweedle@nova.edu.

Welcome

Continued from page 1

- Promoting best practices in CRE at ACR and other conferences.
- Developing and disseminating resources and becoming the primary clearinghouse and distributor of CRE resources and materials.

There will be considerable concrete support for CRE in upcoming months, thanks to the Compton Foundation's recent award of a grant to ACR to enhance its national and international leadership in conflict resolution education. ACR will also be able to encourage efforts that members are making toward establishing, sustaining, expanding and improving CRE in K–12 settings, teacher education and other higher education disciplines.

We look forward to a dynamic Annual Conference in October where we can all learn from each other and begin to create ways to support this essential work. Here are some highlights that may entice you to come! These are in addition to many sessions specifically chosen for interest to educators.

- “Partnering for Progress: A Networking and Relationship-Building Conversation” with representatives of NCPCR, the National Association for Community Mediation, the Consortium on Negotiation and Conflict Resolution, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Peace and Social Justice Association, and others. This is scheduled for Thursday morning, October 16.
- Roundtable Discussions throughout the conference on topics of interest to members, some informal and some

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arranged. What do you want to talk about?

- A meeting and reception on Friday for members and others interested in CRE, a chance to have your ideas and energy influence the future of this Section. (Did we say “eat dessert first?”)

Make your “returning home” reservations later on Saturday so that you can attend the Post-Conference Meeting, where we can tie up loose ends and exchange all those addresses and papers we never get to during the hectic conference days.

And certainly, we are pleased that *The 4th R* is returning to give us a forum for ongoing communication. As Co-Chairs of the ACR Education Section, we are excited and proud to be able to bring you this interesting and provocative issue. The Education Section has gone through some “growing pains” along with the merged organization. But just like what

happens with children, who make progress in fitful spurts, suddenly a miracle happens! The present “miracle” is the rebirth of this wonderful periodical.

Marcia Sweedler and her talented editorial board plan a theme for each edition of *The Fourth R*. The theme for this issue is bullying, a timely, controversial, and important topic! As you read these pages, we urge you to keep in mind that the conflict resolution field has many components. Certainly one of our tasks as conflict resolution educators, the task of changing the minds of people about the ways they deal with conflict, is immense, and requires all of our diverse perspectives and different skills. Whether we call our work “anti-bullying,” “mediation,” “conflict management,” “social and emotional learning,” “social skills development,” “asset building,” or “violence prevention”—and we are sure we have overlooked some—it is essential work we are doing. It is important that we, as advocates in the field, express our views and clarify the benefits and limitations of what we do. The Education Section of ACR gives us a forum to share ideas, and it also gives us a platform upon which to express our opinions.

As you peruse this issue, we trust that you will be inspired, enlightened, and, perhaps, provoked by its content. We encourage you to continue your active participation in the field of conflict resolution education. We challenge you to express your views and convictions by writing to the editor. Most important, we hope you will embrace an active role in ACR, this newly merged organization striving to produce a myriad of miracles!

Mobilizing the “Third Side” for Bully Prevention

by Anita Vestal

Twenty-two educators from private and public schools systems in Florida, Virginia and Pennsylvania exchanged their ideas, ideals and poignant stories about violence in the lives of school children during an online course taught at Eastern Mennonite University in 2002. In this short article, pieces of their stories are shared to illustrate a framework for enlarging the circle in prevention efforts for bullies, victims and bystanders. From the cases described and using Ury’s “Third Side” model (2002), we sketch an approach where schools, families, and communities could stand together to transform some of the violent and depressing aspects in the daily lives of children.

What is the Third Side?

In his collection of essays entitled *Must We Fight?*, Ury sets out a framework for resolving and preventing violence using the “Third Side,” which is simply the “surrounding community” or those we might call “stakeholders” in bully prevention. In education, the Third Side might consist of the greater school community, faculty and staff, parents, administrators and other partners who support children and families. Ury asserts that conflict containment and conflict resolution are not enough. The most important function of the Third Side is to prevent. Prevention is key because the best chance for success comes early on in a conflict.



Starting with Peace Corps service in 1974, **Anita Vestal**, Ph.D., has worked in organizational, community and family development. She held positions in administration and education with Texas Tech University and University of Maryland and now teaches at Eastern Mennonite University in Lancaster, PA. She holds a Ph.D. in Conflict Resolution, an M.B.A., and a B.S. in Child Development.

According to Ury’s model, there are four factors or conditions that enable the Third Side to be effective. They are Incentives, Catalysts, Critical Incidents, and Mindset. Excerpts from teachers’ discussions about conflict and bullying illustrate each concept.

Incentives: Getting Everyone On Board

Motivation from the principal, school board or parents’ group can often jump start new initiatives to prevent bullying and school violence. A middle school counselor discusses an approach for introducing a Bully Prevention program, called “Don’t Laugh at Me” which is available for downloading by Operation Respect at <http://www.operationrespect.org>. School administrators have set goals for implementation of the program school wide. At the homeroom level, team teachers will integrate mini-lessons on curriculum topics that teach empathy, perspective taking, and ethical or interpersonal problem solving within the peer groups. The school counselor says, “The belief is that teachers will now have a more open vehicle for

addressing behavior—other than referrals to the office for discipline—and good kids will be empowered to challenge bully behavior and harassment in the social environment.”

Catalysts: The Spark That Ignites Action

The change must start somewhere with someone. People can take responsibility and extend themselves even if it is only part time or a bit here and a bit there. Pull together all those factions who think they are powerless to change the situation and start pooling resources, ideas and energy. A teacher enrolled in the course was inspired to initiate community time with her third-grade students. She noted, “I read about ‘morning meetings.’ I like this idea. When I taught children younger than third graders I did more of this sort of thing. I think that I want to try the ‘morning meetings.’ I have a perfect rug area in the room where the class can meet together in a circle.”

A social skills teacher-coordinator in an inner city elementary school described a bullying incident

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The Third Side

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involving two girls. “On Friday, I had two girls and their parents in my office for conversation [mediation] as the one daughter was stalking the other in a vicious way. In meeting with the parents [individually beforehand], intense anger was expressed, and threats made so that key staff were alerted to be ready to respond if necessary. However, while tense at moments, the conversation went well and at the end, the families were actually laughing and having fun conversation together. In fact, and this is not unusual, one of the fathers made a funny remark and had everyone laughing, allowing us to share a much needed emotional release.” This teacher is a natural catalyst by structuring mediation and dialogue to resolve issues that arise. She recalled a time when a student looked at her at the end of a mediation and said, “Mrs. R, are you crying?”

Critical Incidents: Every Adversity Carries the Seed for Transformation

An event can often trigger a chain reaction, resulting in either a positive or a negative outcome. Look at the chain reactions from the Columbine tragedy and the trauma of 9-11. A critical incident such as an emergency or disciplinary situation at school offers an opportunity for school staff to understand the home lives of children and their families. A middle school principal in Pennsylvania says, “If I choose to approach each parent as if they are currently doing the best they can, it changes my feelings for them, as well as my response to them. It allows me to approach them as an equal, not quickly jumping to the

conclusion that I am the more responsible one, better educated, smarter, etc., and, therefore, have the right to tell them what to do. We work together to help the child, with the school providing all the possible resources it can. If all else fails, I do it for the child, because children deserve our love and attention regardless of how we feel about their parents.”

Even an innocent episode or chance encounter can provide the momentum for bringing about change, as we can see in this coach’s story. “Today, I had a conversation with a teen who is a product of divorce and lives with mom. This teen has not seen dad in over a year and he misses dad dearly. Dad is an addict and lives too far away for a close relationship. However, my heart was broken by the unfolding story that was told. I encouraged the teen to seek professional counseling for some other issues and to perhaps write a Dear Dad letter. I think writing thoughts out on paper is therapeutic.”

Mindset: I Know I Can

One of the biggest obstacles to the mobilization of the Third Side may be the feeling of disempowerment and personal inability to make a difference. Bullies have been around since the beginning of time; how are we going to change human nature? What types of strategies need to be generated to combat the mindset deterrent?

An administrator at a private coed high school shows that if we teach young children not to tattle, we must also teach them how to get adult help when it is warranted. “Yesterday I spoke with three high school girls and asked them why

they would not report sexual harassment. One of the primary reasons they would not report it was that they had been taught in elementary school not to be a tattletale. I am wondering if this lesson is altogether positive.”

A high school teacher suggests that students, faculty and the greater community could benefit from training and skills-building in listening to one another. She says, “Reflective listening has been difficult for me to do in moments of great emotion—it is hard to be disciplined to the point where you ‘hold’ your emotional response until you truly understand the other person’s point of view. I know each time I have managed to do this, the relationship in question has survived—and each time I have failed to do so, the relationship has suffered. I see a lot of ‘inflammatory, immediate’ reactions in our students, community... (and culture). I think our entire school should be trained in this!”

The types of active interventions shown in the examples enables the Third Side to contain bullying and conflicts proactively through teacher training and classroom morning meetings, resolve conflict as illustrated in Mrs. R’s conference-mediation story, and prevent conflict by making the rules explicit and asking if the child wants to abide by them as in Sarah’s story. Bullying is not just about the bullies and the victims; there is a Third Side that can play a constructive role in transcending bullying behavior.

Editor’s note—To view the references for this article, please visit the Education Section’s Web site at www.acresolution.org/research/nsfl/key/Sec-Ed.

Bullyproofing Your School

by Michael Palmer

“Welcome to our Peace School.” That’s how students greet visitors at Mount Rainier Elementary School in Mount Ranier, MD. They’re building a violence-free place in which respect and mutual support flourish. Oh, yes. Students are sent to the principals office on occasion ... to receive praise for extraordinary kindness.

“I want my school to be like that,” you might be saying. If you want it enough—if, like famous Los Angeles high school teacher Jaime Escalante, you have the *ganas de triunfar* (“desire to succeed”)—your school will become a peace school, one that is characterized by safety, order, and respect.

Leadership is key. But leaders don’t have to be principals or superintendents. Whoever you are—school director, parent, student, teacher, or administrator—if you are willing to work at this you can achieve a bullyproof school. Here’s how.

First, get others together who also want a safe school. This shouldn’t be hard. Many people agree that anxiety about being picked on, ostracized, harassed, or intimidated interferes with doing good work.

Second, study up. Read the best books and articles on bullying. Watch videos and pertinent movies. Interview students and adults in your school to find out what is really going on. Share experiences.



Michael Palmer has a legal and mediation practice and directs The Negotiation Center, which provides mediation, training, and consulting. He teaches conflict resolution at Middlebury College in Vermont, and teaches conflict resolution workshops for lawyers, accountants, consultants, insurance claims adjusters and others. He is the former Chair of the ADR Committee of the Vermont Bar Association and the Addison County Bar Association.

Familiarize yourself with the problem and what experts say about it. Once you have your working group together, you might start by developing a functional definition of bullying, such as this one by Keith Sullivan:

- The actor intends to hurt the other person.
- There is an imbalance of power.
- It occurs over a period of time (not an isolated incident).
- The harm is physical, psychological, or both.

Third, form a task force to address bullying in your school. Include students, parents, faculty, counselors, and administrators. This group should:

- Find out (through interviews or surveys) how harassment, intimidation, and other forms of violence occur at your school.
- Identify possible causes for the problem.
- Explore general kinds of solutions.
- Devise a specific course of action.

Fourth, implement the program, assess its effectiveness, and revise it over time using the basic four-step process outlined above. Review, revise, and redeploy.

Bullies R Us

Each of us participates in, to borrow a phrase from *The Tempest*, “this thing of darkness.” All of us have squashed bugs for no purpose, shot birds for the fun of it, said mean things to someone weaker than us, kicked a dog in anger, passed on malicious gossip, egged on a fight, taunted another, and, as the prayer for forgiveness says, “done things we ought not to have done.” No one is immune. Not even Gandhi, Mother Theresa, Saint Francis, or Hillel.

Is bullying a boys’ problem? Yes. A girls’ problem? Yes. An adult problem? Yes. A school problem? Yes. A workplace problem? Yes. A group problem? Yes. An individual problem? Yes. A human problem? Yes. A primate problem? Yes.

A teacher uses repressive means to maintain order in the classroom.

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Bullying Your School

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Nice girls belittle the girl they are ostracizing. Good boys passively participate in the taunting of a clumsy boy. A principal humiliates teachers whom s/he dislikes.

Labeling people as “bullies” does not help. It degenerates into an us/them dynamic. Somehow when we apply the labels, we never seem to be in the “them” category. Instead, focus on preventing and responding to abusive acts such as hitting, shoving, and name-calling.

Selecting a Consultant/Trainer

It is possible that someone with ties to the school already has sufficient knowledge to lead the development of an anti-bullying program. But you might want (1) to obtain expert guidance not available within the school and (2) to get a leader with no ties to any faction. Whether homegrown or from afar, a consultant/trainer can help your school understand the problem, develop policies and procedures to deal with it, and provide guidance and coaching for acquiring the skills to deal with it.

Labeling people as “bullies” does not help. It degenerates into an us/them dynamic. Somehow when we apply the labels, we never seem to be in the “them” category.

This person should have the following skills, knowledge, and attitude:

- Listens to understand. You want someone who will spend at least as much time exploring what is going on in your school as s/he does sharing his/her thoughts on what can be done about it.
- Understands bullying. Knows the full range of bullying behavior in boys, girls, men, and women.

- Can teach conflict resolution techniques. Knowing how and knowing how to teach others how are different. You need both.
- Approaches the task with humility. Anyone who has the answers, doesn't. The best answers are jointly developed and continually reassessed and revised.

Resources

While there are many excellent trainers and training organizations who can help you bullyproof your school, you can also roll up your sleeves and develop your own expertise. Even if you bring in professional help, you might want to consult one or more of the resources I have compiled. Because there is not enough space to list them here, they have been posted to the Education Section's Web site at www.acresolution.org/research/nsf/key/Sec-Ed.

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