Peer mediation program evaluation

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PEER MEDIATION PROGRAM EVALUATION

By
Maria M. Marano

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
Of
The Graduate School
At
Rowan University
May 2005

Approved by

Date Approved 4/20/05

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This study was designed to determine if the existing Peer Mediation Program at the Egg Harbor Township Intermediate School is working effectively. Utilizing an action research design, 20 sixth graders, who were either mediators or disputants, completed a peer mediation survey during the 2004-2005 academic school year. All 20 surveys were used for analysis with the final research population being 14 female and 6 male participants. In analyzing the results, it was discovered that most of the students felt the Peer Mediation Program was moderately successful and provided a better alternative to solving conflict than if the problems were referred to the Vice-Principal’s office for disciplinary action. Unfortunately, many students indicated they felt some sort of adult intervention was needed to facilitate the process. Also, almost all participants felt the program did not get enough publicity, which resulted in many incidences being referred to administrative offices rather than to Peer Mediation.
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Dennis Hurley and Dr. Ron Capasso, my university mentors for their help and guidance in completing my Rowan University Master’s Program. I would also like to thank my two field mentors, Mr. Joseph Giardina and Mr. Zed Robinson for their internship support and for sharing their administrative experiences with me throughout the past year. Special thanks to my colleague, Mrs. Paula Sykes, for allowing me to enter the world of the guidance counselor and evaluate her existing Peer Mediation Program. And to all my friends at work, than you for supporting me, listening to me, and encouraging me throughout my internship program.

Heartfelt thanks and love go to my husband Michael, my children Michelle and Michael, and my mother Mary. Their support and encouragement throughout this program was the mainstay of my sanity; without them this project would not have been possible.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgements</th>
<th>iii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1 Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of the Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting of the Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship of the Study to the ISLLC Standards</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 Review of the Literature</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 Design of the Study</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Research Design</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development and Design of the Research Instrument</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Sample</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Data Collection</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Data Analysis</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 Presentation of the Research Findings</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 Conclusions, Implications and Further Study</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A Peer Mediation Surveys</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1
Introduction

Focus of the Study

Many schools today claim to have peer mediation programs in place that are working to reduce incidences of violence within their schools. Many of these programs were set in place years ago and have not changed their method of operation since their inception, thus not keeping up with the change in the climate of the student body. A peer mediation program, which has been a product of the Guidance Department, is now in its sixth year of operation at the Egg Harbor Township Intermediate School. At the beginning of each school year, the program coordinator recruits and teaches students how to be effective peer mediators for use during the corresponding school year. Since a major goal of any elementary school is to provide a safe place for learning, peer mediation programs help achieve this goal by providing in-house solutions to student conflicts, confrontation, and disagreements. By teaching students how to diffuse these conflicts as they arise, they will learn to use these problem-solving tools on into their adult lives. In addition, increasing participation in the program should prove to help deter and correct violent behavior resulting from the day-to-day conflict students experience throughout their schooling and in their daily lives.

This study focused on reviewing and evaluating the current in-place Peer Mediation Program to determine both its effectiveness and the possibility of the need to implement changes to the program to increase its success.

Purpose of the Study

All students deserve the right to learn in a stress free environment, without being harassed or pressured or threatened by other students. A peer mediation program gives
students an opportunity to solve episodes of student conflict in a non-threatening manner that is acceptable to both conflicting parties. Another appeal of the program is that it usually does not involve disclosing the problem to any administrators, teachers, or other adults, and can usually be resolved without any of the students getting into further trouble. The Peer Mediation Program also addresses the area of bullying and harassment to a small degree, two areas of emerging concern among educators across the nation.

Definitions

*Conflict (definition #1)* is broadly defined in the educational setting as a struggle between or among students resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, wishes, or demands. (New Jersey State Bar Foundation) This struggle can take the form of violent acts of behavior, teasing, harassing, bullying, making faces, rude gestures, or spreading rumors. Spreading rumors and excluding the victim from a group are also common forms of bullying which are sometimes lessened in nature through participation in peer mediation programs. (Olweus, 2001).

*Conflict (definition #2)* can also be further defined as a prolonged fight or struggle, a disagreement, dispute, or quarrel, a mental or spiritual struggle within a person, or the clashing of opposing principles or statements. (Casey, 2001).

*Conflict resolution* can be defined in the educational setting as a course of action decided upon to resolve a problem. *Mediator* is defined as a third person who helps the disputants settle their disagreement by providing impartial guidelines to help them disclose their true feelings and get to the root of the problem. *Disputants* can be defined as those people who are involved in the argument or conflict. *Peer pressure* can be broadly defined as pressure from a person or group of persons of the same age group to conform to their codes or standards of appearance and behavior. *Arbitrator* is defined as the person who hears the arguments and helps guide the disputants to a solution that works for both of them. Finally, *violence* in relationship to the educational setting can be
broadly defined as the abusive or unjust exercise of power; physical force exerted for the purpose of violating, damaging, or abusing another person or persons. (New Jersey State Bar Foundation).

**Limitations of the Study**

The research of this study was limited to the Egg Harbor Township Intermediate School, one of eight schools in the Egg Harbor Township School District. In addition, limitations included the use of a relatively small sample size in relationship to the population of the school, the random method in which the sample was collected, and the policies of the Egg Harbor Township Board of Education in relationship to questioning participating students.

Other limitations included any incompatibilities or inexperience of the peer mediators due to lack of training, or to lack of communication skills. In addition, limitations included the lack of appropriately matched peer mediators based on racial and ethnic differences among students from different ethnic and economic backgrounds. Further limitations included dealing with time constraints in attempts to work together with the guidance counselor in charge of the program. Finally, limitations included any unwillingness of the part of the mediators or the disputants to share their problems and solutions with the researcher.

**Setting of the Study**

This study took place during the 2004-2005 school year at the Egg Harbor Township Intermediate School in Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey. Egg Harbor Township is located in the heart of Atlantic County, which is located in the southern tier of the state of New Jersey, just a 10-minute drive from Atlantic City. In recent times, Egg Harbor Township has become a bedroom community for many of the casino employees of Atlantic City, thus causing the population of the area to skyrocket beyond normal proportions.
The township covers approximately 75 square miles in area, with about 10% of that area under water. Nine local communities comprise the make up of Egg Harbor Township, which was once known for its abundance of trees and wildlife. These communities of Bargaintown, Cardiff, English Creek, Farmington, McKee City, Scullville, Seaview Harbor, Steelmanville, and West Atlantic City have seen drastic changes to their environment and their citizenry since the inception of the casino industry back in 1978. The township is actually divided into two complete sections separated by the towns of Linwood, Northfield, Pleasantville, and Somers Point. This layout causes a vast divide in the area and in the people of Egg Harbor Township and breaks up the continuity of the community.

The Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan has labeled Egg Harbor Township as one of its “regional growth areas.” This forced rapid growth has caused a tremendous burden on the township and the local school district. According to the United States Census Bureau, the current population in Egg Harbor Township is 31,726, which is roughly 15% of the entire population of Atlantic County. This figure shows a 25% increase in population since 1990, a figure that is rising sharply with each passing year. The population density is currently at 456.2 people per square mile, a figure that is also currently on a steady rise. According to staff writer Jack Kaskey (2002) of The Press of Atlantic City, Egg Harbor Township, along with the surrounding townships of Galloway and Hamilton, two other regional growth communities, accommodated over 75% of Atlantic County’s new homes in the year 2001. Egg Harbor Township alone received a mandate to build nearly 25,000 new homes in the next few years. Currently there are proposals on the table for several new schools, in addition to multi-million dollar additions to the already existing overcrowded schools.

The United States Census Bureau provided the breakdown of the 31,726 residents who presently live in the township. The last census categorized the racial breakdown of
residents, with the figures showing a total of 70% white, 10% African American, 5% Asian, and 6% Hispanic or Latino. The average household size in Egg Harbor Township is 2.74, while the average family size is 3.23. The median age of the residents is approximately 36 years old.

Homes in Egg Harbor Township range from multi-million dollar mansions to rundown trailers in several of the townships trailer parks. According to the census, the median household income in the township is $52,550, while the per capita income for the township is only $22,323. Over 5% of the people fall below the poverty line.

The rapid increase in population, coupled with the recent state freeze on school aid has hit the taxpayers hard in Egg Harbor Township. The community has traditionally been very supportive of the township’s schools, but the burst in student population has strained the tax wallets to the limit, which resulted in the past year school budget being defeated. As a result of the defeated budget, many valuable school programs were cut, leaving students without after-school activities and sports programs. In addition to cutting some existing programs, limits were placed on hiring much needed additional staff, resulting in increased class size and additional strain on the already existing staff.

With rapid growth has come an increase in the number of businesses developing in Egg Harbor Township. The community contains a large shopping mall, numerous shopping centers, many office complexes, an abundance of local businesses, restaurants from fast food to fine dining, the Federal Aviation Administration Technical Center, the Atlantic City International Airport, and several hotels and motels. U.S. Routes 322 and 40, which merge together to become the Black Horse Pike has become another area that has seen tremendous industrial growth in the past decade, reflective of the booming population. Traffic is at an all-time high, adding to the increasing frustration of long-time residents of the township.
The Egg Harbor Township Council is run by 5 members. According to the township’s website, each committee member is elected in alternating three-year terms. The five members choose a mayor and a deputy mayor from amongst themselves. At present, all five members are of the Republican Party. This Republican control has been holding true for the past few decades in the township.

The Egg Harbor Township Board of Education is a nine-member board with three of the nine spots voted on each year. Board members have had a nearly full time job trying to deal with the rapid growth of the township and the state’s freeze on school aid. Voter turnout was extremely low this year with only 2,175 residents casting a ballot when considering there were over 22,000 residents over the age of 18. The budget was defeated by 163 votes after having passed the previous year by nearly 500 votes. The Board of Education continues to experience frustration in trying to balance the budget in a growing district while still providing the students with the best education possible.

One superintendent and one assistant superintendent run the Egg Harbor Township School District, a comprehensive K-12 district. The district is comprised of eight schools all in various locations throughout the center of the township. The H.R. Swift School, the E.H. Slaybaugh School, and the C.J. Davenport School all house kindergarten through 2nd grades. The Dr. Joyanne D. Miller Elementary School houses over 1,200 3rd and 4th grade students, and the Intermediate School is home to nearly 1,300 5th and 6th graders. The Middle School houses 7th and 8th grades, with the High School housing grades 9 through 12. Finally, the district has an alternative school called The Eagle Academy, for at-risk students from the middle school and the high school.

The Egg Harbor Township School District’s official website stated that the district’s educational goal is “to create a system of education that will offer each and every student the opportunity to excel academically and to enjoy the enrichment activities that are important in developing their total well-being.” The website also stated that the school
district has a vision of “all children being empowered, through a blend of traditional and information technology resources, to accomplish the districts educational goals….lifelong learners will be equipped with the skills to succeed in an information age characterized by constant change.” In the past students have been accustomed to having many opportunities to succeed and enjoy numerous activities, both during and after school, however, the overcrowding and the recent budget defeat has most definitely jeopardized the district’s goals for the future if relief is not found soon.

The Intermediate School is comprised of 110 staff members, including a principal, vice-principal, three guidance counselors, two nurses, and five secretaries.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study enabled the school to evaluate the current Peer Mediation Program and to recognize its strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the results of this study gave the school the ability to determine the effectiveness of the program and to answer the question: Is the Peer Mediation Program helping to provide students with a non-violent method for solving conflict?

Relationship of the Study to the ISLLC Standards

This study addressed the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Committee Standard (ISLLC) #2: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. Further exploration of the standard reveals the necessity for identifying and removing barriers to student learning and assessing the school climate and culture on a regular basis. By evaluating and improving the Peer Mediation Program, students gained the benefit of a bully-free and harassment free environment, thus affording a climate more conducive to learning. Students became empowered with the ability to help solve problems not only for themselves but for their peers as well.
Chapter 2
Review of Literature

Introduction

Elementary school students are under constant pressure to learn, to study, do homework, follow rules, make friends, take responsibility for their actions, and get along with their peers. Factors influencing student learning need to be addressed and controlled as much as possible within the school day to help facilitate students attaining their goals. Teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators need to find ways to help students remove barriers to learning and improve the safe climate of the learning environment. In response to this need, many schools have instituted programs to address areas of concern which might include bullying, harassing, peer pressure, children of divorced parents, drugs, violence, and abuse at home. Schools should be a place where students can feel safe however; the truth of the matter is that many students find themselves in confrontational situations based on student rumors, bullying, harassment, and other forms of getting picked on. Many of these episodes will result in serious, long-term academic, physical, and emotional consequences (Lumsden, 2002). Bullying and harassment can leave scars throughout adulthood, impairing performance and preventing people from achieving their potential (Chase, 2002).

Peer mediation programs exploded in the 1980’s in response to the rise of violence, the sharp increase in serious crime committed by youths, and the increasing awareness of the need for social skills instruction in education. (Gale Research, 1998). The National Association for Mediation in Education (NAME) was formed in 1984 to help prepare and provide resources and materials for schools to begin their own programs. Many schools
rushed to implement programs in middle schools and high schools, but many overlooked the need to start such programs in the elementary school levels. By 1995 there were nearly 5,000 mediation programs reported across the country, most of which were in middle and high schools. (Gale Research, 1998). Crime today is spawning criminals younger and younger; it is not uncommon to find weapons and drug offenses occurring in many elementary schools across the nation. Intervention programs needed to be created for students as early as kindergarten and first grade to help provide them with the skills necessary to resolve conflict as they progress through their school years. Learning to resolve conflict is a skill that can carry on into adulthood and help people deal with situations in their daily lives. A psychologist at the University of Washington studied more than 2,000 married couples over 22 years and determined that the ability to resolve conflict was the single most important factor in whether or not each marriage succeeded. (Casey, 2001). A good peer mediation program should provide students with techniques and skills that can be used to deal with conflicts not only during the school day with other students, but at home with parents, with siblings, and with others involved in their day-to-day lives.

What is Peer Mediation?

Mediation is a process by which a skilled communicator assists the primary parties in directly negotiating a mutually acceptable agreement to their differences. (Katz & Lawyer, 1994). Peer mediation in schools is a method of dealing with student conflict that offers the disputants the opportunity to reach a mutually satisfying outcome aided by a neutral third-party from amongst their peers. (Sellman, 2002). These programs traditionally do not deal with incidences of serious behavior infractions or violent attacks, or any behaviors that would involve drugs or weapons. According to the NAME, five of the most common purposes of a school mediation program are as follows:
1. To increase communication among students, teacher, administrators, and parents.
2. To reduce school violence, vandalism, and suspensions.
3. To encourage children, adolescents, and teens to resolve their own disputes by developing listening, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.
4. To teach peaceful resolution of differences, a skill needed to live in a multicultural world.
5. To motivate students' interest in conflict resolution, justice, and the American legal system, and encourage active citizenship.

A good peer mediation program should involve the entire school and constantly be reinforced with lessons and training for all staff and students. Ideally, teachers should be trained well in advance of implementing any such program, but this is not always possible. Often, teachers receive minimal or no training whatsoever and are merely carrying out requests from the guidance department in relation to following through with the program's objectives. Angaran and Beckwith (1999) recommend several keys to a successful peer mediation program:

1. Start early. The sooner students learn how to refer themselves to mediation to settle disputes, the less they will resort to name-calling and fighting.
2. Teach problem-solving skills to all students.
3. Make mediation part of a comprehensive program.
4. Model mediation skills.
5. Involve the community.

Ideally, students and staff would participate in a school-wide introduction program to the peer mediation process. Possible candidates for mediating would either be from volunteers, or from teacher recommendations. Care must be taken to choose mediator prospects from all facets of the student body to include representatives from each of the various cultures present in the school climate. Often, teachers mistakenly refer only the nicest and the smartest students to the program, thus leaving out a large faction of students who often experience problems. These problem students often prove to be great mediators as they are more experienced at dealing with conflict. (Gale Research, 1999).
Also, it is wise to include students who speak other languages based on the culture climate of the school as many disputes occur simply as a misunderstanding in language nuances. Peer mediation can help to break these language barriers by having the mediators supply language skills that staff may lack. (Angaran & Beckwith, 1999).

**Peer Mediation Process**

Once mediators have been selected and the school population is made aware of the existence of the program, students can be referred to mediation either by themselves or on recommendation from another student, teacher, or administrator. Although mediation processes vary slightly from one school to another, the Gale Encyclopedia of Childhood and Adolescence list the following methods as the most commonly used format:

1. **Introduction** – The mediator introduces him or herself, explains the rules, and tries to make the disputants feel comfortable about discussing the conflict.
2. **Identifying the problem** – The mediator listens to each party, writes down the key elements of the conflict, and helps disputants come up with an “agreed-upon” agenda to include all elements of the dispute.
3. **Identifying Facts and Feelings** – The disputants each tell their side of the story. The goal is to bring out all of the underlying facts and feelings in relationship to the problem. The mediator must ask guiding questions to help clarify and refocus the problem.
4. **Generating Options** – The mediator asks disputants to brainstorm ideas to solve the problem, writes them down and notes those agreeable to both parties. If no solution can be reached, participants back up and repeat the process. Sometimes the mediator must meet with each disputant individually to get the real facts.
5. **Agreement** – The mediator write a contract with the agreed upon solutions and everyone involved in the decision signs the agreement.
6. **Follow-up** – After a period of time, the disputants will report back to the mediator on whether both parties are upholding the contract.

Katz & Lawyer (1994) list the generic process of a mediation process as:

1. **Setting the stage.**
2. **Uninterrupted time.**
3. **Focusing the issues.**
4. **The exchange.**
5. **Generation of potential solutions.**
6. **Agreement building.**
Care should be taken to match mediators with disputants, even going as far as to match gender and race to deal with specific types of conflicts. Angaran and Beckwith describe a scenario in which two students get involved in name-calling at recess. Bilingual mediators found the trouble started a few weeks earlier with a shoving incident in the hallway. One boy explained he didn’t mean to push, but that someone had bumped into him first. The boy he eventually bumped into only spoke Spanish, and the first boy said he could not think how to say “excuse me” in Spanish quick enough for an explanation, so he said nothing. This misunderstanding or lack of communication escalated for a few weeks before mediators stepped in and helped settle the problem merely by interpreting and translating so both boys could relate to each other.

Benefits of a good peer mediation program not only include providing conflict management skills for the mediators and the disputants, but also free up valuable time for teachers and administrators who previously had to take the time to work out many of these student conflicts. One study of a peer mediation program found that students who had participated in a mediation session were much less likely to be referred back to the vice principal than those who had their original dispute handled by traditional methods of discipline. (Casey, 2001). Students at the L.A. Ainger Middle School in Florida started a Peer Mediation program back in 2003 and immediately noticed a reduction in discipline referrals to their dean’s office. By December of the school year, about 80 students were mediated into solving their own conflicts by the 17 eighth-grade mediators on the program. An interesting note with this study was that nearly all the conflicts during the school year had been disagreements between two girls, and most stemmed from conflicts that happened not at school, but over the Internet via instant messaging. (Lonsdale, 2003).

Although there are many benefits for all those involved in a peer mediation program, Katz and Lawyer (1994) outline some of the major benefits. Those include:
1. Privacy and confidentiality for all parties involved.
2. Focus on improving behavior in the future rather than placing blame or punishment on past behaviors.
3. Simple language; peer-to-peer talking in simple terms easily understood by all involved.
4. Creative solutions offered and agreed upon by all participants.
5. Educational benefits by providing practice for good listening skills, effective summarizing, creative problem solving, and agreement writing.
6. Empowering students with the right and responsibility to work their way out of the conflict.
7. Little risk involved to the disputants if they can come to a mutual agreement. Students are more likely to live up to their agreement to avoid disciplinary action by higher authorities.

Conclusion

Everyone will experience conflict, most often on a daily basis. It is inevitable. Conflict is even expected at time, especially as we encourage students to explore their individuality and to think for themselves. Students experience conflict in all facets of their lives; in school, at home with parents, siblings, and in other out-of-school activities. Educators must be able to recognize when situations of conflict arise that go beyond the scope of just fading away and resolving themselves. By providing students with the necessary outlet to help determine resolutions to their conflicts, educators not only save themselves valuable time needed for teaching activities, but empower students with the knowledge to help them avoid similar conflicts in the future and on into their adult lives. Peer mediation programs eventually become a win-win situation for all involved.
Chapter 3
Design of the Study

Description of the Research Design

This study reflects the compilation of data highlighting the responses from students regarding the Peer Mediation Program at the Egg Harbor Township Intermediate School. The study was performed during the 2004-2005 school year through the coordination of the Intermediate School Guidance Department. The use of a survey to obtain student observations and opinions provided the necessary data to determine the overall effectiveness of the current Peer Mediation Program and to provide the basis to make recommendations for any future changes to the program.

Development and Design of the Research Instruments

This study utilized a survey to gain data from students who attend the Egg Harbor Township Intermediate School and participated in the Peer Mediation Program, either as a mediator or as a disputant (see Appendix A.) The survey focused upon obtaining student observations and perceptions of the program as it exists in its present format. The survey instrument’s design was made student friendly so that the students could easily understand and answer the questions anonymously.

Students were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the survey, its process, and the results. They were also told the surveys would be completely anonymous and their names would not be disclosed to anyone at any time.

Description of the Sample

This study was conducted at the Egg Harbor Township Intermediate School, located in a rural area in Atlantic County. Sixth grade students were chosen as a sample based on their participation in the Peer Mediation Program. The 20 students surveyed included 10
disputants and 10 mediators. Of the 10 disputants, 4 were male and 6 were female. Of the 10 mediators, 2 were male and 8 were female. This sample included everyone as of the survey date who had participated in the program and had returned a permission letter from his or her parents. For this reason, the sample could not be gender balanced but reflected responses from 80% of the total students who had participated thus far.

Description of the Data Collection

The surveys were given to the programs participating students shortly after they took part in a mediation process. Before they were issued to the participating students, the surveys were reviewed and explained. After all the surveys were collected from those who had participated in the program, data was recorded and analyzed.

Description of Data Analysis

The data was analyzed by percentages and individual comments from participants to determine the effectiveness of the Peer Mediation Program on the participating students. In addition, data was collected for suggestions to make improvements to the current program.
Chapter 4

Presentation of the Research Findings

The design of this study was developed to analyze the effectiveness of the existing Peer Mediation Program at the Egg Harbor Township Intermediate School. The results of the survey will show areas of success and areas targeted for improvement. In addition, the results identified some specific areas of conflict the students experienced while at the Egg Harbor Township Intermediate School.

The survey was administered to 20 sixth grade students who have taken part in the Peer Mediation Program either as a mediator or as a disputant. Of the 20 students, 50% were disputants and 50% were mediators. Additionally, the gender breakdown shows 20% of the disputants and 40% of the mediators were male, leaving an uneven balance of 80% disputants and 60% mediators female.

Although the study shows only about 3% of the total sixth-grade population participated in this study, the study targeted the entire Peer Mediation Program rather than the entire sixth grade. The 20 participants represent 80% of the total participant number of the Peer Mediation Program as of the survey date.

The findings are presented in 2 separate areas based on the 2 different surveys. Both surveys collected limited background information, questions specifically related to the peer mediation session in which they participated, and participant’s perceptions about components of the overall program and suggestions for improvement.
The disputant survey was designed to discover the disputants’ overall perceptions of the entire process of the Peer Mediation Program specifically related to their experience in at least one session of mediation. Of the 10 disputants surveyed, only 20% had been to more than one peer mediation session. When asked how they came to know about the program, 40% said they learned of it from their guidance counselor, while 60% said they learned of it from either the principal or vice-principal. It is interesting to note here that none of the participants indicated they heard of the program from anyone else in the school. When asked how they came to end up in their peer mediation session, 100% of the disputants indicated they were told they had to go to the session by either the guidance counselor or an administrator.

When asked about how many participants were in the peer mediation session, 70% said their session only had 2 disputants, while 30% indicated they had more than 2 disputants in their session. Sixty percent indicated their session length was between 15-20 minutes, while 40% said their session took longer than 20 minutes. Twenty percent of the participants indicated one or more of the disputants in their session were either shouting or angry during the session, while 80% showed their disputants were acting in a calm manner throughout the session.

When asked about specific reasons for the disputant conflicts, participants were instructed to check all reasons that may have had anything to do with the conflict. Forty percent indicated the conflict was over an incident that occurred either in school or on the school bus. Sixty percent indicated the conflict involved the spreading of rumors, and 60% said their conflict involved some type of bullying or harassment. The disputants were asked to indicate if their conflict was indeed resolved through their peer mediation
session. The answers here indicated that 60% felt their session had reached an agreeable settlement, however, 40% had not.

Several questions were then asked of the disputants as to how they felt about the peer mediators who mediated their session. When asked if the felt the peer mediators were helpful during the session, 20% indicated the mediators were able to help them resolve their conflict very quickly, 40% said the mediators were able to help them work out the problem but it took a good length of time, and 40% felt the mediators were not helpful at all due to the problem being complicated. Next, the students were asked if they felt the mediators had been trained properly to help them resolve their conflict. Twenty percent indicated they felt the peer mediators were trained very well and seemed to know what they were doing and 30% felt the mediators seemed a bit nervous and were having trouble at the beginning of the session. Ten percent indicated they thought the mediators were unsure of what to do but were eventually able to work it out, and 40% indicated they felt the mediators were completely unsure of what to do and as a result the session did not go well.

The final questions for the disputants revolved around their perceptions of the success of the Peer Mediation Program and some suggestions or reasons for areas of concern or improvement. When asked if they felt that peer mediation was a good program and should be continued in the future, 20% indicated the program was very good and should be continued, 20% felt the program was pretty good and should be continued, 20% felt the program had some good points but could use some improvements, 20% thought the program was not very good and should be discontinued, and 20% felt the program was of no use and should definitely be discontinued. When asked to indicate
some reasons for their decisions about continuing the program in the future, students were asked to check off all answers that might apply. Results here showed 30% felt the disputants were uncooperative, 40% said one or more of the disputants wanted the other one to get into trouble, 20% felt adults were needed to help solve the conflict, 80% felt the mediators needed more training, and 60% indicated the Peer Mediation Program needs more publicity in order to be considered successful.

Participants were then asked their feelings about peer mediation programs in general. Responses showed 80% felt that peer mediation programs were a good non-violent way to resolve student conflict, and 60% felt it was a good idea to have peers help solve these conflicts.

When the students were asked to write their own suggestions for any improvements or suggestions for the future of the program, 80% of the disputants wrote similar comments referring to either adult involvement or more publicity for the program. Comments included “adults should help out”, “more students should be told about the program”, “more reminders in homeroom or on school announcements about the program”, “I think only adults should handle problems that involve bullying or harassment”, “more students should go to peer mediation before their conflicts get worse”, “adults should come help out when there is anyone shouting”, “there should be a way to make more students and teachers aware of the program”, “homeroom teachers should be more interested in the program instead of just handing out detentions all the time if people are arguing”, and “more students should be reminded about the program to help them with problem students.” Also, specific references to adult intervention were: “an adult should help out at the beginning of the session so everyone understands the
program without wasting a lot of time having the disputants try to explain the conflict”, and “I think peer mediation is a very good program, but some adults should help and follow up to see if the problem was resolved.” One question asked of the disputants in the survey specifically asked if there was any type of follow-up or check-up made after their session, either by the peer mediators or by someone else. Findings showed 100% of the disputants indicated there was no mention of any follow-up, and 80% of them said they assumed an adult would check with them at some point in the future to make sure they were following the agreement or settlement decided on in the session.

Concerning selection of their mediators, 40% of the disputants made similar comments like: “I think they should choose mediators that do not know any of the disputants”, “I thought it would have been more fair if an adult helped us resolve our conflict, the mediators were not fair”, “there should not be someone’s friends as the mediator, it was unfair”, “make sure that the mediators are not younger than the disputants because that would be bad”, and “I think the mediators took the side of the other disputant against me, it was not fair.” Additional comments included “someone should make sure the mediators are not friends with any of the disputants”, “mediators should not take sides, it’s unfair to the other disputants”, and “mediators should not be allowed to tell other people what happened in the session.” Additionally, 30% of the disputants made comments indicating they felt the other disputant should have received some sort of disciplinary action rather than just going to peer mediation. Comments here included: “I think the other disputant should have gotten punished for what he did to me; he got away with it because he agreed to come to peer mediation” and “a disputant should
not be allowed to just walk out of a session before we are done without getting any punishment."

The peer mediator survey began by asking if they enjoyed their participation in the program as a mediator. Of the respondents, 100% indicated they enjoyed their role as mediator and would continue participation in the program again next year. When asked what their reasons were for participating in the program, the following responses were indicated: 50% said a teacher had influenced them, 80% said their parents had influenced them, 20% said their friends had influenced them, 90% said they did it because they liked to help others, 40% said they did it because they felt it would help them solve their own problems, and 40% said they thought it would look good on their school records. Although there was a place for additional reasons not previously mentioned, none of the respondents indicated other reasons for their participation.

Several questions were designed to discover if the mediators felt as if they had received enough training to mediate successfully. Of these responses, 100% of the participants indicated they had attended the original informational meeting but only 80% indicated they knew what to do after that meeting. Again, 100% indicated they attended the additional training sessions, but only 80% said they felt confident about their mediation skills after the training sessions. Finally, 100% of the mediators felt the video they saw was very helpful in explaining the Peer Mediation Program, and 100% felt the scenarios they participated in for practice mediation were very realistic.

Next, several questions were asked in relationship to the specific sessions that were mediated. Responses here showed 100% of the mediators had mediated at least one session as of the survey date, and all of those sessions included 2 mediators and 2
disputants. A total of 100% of the sessions included disputants who were told to go to mediation rather than the disputants volunteering for the session. Concerning length of the sessions, respondents indicated 80% of the sessions took approximately 15-20 minutes, with 20% of the sessions running longer than 20 minutes. Concerning the demeanor of the participants, 30% of the sessions included disputants who were shouting or angry, with 70% of the disputant sessions showing calm behavior throughout. Mediators indicated 40% thought it was very easy to mediate their session, 30% thought the session was a little complicated but were still able to work it out, and 30% thought the session was difficult because one or more of the disputants were not cooperating.

When asked about reasons for the disputants’ conflict, 100% of the mediators indicated the problem involved something that had started either in school or the bus.

![Bar Chart](chart.png)

Additionally, 100% said the conflict was apparently started by rumors from other students, and 40% said the conflict had something to do with bullying or harassment.

Of the sessions involved, 70% of the mediators indicated the disputants were able to come to an agreement to settle their differences while 30% said they were not able to come to an agreeable solution and finally just gave up and ended the session.
When asked about making arrangements to provide a check-up or follow-up in the future, 100% of the mediators indicated they did not make arrangements for follow-up but assumed that someone else was going to be checking up on the disputants.

The final questions focused on asking the mediators to express their opinions and recommendations for the Peer Mediation Program to continue in the future. They were asked to check off any and all reasons that might apply to their beliefs about the success of the program. Fifty percent of the mediators indicated they feel the program is very good and should definitely be continued in the future, 30% felt the program was pretty good, while 20% felt the program had some good points but could use some improvements for the future. All of the mediators indicated they believed the Peer Mediation Program was a good way for non-violent solutions to people’s conflicts.

When the mediators were asked to indicate areas for improvements, 30% said the disputants did not want any help, were uncooperative, did not get along, and probably would never get along. Other results here showed that 60% of the mediators said their disputants wanted someone to get into trouble and felt some type of adult intervention was needed at some point during the process. Finally, 20% of the mediators felt there should be more training provided for the mediators, and 70% indicated they felt the program needed more exposure or publicity.

When asked to provide their own written suggestions for some areas of concern, 70% mentioned they thought adults should be more involved at some point of the process. These comments included “adults should check in on the session once in a while”, “the sessions really could use more help from an adult when things aren’t going right”, “adults should help out when disputants are uncooperative”, “an adult should help
out at the beginning of the session” and “the adults who recommended they go to peer mediation should do some sort of follow-up to make sure the problem was taken care of.” Eighty percent of the mediators indicated they thought the Peer Mediation Program needed more exposure and publicity, especially from homeroom teachers. Comments included “not enough students know they can come to peer mediation if someone is picking on them or bothering them all the time”, “the Peer Mediation Program really needs more publicity so more people use it”, “more teachers should send more students instead of letting arguments get to the boiling point”, and simply “more students should use peer mediation.”

Similar comments were made by 60% of the mediators concerning the behavior of the disputant and the training of the mediators. Comments included “disputants should not just be able to walk out of a session before a settlement is reached”, “disputants should still get some type of punishment if they don’t cooperate in the session”, “first year peer mediators really could use more practice at this”, and “peer mediators really need more training and more explanations when they first try to mediate a session.”
Chapter 5
Conclusions, Implications and Further Study

This survey was administered to 20 sixth-grade students who had participated in the Egg Harbor Township Intermediate School Peer Mediation Program. It was originally intended that the sample size would be much greater to get a wider array of responses; however, the sample size was determined by the confines of the program and the return of the permission letters given to parents of the participants. As of the date of the survey, only 20 students of the total 25 program participants had returned the parent permission letters indicating their consent to participate in the survey. There was no regard as to the gender or grade of the students involved in the study due again to the fact that the survey had to include all participants as of the survey date.

The results were examined in two specific areas based on the manner in which the students participated in the program. Two separate surveys were prepared and administered over a period of 2 weeks. The peer mediator survey was administered to all students who had participated in at least one session this school year as a mediator. The peer disputant survey was administered to all students who had participated in at least one session this school year as a disputant. Both surveys elicited a small amount of background information, however, this information did not prove to be useful in any way towards the findings of the survey. This is due partly because of the small sample size and the uneven gender breakdown and therefore could not be categorized into any significant findings.
This study was done to determine the overall areas of success or weakness of the current Peer Mediation Program. The disputant survey asked some background information about the session in which the student had participated; how many students were in the session, how long the session took to complete, the reasons why they were in the session, how they came to learn about the Peer Mediation Program, and whether or not their session was thought to be successful. Additionally, the disputants were asked several questions concerning the abilities of the peer mediators and how well they were able to run the session. Finally, the disputants were asked to give any suggestions they might have for improvements to the program.

Of all the disputant participants, it was interesting to note that 100% of them were referred to the session either by their guidance counselor or an administrator. None of the disputants indicated they had prior knowledge of the program. Although the guidance counselors had previously introduced the program to each homeroom class, it was interesting to note that none of the homeroom teachers seemed to be taking advantage of the program to help solve student conflicts. Previous research in this area clearly shows that consistent reinforcement needs to be provided throughout the entire school, especially from the homeroom teachers. It was also interesting to note that none of the disputant participants requested to attend the mediation session on their own. This seems to indicate that although all students were informed of the existence of the program, there was apparently not enough reinforcement throughout the year to constantly remind students of the option of using the program. This finding was of particular concern and will be targeted for future improvements to the program’s success. Previous studies in this area have shown that early intervention into student conflict situations can help avoid
more serious problems in the future, in addition to reducing the amount of referrals to an administrative office.

There did not seem to be any correlation between the number of disputants or mediators per session, the behavior of the disputants in the session, or the length of the session to the overall success of the program in general. If the study included a larger sample size, it might have shown some correlation in these areas but with such a small sample it was difficult to determine any patterns in behavior in these areas.

Concerning the reasons as to why the disputants were experiencing a conflict with another student, it was interesting to note that over half of the disputant conflicts arose from rumors, bullying and/or harassment. This is consistent with prior research in this area. These are behavior problem areas that are normally targeted by character education programs and other similar programs run by the guidance department in our school. The remainder of the student conflicts occurred either in school or on the school bus. None of the disputants indicated that their conflict started somewhere other than school. This finding was a bit of a surprise as some previous studies in this area have shown many student conflicts are started either at home, over the internet, on the phone, or other areas of social gathering for students. One reason for this discrepancy might be due to the fact that the student body of this school is drawn from an extremely large area throughout the township. With such a large area and so many different programs available after school and on weekends, it is probable that the survey participants just do not come in contact with each other except when on the bus or in school.

Another surprise in the findings was in the question as to whether or not the disputants' problems were resolved in their session. Although 60% of the disputants
indicated their problems were resolved, the other 40% of the disputants indicated they were not able to come to an agreeable solution and finally just had to give up. This figure is alarming in the fact that the program's success rate could be determined as only 60% successful, however, consideration should again be given to the small sample size.

Several questions concerning the competency of the mediators were asked of the disputants in regards to their actual mediation session. The findings here correlate directly with the success rate of the peer mediation sessions. When asked if the disputants thought the peer mediators were helpful in the session, 60% said either they were definitely helpful, or they were able to work it out to an agreeable solution. The others indicated they felt the peer mediators were not helpful at all and that their problem was just too complicated to be resolved. When asked if they felt the peer mediators had been trained properly, 40% indicated they felt the mediators were unsure of what to do so the session did not go well. Additionally, 80% of them felt the peer mediators needed more training. Although several training sessions were provided at the onset of the program in October, it might prove beneficial to provide more opportunities for the mediators to be involved in role-playing situations to practice their mediation skills on a regular basis.

One area of the survey, which showed a direct need for improvement, was concerning the absence of follow-up sessions either by the guidance counselor, the administrators, or the homeroom teacher. Surprisingly, 100% of the disputants indicated there was no mention of any follow-up plans by anyone. This seems to be an area that should be addressed for the future success of the program. One could assume that if the same students do not return for another mediation session that their problems are
resolved, however, it might prove to be beneficial to call them back in the future for a follow-up session to be sure their conflict was resolved.

The final questions for the disputants asked them to give some opinions about how they felt about the Peer Mediation Program and whether or not they could provide any suggestions for the future. The responses here were quite mixed, but there was a common thread relating to asking for some adult intervention into the mediation sessions. Although most of the disputants indicated they felt the Peer Mediation Program was a good non-violent way to resolve student conflict, they also indicated they felt that adult intervention was needed at times to help facilitate the success of difficult sessions. Several students commented they felt that only adults should handle these problems, but those same students also indicated they felt the Peer Mediation Program was a success. It was apparent that the results of the survey could have benefited from more specific questions rather than the general areas that were listed here.

The written suggestions provided by the disputants were found to be quite interesting. Many of them offered good suggestions involving making the program more available through announcements and reminders to the student body through the homeroom teachers. It was also indicated that the disputants felt there should be more involvement from the homeroom teachers. This is a good suggestion since the students in this school spend most of their day with their homeroom teacher. Of particular interest was a comment by one disputant who mentioned that the homeroom teachers should refer more students to peer mediation rather than just giving out detentions.

Some disputants felt the Peer Mediation Program was not a complete success because some of the disputants were just uncooperative, or that one or more of the
disputants wanted the other to get into trouble. One important aspect of the Peer Mediation Program is that adults are not involved, and there are no disciplinary actions meted out to any of the participants. This might be an unsatisfactory result to a student who may feel that he was completely in the right with the dispute and would not be satisfied with just an agreement from a peer mediation session. Care must be taken when choosing which incidences get referred to peer mediation and which ones get sent to the administrative office for a more severe punishment. Offending students should not be made to think they could instigate serious problems and then just go to a mediation program to get out of receiving more serious disciplinary actions.

One area of particular interest was concerning the selection of peer mediators for the disputants’ sessions. Previous research has shown the importance of properly matching mediators with disputants based on their backgrounds, language barriers, age, and social status. From the comments on the disputant surveys, it was obvious that this might be an area in need of improvement at this school. Disputant comments here indicated that some of the peer mediators might have been friends with one or more of the disputants in the session or might have given the appearance of taking one side or the other. Other comments indicated the possibility that the mediators might have been younger than the disputants and the disputants saw this as a problem. Although all the disputants in the survey were in the same grade level, additional moderators not in the survey were in the previous grade. It can be assumed that the older students did not feel confident with younger mediators. Another area of concern is in the confidentiality of the discussions in the session. Assuming the participants were all told the sessions were to be held in the strictest confidence is probably asking too much of students at this age
level. Some comments here showed a breach of confidence by indicating that peer mediators should not be able to tell other people what happened in the session. Although this comment was only made by 2 of the disputants, news of this confidentiality breach could destroy the entire program by discouraging others to talk their problems out in front of their peers.

The peer mediator survey began by asking the students if they enjoyed being a peer mediator and if they would continue in the future. An overwhelming 100% indicated they did indeed enjoy being a mediator and most said their parents and the fact that they liked to help others influenced them most.

Concerning their training to become a peer mediator, most of the participants indicated they felt they were adequately trained to handle the sessions. I felt it was important to determine the confidence level of the mediators and if they felt the training sessions were helpful to them. It was good to find they all felt the scenarios they had for practice mediation seemed to be realistic to them. Although most of the mediators were confident about their abilities to mediate a session, some of them indicated their actual session was difficult due to the disputants being uncooperative. This might indicate a need for more practice sessions using more difficult situations as examples.

The peer mediators gave similar responses to the disputants when asked for suggestions for improvements to the program. Again, many of the respondents indicated that although they felt the Peer Mediation Program was a good way to help resolve student conflict, they also indicated they felt some adult intervention was needed at times. Unfortunately having adults involved in any way during the actual sessions would defeat the purpose of having peers help to resolve students' conflicts but it might prove
beneficial to have an adult check in on the session after a short time to reassure the participants they are on the right track. These responses also might show that although the need for complete peer problem solving might work out with older students, it is quite possible that 5th and 6th grade students need an adult to help keep them on track. Several mediators commented on the fact they felt that uncooperative disputants should receive some type of punishment if their conflict cannot be resolved in the session. This might indicate a need for an adult to provide some sort of follow-up to the session.

There seemed to be a strong correlation in the responses of the mediators and the disputant surveys concerning many areas of the survey. This might be a good indicator of the consistency of the program and the results of the sessions even though the sample size was quite small in comparison with the entire student body of the school.

Overall, these surveys clearly show that the Peer Mediation Program has definitely provided some students with a good non-violent way to help resolve some of their conflicts with other students. The importance of continuing the program can be seen in the results, which indicate that most of these student conflicts occur from events happening either in school or on the school bus. With a student body of over 1200 students, it is very easy for rumors to be spread and students to overreact to comments they think others made about them. Hallways are overcrowded, lunchrooms and playgrounds are overcrowded, many of the students are rushed from one class to another, and the school day is packed with one activity after another. All these add up to a very busy and tiring day for the elementary school student and it is easy to see how conflict could arise and how tempers could flare. Providing programs to help students deal with
these problems as they arise will help them not only help them avoid future conflicts, but will also provide them with a safer school environment.

The current Peer Mediation Program has been in operation for approximately 6 years and has been providing many helpful sessions for many students. This is obviously a very important program that helps students resolve their conflicts and should definitely be continued in the future. There is definitely a need for more exposure to the program for the entire student body, as well as for the entire staff in the school. Although surveys were not conducted on staff members in the school, comments made to me during the course of this study indicated many of the staff members did not know of the existence of the Peer Mediation Program. After the surveys were conducted with the students, I noticed an increase in the number of students attending mediation sessions. After informing the administrators and guidance counselors of the results of this study, it was determined there would be a concentrated effort to make the program more visible throughout the school. Steps are now being taken to increase signage, announcements, and provide additional information for homeroom teachers on a more consistent basis. Administrators are also making a more concerted effort to send some of their discipline referrals to mediation rather than just issuing detentions for minor student squabbles. I believe that once students realize that even though they may have managed to get their conflict referred to an administrator in the hopes of getting someone punished, they might still get referred to peer mediation as an alternative to detentions or more severe punishment.

The research conducted in this study will prove to be beneficial to everyone in the Intermediate School, as well as other schools of similar student body size and age. The
guidance department puts a great deal of time and effort into the maintenance and execution of this program and it is important that the rest of the staff be more aware of its existence and know when to use it for conflict resolution. It might be beneficial to provide staff with an in-service to increase awareness and use of the program in the future. In addition to providing students with a non-violent way to help resolve their conflicts, increased use of the Peer Mediation Program will most definitely result in a decrease in more severe disciplinary actions meted out by the administrators. Reducing the number of office write-ups could only serve to benefit the entire school as a whole, while helping to empower students to solve their own problems.

Other findings in this study show school administrators that many of the conflicts students experience originate in school or on the school bus. It might be beneficial to study this area in more depth to see if another program of this type might be able to be used to help reduce conflict in these areas even before it arises. Teachers and students should be made more aware of conflict in its origins to help students avoid reaching their boiling point of explosive behavior.

Throughout the completion of this study, I came to realize the importance of constantly monitoring and evaluating programs in our school. Each year the make-up of our student body changes as over 600 students move out and another 600 students move in, although most of the staff remains constant with the exception of the addition of one or two new teachers each year. Programs like Peer Mediation not only provide ways to resolve conflict for some students, but also provide opportunities for others to emerge as leaders. Another area for future study might include tracking the peer mediators continued participation in the program as they progress through the school system into
the upper grades. Additionally, it might be interesting to track the disputants as they too progress through the school system to determine if the benefits of peer mediation carry with them into the future.

Overall, in combining the results from both the mediators and the disputants, and from comments heard from among students and staff members, I can say the current program is quite successful. Implementing some minor changes in the future will only add to the continued success of the program.
References


Appendix A

Peer Mediation Surveys
Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out this survey. Your answers and suggestions will help future participants have a good experience with our Peer Mediation Program.

Please fill out the survey truthfully.

Please notice there is no place to put your name. This survey is completely anonymous and the information you provide will be confidential and will only be used as data in my survey.

Thank you very much for your time and honesty in completing this important survey.
Background Information

Please circle one: 6th grade female 6th grade male

Please check one: 1st year as mediator 2nd year as mediator

Do you enjoy being a Peer Mediator? Yes No

Do you plan to be a Peer Mediator again next year? Yes No

If you do not plan on being a Peer Mediator again next year, please check all that apply:

____ I do not have time to do it again.

____ I do not really like being a Peer Mediator.

____ My parents do not want me to do it again.

____ I do not like trying to solve other people’s problems.

____ Other reason (please list) ____________________________________________

What are your main reasons for being a Peer Mediator? Please check all that apply.

____ My teacher recommended me.

____ My parents wanted me to do it.

____ My friends wanted me to do it.

____ I like helping others solve their problems.

____ I think it will help me solve my own problems.

____ I think it is something that will look good on my school records.

____ Other reason (please list) ____________________________________________
The following questions all have to do with the explanation and training sessions that were supposed to help you understand what your job as a Peer Mediator would involve.

1. How did you end up becoming a Peer Mediator?
   ____ I volunteered.    ____ I was recommended by someone.

2. Did you attend the first informational meeting in the LGI where the Guidance Counselor explained the program to you?
   ____ Yes, I attended the meeting in the LGI
   ____ No, I did not attend the meeting in the LGI

3. Thinking back to that first meeting in the LGI, did you understand all the information that was presented to you so you knew what being a Peer Mediator would involve?
   ____ Yes, I understood all or most of what I was going to have to do.
   ____ No, I did not completely understand what it would be like.
   ____ I really already knew what it would be like since I did it last year.
   ____ I did not attend the meeting in the LGI.

4. Did you attend any of the Peer Mediation training sessions?
   ____ Yes, I attended all 3 sessions this year.
   ____ Yes, but I could not attend all 3 sessions; I only went to 1 or 2 this year.
   ____ I attended some sessions last year and only had to attend 1 session this year.
   ____ I attended some sessions last year but did not attend any sessions this year.
   ____ I have never attended any training sessions either this year or last year.

5. After you attended one or more of the training sessions, did you understand what you would have to do for your positions as a Peer Mediator?
Yes, I felt I understood what I was supposed to do as a Peer Mediator.

No, I did not completely understand what I was supposed to do as a Peer Mediator.

I did not attend any of the sessions.

6. Did you think the Peer Mediation training video segments were helpful to you?

Yes, I found the video to be helpful.

No, I did not think the video was helpful.

I would have liked to see more videos about Peer Mediation.

I did not see the video.

7. Thinking back to the training sessions you attended and the situations you practiced with a partner, did you think those situations were realistic and might actually occur in our school?

Yes, I thought the practice Peer Mediation sessions were very realistic.

No, I did not think the practice Peer Mediation sessions were very realistic.

I did not attend.

8. After the training and practice sessions, did you feel confident that you would be able to do a good job mediating a session with disputants?

Yes, I felt confident I could manage a Peer Mediation session with disputants.

No, I felt like I needed more information or more practice on how to be in charge of a Peer Mediation session.

I did not attend the sessions, but still felt confident I would be able to do a good job.

9. Have you had the chance to participate in a real Peer Mediation session either this year or last year?

Yes, I have participated in one or more sessions as a Peer Mediator.

No, I have not yet been called to participate in a session as a Peer Mediator.
If you have not yet participated in a session, you are finished with the survey. Please DO NOT answer any additional questions.

If you HAVE participated as a Peer Mediator, please continue on with the rest of the survey.

If you have participated in more than one session as a Peer Mediator, please answer the following questions in relation to just ONE of those sessions.

10. How many Peer Mediators participated in the session (including yourself?)
   ___ I was the only Peer Mediator in the session.
   ___ There were 2 Peer Mediators in the session, including myself.
   ___ There were more than 2 Peer Mediators in the session.

11. How many disputants were in the session?
   ___ There were only 2 disputants in the session.
   ___ There were more than 2 disputants in the session.

12. Did the disputants come to the session voluntarily or were they ordered to go by someone else?
   ___ The disputants asked to go to Peer Mediation on their own.
   ___ The disputants were told they had to go to the session by someone else.
   ___ I don’t really know.

13. Approximately how long did your session take to finish?
   ___ About 5-10 minutes, it went pretty quickly.
   ___ About 15-20 minutes, it took a while to agree to a settlement.
   ___ Longer than 20 minutes, the disputants were either having difficulty explaining their side of the problem, or they were having difficulty coming to an agreement.
14. Did the disputants get loud, angry, or out of hand during the session?

_____ Yes, they were shouting at each other at times and had to be calmed down.

_____ No, they were pretty calm and explained their thoughts when it was their turn.

15. Did you think your job as a Peer Mediator was easy during this session?

_____ Yes, the problem was not too hard and I helped them in no time.

_____ Yes, the problems was a little complicated but I was able to help them work it out.

_____ No, the problem was difficult and one or more of the disputants were not cooperating.

The following questions concern the specific reasons for the problems the disputants were having. Please answer to the best of your knowledge about the problems.

16. Was the conflict with the disputants over something that happened in school?

_____ Yes, they got into some type of argument during school or on the bus.

_____ No, they were having a conflict over something that started somewhere other than school or the bus. (For example, home, over the internet, on the phone, at a game, at the mall, etc.)

17. In your opinion, was the conflict with the disputants something that was started by rumors spread by other people?

_____ Yes, the conflict was apparently started by rumors from other students.

_____ No, the conflict was strictly between the disputants.

_____ I really don’t know how it started.

18. In your opinion, did the conflict between the disputants involve one or more of them being bullied or harassed by the other(s)?

_____ Yes, one or more of the disputants claimed he/she was being bullied, picked on, or harassed by the other(s).

_____ No, there was no bullying or harassing involved in the dispute.
19. Did the disputants finally come to an agreeable solution to their problem?

____ Yes, they both or all agreed to the settlement and agreed to abide by the decisions made in the session.

____ No, they were not able to come to an agreeable solution to their problem and we finally all just gave up and ended the session.

20. Did you make plans for a follow-up or check-up on your disputants to see if they were getting along or abiding by the decisions made in the session?

____ Yes, we made plans to check back with the disputants to see how they were doing.

____ No, we did not make any plans to check back with the disputants.

____ I assumed the Guidance Counselor, Vice-Principal, or Homeroom Teacher was going to check back with the disputants to see if they were getting along after the session.

The last few questions have to do with your opinion of the Peer Mediation program and any recommendations you may have to improve the program in the future. Please try to provide some suggestions for improvement if possible.

21. Do you feel the Peer Mediation program at the Egg Harbor Township Intermediate School is a good program and should be continued in the future? Please read through ALL the answers and choose the one that BEST fits your opinion about the program.

____ Yes, I think the program is very good and should definitely be continued in the future.

____ Yes, I think the program is pretty good and should be continued in the future.

____ Yes, I think the program has some good points, but could use some improvements for the future.

____ No, I think the program is not really very good and should be discontinued.

____ No, I think the program is of no use at all and should definitely be discontinued.
22. If you think the Peer Mediation program is NOT a good program, OR, if you think it is a good program but could use some improvements, please check off ALL answers that might apply to your reasons:

_____ The disputants did not seem to want help from other students.

_____ The disputants just do not get along and the program is never going to help them resolve their conflicts.

_____ The disputants were uncooperative and thought the Peer Mediation session was a joke.

_____ One or more of the disputants did not want to be in Peer Mediation because they would have rather had the problem dealt with in the office so the other person could get into trouble.

_____ I do not think other students should be trying to solve problems for students; I believe all the problems should be handled by adults.

_____ I think the Peer Mediators really should have more training sessions and practice so they can be more successful at being Peer Mediators.

_____ I do not think enough people know about the program.

23. Do you think the Peer Mediation program is helping to provide some students with a non-violent way for them to solve their conflicts?

_____ Yes, I think the disputants now realize it is better to talk their problems out with someone else who can help them to get along.

_____ No, I do not think the disputants learned from the Peer Mediation session and feel they will probably go back to their conflict at some time in the future.

24. Please take a moment to write down any of your own suggestions you may have that would help us to improve the program in the future for our school and our students.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Thank you very much for completing the Peer Mediation survey. Remember, your answers are confidential and will only be used as data in my research paper.
PEER MEDIATION DISPUTANTS

Background Information

Please circle one: 6th grade female  6th grade male

Please check one: 1st time disputant  2nd or more time as disputant

How did you learn about the Peer Mediation program?
- I learned about it through a Guidance Counselor talking to my class.
- I heard about it from other students.
- I heard about it from my homeroom teacher.
- I heard about it from the Principal or Vice-Principal.
- I only learned about when I was told to go to a session.
- Other (please list what): ____________________________

If you have been in more than one session as a disputant, please answer the following questions in relation to just ONE of those sessions.

1. How many disputants participated in your session (including yourself?)
- There were only 2 disputants in my session.
- There were more than 2 disputants in my session.

2. Did the disputants come to the session voluntarily or were they ordered to go by someone else?
- One or all of us (the disputants) asked to go to Peer Mediation on our own.
- One or all of us (the disputants) were told we had to go to the session by someone else.

3. Approximately how long did your session take to finish?
- About 5-10 minutes, it went pretty quickly.
- About 15-20 minutes, it took a while to agree to a settlement.
- Longer than 20 minutes, we (the disputants) were either having difficulty explaining our side of the problem, or we were having a problem coming to an agreement.

4. Did any or all of the disputants get loud, angry, or out of hand during the session?
- Yes, some or all of us were shouting at each other and at times had to be calmed down.
- No, we were all pretty calm and just explained our thoughts when it was our turn.
5. Did you think the Peer Mediators were being helpful during the session?
   _____ Yes, the problem was not too hard and they helped us in no time.
   _____ Yes, they problems were a bit complicated but the Peer Mediators were able to help us work it out after a while.
   _____ No, our problem was complicated and the Peer Mediators really were not helping us come to an agreement.

6. Did it appear to you that the Peer Mediators had been trained properly to help you solve your problems?
   _____ Yes, they really seemed to know what they were doing.
   _____ Yes, but they seemed a little nervous and were having trouble helping us at first.
   _____ No, they were unsure of what to do but eventually we all worked it out.
   _____ No, they were unsure of what to do and the session did not go well at all.

7. After the session was over, did the Peer Mediators tell you they would check up on you in the near future to see if you were getting along better?
   _____ Yes, they made plans to check back with us (the disputants) to see how we were doing.
   _____ No, they did not make any plans to check back with us.
   _____ I assumed that the Guidance Counselor, the Vice-Principal, or my Homeroom Teacher would check up on us in the near future.

The following questions concern the specific reasons for the problems the disputants were having. Please answer to the best of your knowledge about the problems.

8. Was the conflict with the disputants over something that happened in school?
   _____ Yes, we got into some type of argument during school or on the bus.
   _____ No, we got into a conflict over something that started somewhere other than school or the bus (for example: home, over the internet, on the phone, at a game, at the mall, etc.)

9. Was the conflict with the disputants something that was started by rumors from others?
   _____ Yes, the conflict was started by rumors from other students.
   _____ No, the conflict had nothing to do with rumors and was just between the disputants
   _____ I don’t remember how it started.
10. Did the conflict between the disputants involve one or more of you being bullied or harassed by the other(s)?

[ ] Yes, either me or one of the other disputants claimed we were being bullied, picked on, or harassed by one or more of the others.

[ ] No, there was no bullying or harassing involved in the dispute.

11. Did all the disputants finally come to an agreeable solution to the problem?

[ ] Yes, we all agreed to a settlement and agreed to abide by the decisions made in the session.

[ ] No, we were not able to come to an agreeable solution to our problems and we finally just gave up and ended the session.

The last few questions have to do with your opinion of the Peer Mediation program and any recommendations you may have to improve the program in the future. Please try to provide some suggestions for improvement if possible.

12. Do you feel the Peer Mediation program at the Egg Harbor Township Intermediate School is a good program and should be continued in the future? Please read through ALL the answers and choose the one that BEST fits your opinion about the program.

[ ] Yes, I think the program is very good and should definitely be continued in the future.

[ ] Yes, I think the program is pretty good and should be continued in the future.

[ ] Yes, I think the program has some good points but could use some improvements.

[ ] No, I think the program is not really very good and should be discontinued.

[ ] No, I think the program is of no use at all and should definitely be discontinued.

13. If you think this is NOT a good program, OR, if you think it IS a good program but could use some improvements, please check off ALL answers that might apply to your reasons:

[ ] One or more of the disputants did not want help from other students.

[ ] One or more of the disputants just do not get along and the program is never going to help us to resolve our conflicts.
One or more of the disputants were uncooperative and thought the Peer Mediation session was a joke.

One or more of the disputants did not want to be in Peer Mediation because they would have rather had the problem dealt with in the office so someone could get into trouble.

I do not think other students should be trying to solve my problems; I believe all student problems should be handled by adults.

I think the Peer Mediators really should have more training sessions and practice so they could be more successful at being Peer Mediators and do a better job.

I do not think enough people know about the program.

14. Do you think the Peer Mediation program is helping to provide some students with a non-violent way for them to solve their conflicts?

Yes, I think the disputants now realize it is better to talk out our problems with someone else who can help us to get along.

No, I do not think the disputants learned from the Peer Mediation session and I feel we will probably go back to our conflicts at some time in the future.

15. How do you feel about other students (peers) trying to help settle problems among disputants?

I think it’s a good idea to have students helping students.

I think it’s a bad idea to have students try to settle disputes with other students because I think all the conflicts should be handled by the adults in the building (teachers, guidance counselors, vice-principals, principals).

16. Please take a moment to write down any of your own suggestions you may have that would help us to improve the program in the future for our school and our students.

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

Thank you very much for completing the Peer Mediation survey. Remember, your answers are confidential and will only be used as data in my research paper.