

CRESST News

For Heads,
teachers and
support staff

For everyone
interested in
social
transformation

Autumn 2008

Conflict Resolution Education in Sheffield Schools Training

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Fall outs between girls need to be taken seriously

Jade and Sarah were good friends and spent hours playing, growing up together and sharing their secrets until they fell out in Y6. They can't be sure what the fall out was about now but the conflict escalated beyond reason and both they and their family and friends suffered for the next four years.

Both girls found themselves subjected to violent attacks, threats and intimidation, vicious rumours and periods of isolation. The girls and their mothers became ill with depression and anxiety. The fathers felt well out of their depth, confused and angry. Their friends felt drawn in to situations that left them upset, confused and frightened and annoyed that they were often accused of fanning the flames. A lot of time was lost from school and work and grades suffered.

As the conflict reached its height in Y8 teachers, student support staff and senior management spent hours trying to solve the problems. Neither girl could be identified as "the bully" and punished with exclusion. The court threw out a case of alleged assault. Both parties felt victimised.

Girls are often accused of using emotional tactics when they fall out such as ignoring, hard staring, revealing secrets and name calling. Text bullying is far more prevalent in girls than boys. Girls are more likely to send texts calling nasty names and "bitching" about family, friendships, looks and style.

Liz Carnell, director of the charity Bullying UK says that girls and boys tend to bully in different ways from a very young age. "Girls use social means: they take someone's friends away"

Val Besay, consultant educational psychologist, calls for urgent action to stamp out female bullying in her book, "Challenging Girls".

"Boys have a hierarchy based on physical power, girls have a hierarchy based on friendship. It is about who is 'Little Miss Popular'. Emotional scars can be harder to heal than physical hurts."

There may be a natural tendency amongst girls to use emotional weapons against their perceived enemy but this doesn't excuse parents and teachers from intervening at an early stage. The longer things are left the harder it is to bring about a reconciliation, as illustrated in the true and not uncommon story of Jade and Sarah. Far better to be proactive, especially in the primary school years and channel emotional intelligence into positive and successful leadership. More girls than boys volunteer to become peer mediators where a caring and kindly tendency can be developed and recognised. Peer Mediation schemes give young people a precious sense of respect for self and others. Peer mediators are taught the skills of empathy and problem solving and they encourage others to use these skills, which can only help to reduce "bitchy bullying".

With the help of CRESST Jade and Sarah (not their real names) went through a long but successful mediation and both girls stayed at school to do their GCSEs. The school is reviewing its approach to conflict.

Your questions answered – peer mediation a Y6 perspective

Hunters Bar Junior School has been running a peer mediation service for two years. This year they introduced an extra element to their training. The leaving Y6 group answered the questions of the newly trained peer mediators, and gave an overview of their year.

Here are some of the questions the Y5's asked us after their training



Q: What if you don't get your mediation finished by the end of playtime?

A: You can carry on next break or the next day.

Q: What if one person wants mediation but the other doesn't?

A: You can't force anyone to have mediation, but you can persuade them.

Q: What if the mediation doesn't work?

A: Mediations don't always work, sometimes it's best to agree to disagree.

This year we had great success being Peer Mediators, and we all hope next year will be as successful. We would like to tell you all about the job and try to encourage others to take it up.

When we started training we were all excited and nervous knowing we were going to be Peer Mediators. The training paid off and all of us enjoyed it. We have used the training to help with our own problems and situations we get into and we hope we can carry on in secondary school and use the skills for the rest of our lives. We can admit that at the beginning of the year we needed lots of advice.

Being a Peer Mediator makes you feel important and you feel really good when the mediation goes right and you gain the trust of the disputants. You are recognised by staff and seen as a better person to them. It has been good working in pairs and has given us chance to get to know other people on duty as well as people in other year groups. When we are not on duty talking to the people we have mediated has helped keep our trust and help them continue to solve their problems. As a Mediator you feel much more grown up and important as you are sorting problems and are talked to like an adult. We have learnt how to listen really well and people have opened up to us. We feel proud for helping friends and setting examples to younger children. Friends are now sorting out their own problems, so now we don't get as many arguments and that's what we were after.

Below are some vital pieces of advice:

- ❖ Always keep calm. If you get stressed or frustrated the disputants will probably get stressed too.
- ❖ Don't take sides. Even if you know one of the disputants.
- ❖ Never force anyone into mediation
- ❖ Never gossip at the mediation. It will give you a bad reputation.
- ❖ Never tell the disputant off. They will feel intimidated and not want to come back.
- ❖ Always carry a pen and paper with you when you are on duty
- ❖ Always be ready for an unexpected mediation. You will be thanked, and importantly may be asked to do more in the future

Although it may seem like fun being a Peer Mediator can have some down points like when mediation goes wrong and the disputants get angry with each other, or when you can't gain their trust and they won't tell you properly about the incident.

Anston Park Junior School take on a whole school approach



Headteacher, Jo Leishman at Anston Park Junior School has committed to a whole school approach to conflict resolution and was very proud of her first cohort of Peer Mediators who were well supported by PSHE coordinator Pam Hosie.

Pam says "[the peer mediators] are working really well and the rest of the children have coined a new phrase they now tell us: 'It's OK I've been mediated'"

Mundella Primary School introduce peer mediation

Mundella gave their Y5 pupils the ten hour Conflict Resolution Programme of Study and then chose 15 pupils to train as peer mediators.

"The Peer Mediation training is excellent. I am extremely impressed with the children's attitude and I am sure this will be an enormous help in sorting out difficulties in the playground. The idea is marvellous and I am extremely glad Mundella has decided to take this on board." Parent Governor Jackie Allisai-Skinner



"The mediation training has taught me that I am better at people skills than I thought" Meg

"I found it really fun doing the training and I have learned lots of life skills and how to be a good mediator. I am excited about starting next term and having more responsibility. The things I have learnt most is that feelings are very important and how to feel what other people are feeling." Chloe

CRESST is dedicated to helping children and young people learn conflict resolution skills that can be used in their schools and communities. Please get in touch if you would like your school or youth organisation to know more about conflict resolution.
0114 2412745 admin@cresst.org.uk

Dates for your Diary

An Introduction to Conflict Resolution

This one day course explores the nature of conflict, the key skills of self expression, empathy, cooperation, problem solving and mediation (including peer mediation). For Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools, Learning Mentors, PSHE/Citizenship co-ordinators, Behaviour Support staff, **all** adults that work with children and young people.

The day will address conflict resolution awareness, develop the skills needed to successfully manage your own conflict and also provide ideas and activities to educate and support young people.

Dates: 1st October 2008 & 4th February 2009 (9.15am – 4.00pm)

Venue: Scotia Works, Leadmill Road (near the train station)

Cost: £50

Contact the CRESST office telephone 0114 2412745 or email admin@cresst.org.uk

8th October 2008 Junior Peer Mediators' Conference

Quaker Meeting House, Sheffield.

Book your places now call the CRESST office 0114 241 2745

21st September International Day of Peace

Secretary-General Kofi Annan has asked all United Nations departments and agencies to expand their observance, extending a special invitation to civil society and highlighting the Minute of Silence at 12 noon. For complete information about the International Day of Peace, please visit: <http://www.internationaldayofpeace.org>

17th November World Peace Day and the start of Anti-bullying week

This year's theme is "Being different, belonging together"

"The only way to real peace is through negotiation and resolving the issues that created the problems" World Peace Day Organisation

For more information about world peace day visit <http://www.peaceday.org/>

Book Review for The Great Paper Caper

by Oliver Jeffers, published this month (September) by HarperCollins £11.99

There's a wood thief at work in the forest. Trees are felled and disappear overnight. A group of forest animals and a child start to accuse each other, but they soon realise that all six of them have alibis. So they launch an investigation and cooperate in looking for clues and solving the mystery. The story moves towards an upbeat conclusion in which a suspect is interrogated and brought to the forest court where he confesses and agrees to make amends.



Droll illustrations amplify the spare text with understated humour and, without being didactic, the narrative raises environmental issues as well as showing the value of cooperation. Removal of the novelty dust-jacket reveals a surprise project which reinforces themes in the story. The book is fun to read and discuss, thought provoking and highly recommended for Infants and Juniors! Copies of the book are available to readers of the CRESST Newsletter at the reduced price of £9.99 from Rhyme & Reason Booksellers at Hunters Bar.
(reviewed by Richard Welsh)