

## **STUDENTS**

### **SUBJECT: Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation**

To promote student safety and contribute to the maintenance of a positive school climate, the County Board of Education and County Superintendent of Schools encourage the development of school-based conflict resolution programs designed to help students learn constructive ways of handling conflict. The Board and Superintendent believe that such programs can reduce violence and promote communication, personal responsibility and problem-solving skills among students.

Conflict resolution strategies shall be considered as part of each school's comprehensive safety plan and incorporated into other County Office of Education discipline procedures as appropriate. Conflict resolution programs shall not supplant the authority of staff to take appropriate action as necessary to prevent violence, ensure student safety, maintain order in the school, and institute disciplinary measures.

(cf. 0450 - Comprehensive Safety Plan)

(cf. 5144 - Discipline)

(cf. 5144.1 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process)

(cf. 5144.2 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process (Students with Disabilities))

Schoolwide programs may include curriculum in conflict resolution, including, but not limited to, instruction in effective communication and listening, critical thinking, problem-solving processes and the use of negotiation to find mutually acceptable solutions. In addition, the curriculum may address students' ethical and social development, respect for diversity, and interpersonal and behavioral skills.

Conflict resolution programs may incorporate peer mediation strategies in which selected students are specially trained to work with their peers in resolving conflicts.

Students' participation in any peer mediation program shall be voluntary and kept confidential by all parties involved.

(cf. 4119.23/4219.23/4319.23 - Unauthorized Release of Confidential/Privileged Information)

(cf. 5125 - Student Records)

In developing a conflict resolution and/or peer mediation program, school-site teams shall address, as appropriate:

1. The grade levels and courses in which the conflict resolution curriculum shall be delivered

(cf. 6143 - Courses of Study)

2. Staff development related to the implementation of the curriculum and modeling of appropriate behaviors and communication skills

(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)

3. The selection of peer mediators involving, to the extent possible, a cross-section of students in terms of grade, gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, and including some students who exhibit negative leadership among peers

4. Training and support for peer mediators, including training in mediation processes and in the skills related to understanding conflict, communicating effectively and listening

5. The process for identifying and referring students to the peer mediation program

6. The types of conflicts suitable for peer mediation

(cf. 5131 - Conduct)

(cf. 5131.1 - Bus Conduct)

(cf. 5131.4 - Campus Disturbances)

(cf. 5136 - Gangs)

(cf. 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment)

(cf. 5145.7 - Sexual Harassment)

7. Scheduling and location of peer mediation sessions

8. Methods of obtaining and recording agreement from all disputants

9. The appropriate involvement of parents/guardians, the community and staff, including counseling/guidance and security staff

(cf. 1400 - Relations Between Other Governmental Agencies and the Schools)

(cf. 6020 - Parent Involvement)

10. Communications to students, parents/guardians and staff regarding the availability of the program

11. Methods of following up with students to determine the effectiveness of the process

12. Development of assessment tools to periodically evaluate the success of the program including, but not limited to, measurements of whether there has been a reduction

in violence at the school and whether the school's suspension rates have fallen since the program has been introduced

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

32230-32239 School violence reduction programs

32295.5 Teen court programs

35291-35291.5 Rules

35294-35294.9 School safety plans

44807 Duty concerning conduct of students

CALIFORNIA CONSTITUTION

Article 1, Section 28(c) Right to safe schools

Management Resources:

CSBA PUBLICATIONS

Protecting Our Children: Governing Board Strategies to Combat School Violence, revised 1999

CDE PUBLICATIONS

Safe Schools: A Planning Guide for Action, 1995

USDE PUBLICATONS

Creating Safe and Drug-Free Schools: An Action Guide, 1996

WEB SITES

U.S. Department of Education, Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program:  
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/>

California Department of Education, Safe Schools and Violence Prevention Office:  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/safety/>