Public Advocate for the City of New York

Conflict Unresolved:
DOE Fails to Recognize What Works in School Safety and Student Achievement

A REPORT BY PUBLIC ADVOCATE BETSY GOTBAUM
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Executive Summary

By failing to support and effectively implement conflict resolution and social/emotional programming, the DOE undermines its own efforts to improve student achievement. Studies demonstrate that conflict resolution programs successfully teach children to act cooperatively and express themselves non-violently, which, in turn, leads to safer schools and a classroom environment more conducive to teaching and learning.

To better evaluate the degree of institutional support for conflict resolution and social/emotional programming in New York City schools, the Office of the Public Advocate and the National Center for Schools and Communities (NCSC) at Fordham University surveyed non-profit providers of this programming about their contribution to city public schools; the effect of DOE school safety and discipline policies on the services they provide; and their overall experiences working in New York City public schools. The survey resulted in the following findings:

- 85 percent of providers of conflict resolution and social/emotional programming in middle schools do not agree that DOE school discipline policies adequately address the social/emotional needs of the students;
- 85 percent of providers to middle schools do not agree that DOE school safety policies effectively address the root causes of violence and disruptive behavior.
- 86 percent of providers to high schools do not agree that the current DOE school discipline policies are sustainable in promoting long-term results in dealing with violent and disruptive students.

This report offers the following recommendations, among others, to improve the provision of conflict resolution and social/emotional programming in New York City schools and thereby improve student safety and achievement:

- Create a central Conflict Resolution and Social/Emotional Programs Office
- Establish a Conflict Advisor/Counselor Position in Select Schools
- Establish a School Safety Planning Committee

This report was prompted by the findings of a February 2007 Public Advocate report entitled "Between Policy and Reality: School Administrators Critical of Department of Education School Safety Policy." The findings of the report, which were based on a survey of school administrators, suggest that the DOE is not doing enough to ensure that conflict resolution training and services are supported in city schools.

Part I

Introduction

In February 2007, Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum released a report entitled "Between Policy and Reality: School Administrators Critical of Department of Education School Safety Policy." The findings of the report, which were based on a survey of school administrators, suggest that the DOE is not doing enough to ensure that conflict resolution training and services are supported in city schools. This despite the fact that the DOE's own Citywide Standards of Discipline and Intervention Measures state that "[a]dministrators, teachers, counselors, and other school staff are expected to engage with students, including students with disabilities, in intervention and prevention strategies that address the student's behavioral issues…and family circumstances" and specifically call for "social/emotional learning, such as conflict resolution/mediation/negotiation."[1]

Studies demonstrate that conflict resolution programs successfully teach children to act cooperatively and express themselves non-violently, which, in turn, leads to safer schools and a classroom environment more conducive to teaching and learning. By failing to support and effectively implement conflict resolution and social/emotional programming, the DOE undermines its own efforts to improve student achievement.

The vast majority of providers of conflict resolution and social/emotional programming are non-profit organizations, including settlement houses, organizations affiliated with a college or university, and youth development/leadership organizations. In New York City, these organizations work in public schools from kindergarten to twelfth grade, and in off-site locations such as community centers and juvenile detention centers. The services provided take place during the school day, after-school, and over the weekend or during school vacations.

The organizations provide a range of services, and many will tailor their programs to specific schools and age levels. The degree of involvement in the schools also varies, as some providers require that the entire staff of the school commit to implementing the program. The intervention components of the programs involve elements of peer mediation, and one-on-one, group and family counseling. The preventive components generally seek to empower students to create their own safe environment, recognizing that adults and security cameras cannot always be there to ensure safety. These programs teach students—through direct instruction, integrated curricula, and a wide variety of creative programming, such as problem-solving games and workshops—the skills to resolve conflict non-violently, think critically, and challenge bias.

To better evaluate the degree of institutional support for conflict resolution and social/emotional programming in New York City schools, the Office of the Public Advocate and the National Center for Schools and Communities (NCSC) at Fordham University surveyed non-profit providers of this programming about their contribution to

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[1] New York City Department of Education (DOE), "Citywide Standards of Discipline and Intervention Measures [The Discipline Code]" (2006-07), pg. 2.

city public schools; the effect of DOE school safety and discipline policies on the services they provide; and their overall experiences working in New York City public schools. Part II provides background concerning conflict resolution and social/emotional programming; a brief review of the extant literature on the subject, documenting findings from quantitative studies of such programming; and a case study of one the largest and longest-running providers of conflict resolution and social/emotional programming in New York City. Part III describes the methodology used in the survey for this report and presents and discusses the findings from the survey. Part IV provides a concluding statement and recommendations.

Part II

Background

The roots of conflict resolution and social/emotional programming in schools can be linked to four primary groups: researchers studying dispute resolution in the business sector, non-violence activists, members of the legal profession, and educators.[2] In the 1960s, supportive research on the benefits of dispute resolution in the business sector led to the creation of similar programs for schools. In the 1970s, Quakers in New York City opposed to the Vietnam War developed a conflict resolution program for schools titled Children's Creative Response to Conflict. In 1980, President Carter enlisted teams of lawyers to develop conflict resolution curricula for schools and allocated funding for Neighborhood Justice Centers. In 1985, educators in New York City formed a group known as Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) and developed the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP).[3]

Shortly after the creation of RCCP, the New York City Board of Education (BOE) established a central office called the BOE Office for RCCP. The office was in place for seventeen years until former Chancellor Harold Levy closed the office in the final days of his tenure as a cost-saving measure. With the arrival of Chancellor Joel Klein, there was hope among the supporters of RCCP that the office would be restored and a centralized commitment to conflict resolution would be renewed.

However, when the new DOE unveiled its school safety initiative, Operation Safe School or *SchoolSafe,* on November 25, 2002, it became evident that conflict resolution programming would be used as a way of punishing disciplinary infractions rather than preventing them as intended. The DOE's discipline code manual, City Standards of Discipline and Intervention Measures, enumerates a range of possible intervention strategies including referral to the Pupil Personnel Team (school counselor), intervention by counseling staff, individual/group counseling, conflict resolution, peer mediation, community service, guidance conferences, mentoring programs, and referral to substance

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[2] Johnson D.W. & Johnson R.T., "Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation Programs in Elementary and Secondary Schools: A Review of the Research," *Review of Educational Research,* Winter 1996, Vol. 66, No. 4, pgs. 459-506.
[3] *Ibid*.

abuse counseling services.[4] But these strategies are offered as *possible disciplinary responses to* student infractions, rather than preventive measures.

The DOE appears to have subordinated conflict resolution and social/emotional programming to a get-tough policy. But this approach does not account for the complexity of school conflict[5] and has produced mixed results, at best. In April 2006, the DOE announced that, since the 2003-2004 school year, major crime in schools citywide had dropped 12 percent, violent crime 27 percent, and total crime 7 percent.[6]
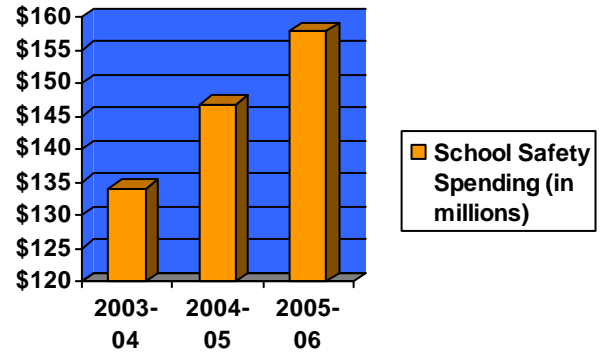
These successes, however, were short-lived. The Mayor's office has recently released school safety data that shows a spike in school crime,[7] calling into question the effectiveness and sustainability of DOE school safety policies.
Over the last three years the DOE has increased its school safety budget by more than $20 million.[8] Despite the substantial increases in school safety spending, the most recent school safety statistics show a 21 percent increase in school crime.[9] Additionally, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) keeps a running record of school safety incidents, which often shows a greater number of incidents than reported by the DOE and is a source of contention between teachers and the DOE.[10]

The Dignity for All Students Act and Children's Mental Health Act

In recent years, two important pieces of legislation have been enacted in an effort to improve the culture and safety of schools and thus better sustain safe school environments. Both pieces of legislation signify an increased awareness on the part of elected officials and the general public of the importance of conflict resolution and social/emotional programming in dealing with day-to-day conflict in the learning environment. The Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) was enacted by the New York City Council in 2004 in response to what appeared to be a growing problem of harassment and bullying in New York City public schools.[11] DASA requires the DOE to

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[4] *See* 1.

[5] Burstyn, J.N., et al., Preventing Violence in Schools: A Challenge to American Democracy, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers: 2001.

[6] DOE, *Mayor Bloomberg, Schools Chancellor Klein and Police Commissioner Kelly Announce a New School Safety Initiative Amid Significant Declines In Crime In City Impact Schools ,* http://schools.nyc.gov/Administration/mediarelations/PressReleases/2005-2006/04132006pressrelease.htm.

[7] Mayor's Office of Operations, Preliminary Mayor's Management Report (PMMR), January 2007.

[8] DOE, Annual Financial Statements for fiscal years ending June 30, 2004 and 2006.

[9] *Ibid*. Difference in four-month actuals for FY06 and FY07.

[10] United Federation of Teachers, "Klein Echoes Union's Plea to Document Every Incident," *New York City Teacher*, September 21, 2006.

[11] New York City Council, Committee on Education, Briefing Paper for Proposed Introduction 188-a, "The Dignity for All Students Act," April 24, 2004.

train pedagogical staff and school safety officers to prevent harassment and bullying and establish an appropriate reporting mechanism for incidents of harassment and bullying.[12]

The City Council held two hearings on DASA at which parents, teachers, advocates, and members of the community testified that the DOE had shown itself to be unable to stop harassment and bullying from eroding the quality of education in their schools. Experts testified that extensive exposure to harassment can create serious socialization and self-esteem issues for students, causing them to skip school, perform poorly academically, and even drop out.[13] On June 28, 2004, the City Council passed DASA. Two months later, Mayor Bloomberg vetoed the bill. On September 8, 2004, the Council overrode his veto.

Last summer, Governor Pataki signed into law the Children's Mental Health Act of 2006,[14] which requires the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to promulgate regulations for incorporating social/emotional standards and programs into elementary and high schools in every school district in the state. Unfortunately, the legislation makes school district compliance with the law voluntary. It is encouraging, however, that the state recognizes the need for conflict resolution and social/emotional programs.

Literature Review

Through conflict resolution and social/emotional programming, students and educators gain the competencies to recognize and manage conflict and emotions, develop caring and concern for others, make good decisions, develop positive relationships, effectively handle challenging situations, and behave responsibly and ethically.[15] In addition to all these desirable outcomes, conflict resolution and social/emotional programming have been demonstrated to improve student achievement. The following is a brief synopsis of the research on such programming:

In 1999, the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University released a report, "Changing Children's Trajectory of Development," documenting the results of a two-year study of the RCCP program in New York City public schools. The findings of this report show that the RCCP can significantly reduce the degree to which students rely on hostile and aggressive problem-solving strategies. The study was an experimental design where students with similar backgrounds were sorted into three categories: full exposure to RCCP, partially exposed, and no exposure. Teachers reported consistently better

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[12] New York City Local Law 42 of 2004, (DASA).

[13] New York City Council, Committee on Education, Briefing Paper on Dignity for All Students Act, April 5, 2005.

[14] New York State S.B. 6672, known as the Children's Mental Health Act of 2006.

[15] Weissberg, R.P., "Social and Emotional Learning for School and Life Success," *The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL),* August 20, 2005.

behavior among children exposed to RCCP lessons. Additionally, students who had more exposure to RCCP lessons did better in math.[16]

In 2005, psychologists Joseph Durlak and Roger Weissberg et al. conducted the largest meta-analysis[17] to date of studies evaluating conflict resolution and social/emotional programming and discovered that such programming improves school attitudes, school behavior, and school performance. The results of their analysis are as follows:

School Attitudes
Students involved in conflict resolution and social/emotional programming have a stronger sense of community, higher academic motivation and educational aspirations, better understanding of consequences of their behavior, and better ability to cope with school stressors.

School Behavior
Students involved in conflict resolution and social/emotional programming participate in class more frequently, demonstrate more pro-social behavior, have improved attendance, show reductions in aggression and disruption, and are less likely to drop out of school.

School Performance
Students involved in conflict resolution and social/emotional programming demonstrate improved math, literacy, and social studies skills; higher achievement test scores and grades; improved learning skills; better problem-solving ability; use of higher reasoning strategies; and improvements in reading comprehension. Students who participated in conflict resolution and social/emotional programming, compared with matched peers who did not participate, showed improved grade point averages and ranked 12 percentile points higher on academic achievement tests.

Outcomes	Post Test Effect Size[18]
Positive School Behavior	0.47*
Academic Achievement Tests	0.39*
Grades	0.28*
Negative School Behavior	0.21*
Violence/Aggression in School	0.22*
School Discipline/Suspension	0.28*
Peer Acceptance	0.06
Peer Rejection	0.27*

*$p<.05$[19]

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[16] Aber, J.L., "Changing Children's Trajectory of Development: Two-Year Evidence for the Effectiveness of a School-Based Approach to Violence Prevention," *National Center for Children in Poverty*, Columbia University: December 2003.

[17] In statistics, a meta-analysis combines the result of several studies that address a set of related research hypotheses. Durlak, Weissberg et al. used more than 300 studies covering 665 programs.

[18] Effect size is a measure of the strength of the relationship between two variables. In this case, an effect size of 1.00 would represent one standard deviation in the positive direction from the control groups of the studies analyzed.

The Durlak, Weissberg et al. analysis is the most extensive available, but there are many others that show similar outcomes (Zins et al., 2004; Wang, Haertel, and Wallberg, 1997; Dymniki, 2006; Hawkins et al., 1999; Munro et al., 2006; etc.).

A Provider's Point of View

The following profile of the Educators for Social Responsibility is based on a phone interview between the Office of the Public Advocate and ESR Metro Director, Tom Roderick. (In February 2007, the organization changed its name to Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility, but this case study will refer to it as ESR Metro.)

"Principal Mary Buckley Teatum of P.S. 217 in Brooklyn adopted the RCCP curriculum five years ago and says it has transformed the culture of her school. Buckley credits much of the success to Donna Connolly, an RCCP trainer who provided support until the Office of RCCP was closed by the DOE. 'This is a program that can turn a school around if everyone buys into it,' said Buckley. She described her Ditmas Park school as a 'mini-UN' where students get along well and student mediators resolve disputes. 'Children who are mediated feel so good,' Buckley said. 'We had children who were problematic and we've made them mediators. It changes their self-esteem.'" *Source: See Footnote 20.*

ESR Metro was founded in 1982 by a group of New York City educators and activists concerned about the peril of nuclear war. In 1985, ESR Metro developed the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) [20] and began a relationship with the BOE to provide conflict resolution programming in city schools. Over the past twenty-two years, ESR Metro has served hundreds of thousands of students, parents, and educators through the RCCP program. In 1999, the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University, performed an extensive study on the RCCP program in New York City schools (see above) and determined that students who received significant exposure to the program were more likely to choose nonviolent strategies to resolve conflicts and experienced gains in student achievement. ESR Metro continues to expand its programming and is involved in schools throughout the city.

RCCP started slowly, but following a spate of high-profile youth violence incidents in New York City and elsewhere in the country in the late 1980s and early 1990s, additional funding became available for conflict resolution programming, and the program expanded rapidly. In the early 1990s, when the Board of Education created a conflict resolution office, it hired the co-founder of ESR Metro, Linda Lantieri, to run the office.

In addition to expanding the RCCP program to more schools throughout the city, the BOE developed Project Stop, a middle school violence prevention program that was later

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[19] Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P., *A Major Meta-Analysis of Positive Youth Development Programs*, presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C., August 2005.

[20] The components of RCCP: 3-5 day introductory training course to prepare teachers to implement the curriculum, regular classroom instruction based on a K-12 curriculum, classroom coaching of teachers by expert consultants, peer mediation programs, and training for school administrators and parents. http://www.morningsidecenter.org/programs_conflict.html#rccp

eliminated by the DOE under Chancellor Klein. RCCP and Project Stop were successful in curbing violence and changing the culture of many struggling schools.[21] Roderick believes that with the elimination of centrally administered conflict resolution and social/emotional programming and the shift in decision-making concerning support services such as conflict resolution programming to the principals of individual schools, providers of such programs will have to market themselves to schools in ways they never have before. ESR Metro's extensive network, built up over many years, will, for the most part, save it from the burdens faced by smaller and newer organizations. However, the changes will increase the time ESR Metro staff must spend on administration, as it shifts from a handful of large contracts with the old BOE to 60 different, smaller, contracts with individual schools.

Roderick also points out that, throughout the country, the emphasis on English Language Arts (ELA) and math test scores, as prescribed by the federal education law No Child Left Behind (NCLB), has meant that less time is available for conflict resolution and social/emotional programming and suggests that New York City is no exception to this trend. In fact, New York City schools are not only subject to the federally-mandated tests but are also required by the DOE to administer 'interim' assessments in ELA and math every six weeks. The reduction in conflict resolution and social/emotional programming that has occurred throughout the country is exacerbated in New York City by these additional requirements.

Roderick noted that with more money flowing directly to the schools to be spent at the principals' discretion and accountability for test scores becoming more rigid, it is increasingly likely that conflict resolution and social/emotional programs will be overlooked in favor of test preparation courses, unless the DOE places greater value on such programming, recognizing the impact it has on student achievement.

Part III

Methodology

A survey was designed and electronically disseminated by the Office of the Public Advocate and NCSC. The ordered series of questions assessed the day-to-day experiences and opinions of staff at organizations providing conflict resolution and social/emotional programming in New York City public schools. The survey was emailed to 55 organizations and was available online at the NCSC website.[22] Forty-three responses were returned from 35 different organizations. The 35 different organizations work with a total of approximately 55,000 students annually.

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[21] Fuentes, A., "Peace Nix: How the Schools Conflict Office Got Mugged," *The Village Voice,* February 4, 2004.
[22] National Center for Schools and Communities, www.ncscatfordham.org/pages/home.cfm.

Findings

*DOE School Safety and Discipline Policies: **High Schools***
- ¶ 80 percent of respondents do not agree that DOE school **safety policies** adequately address the social/emotional needs of the students. Only 6 percent of respondents agree.
- ¶ 83 percent of respondents do not agree that DOE school **discipline policies** adequately address the social/emotional needs of the students. Only 3 percent of respondents agree.

- ¶ 80 percent of respondents do not agree that DOE school **safety policies** are successful in creating a safe environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Only 6 percent of respondents agree.

- ¶ 83 percent of respondents do not agree that DOE school **safety policies** effectively address the root causes of violence and disruptive behavior. Only 6 percent of respondents agree.

- ¶ 86 percent of respondents do not agree that the current DOE school **discipline policies** are sustainable in promoting long-term results in dealing with violent and disruptive students. Only 6 percent of respondents agree.

- ¶ 83 percent of respondents do not agree that the current DOE school **safety policies** are sustainable in promoting long-term results in dealing with violent and disruptive students. Only 3 percent of respondents agree.

*DOE School Safety and Discipline Policies: **Middle Schools***
- ¶ 79 percent of respondents do not agree that DOE school **safety policies** adequately address the social/emotional needs of the students. Only 6 percent of respondents agree.

- ¶ 85 percent of respondents do not agree that DOE school **discipline policies** adequately address the social/emotional needs of the students. Only 3 percent of respondents agree.

- ¶ 79 percent of respondents do not agree that DOE school **safety policies** are successful in creating a safe environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Only 3 percent of respondents agree.

- ¶ 85 percent of respondents do not agree that DOE school **safety policies** effectively address the root causes of violence and disruptive behavior. None (0 percent) of the respondents agree.

- ¶ 85 percent of respondents do not agree that the current DOE school **discipline policies** are sustainable in promoting long-term results in dealing with violent and disruptive students. Only 3 percent of respondents agree.

¶ 79 percent of respondents do not agree that the current DOE school safety policies are sustainable in promoting long-term results in dealing with violent and disruptive students. Only 6 percent of respondents agree.

*DOE School Safety and Discipline Policies: **Elementary Schools***

¶ 64 percent of respondents do not agree that DOE school **safety policies** adequately address the social/emotional needs of the students. Only 9 percent of respondents agree.

¶ 69 percent of respondents do not agree that DOE school **discipline policies** adequately address the social/emotional needs of the students. Only 3 percent of respondents agree.

¶ 53 percent of respondents do not agree that DOE school **safety policies** are successful in creating a safe environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Only 11 percent of respondents agree.

¶ 61 percent of respondents do not agree that DOE school **safety policies** effectively address the root causes of violence and disruptive behavior. Only 8 percent of respondents agree.

¶ 67 percent of respondents do not agree that DOE school **discipline policies** effectively address the root causes of violence and disruptive behavior. Only 6 percent of respondents agree.

¶ 67 percent of respondents do not agree that the current DOE school **safety policies** are sustainable in promoting long-term results in dealing with violent and disruptive students. Only 11 percent of respondents agree

The findings above show that providers of conflict resolution and social/emotional programming overwhelmingly believe that the DOE's school safety and discipline policies do not meet the social/emotional needs of students and fail to address the root causes of violence and conflict in schools. Dissatisfaction with DOE policy is greatest at the high school level where school safety polices are most rigid and punitive and the most students are suspended.[23] Conflict resolution and social/emotional programming at the high school level are used almost exclusively in combination with punishment for a disciplinary infraction. (It should be noted that a recent report by the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative found that, despite the DOE's decision to use conflict resolution programming as part of disciplinary action, such programming is rarely available even to disciplined students).[24]

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[23] Citizen's Committee for Children, "Keeping Track of New York City Children," February 2, 2006.
[24] Sullivan, E., "Deprived of Dignity: Degrading Treatment and Abusive Discipline in New York City and Los Angeles Public Schools," *National Economic and Students Rights Initiative*, March 2007.

DOE Conflict Resolution Professional Development for Teachers and Administrators

¶ 60 percent of respondents do not agree that the conflict resolution training for teachers and administrators adequately provides **high school** teachers and administrators with tools to resolve conflicts. Only 14 percent of respondents agree.
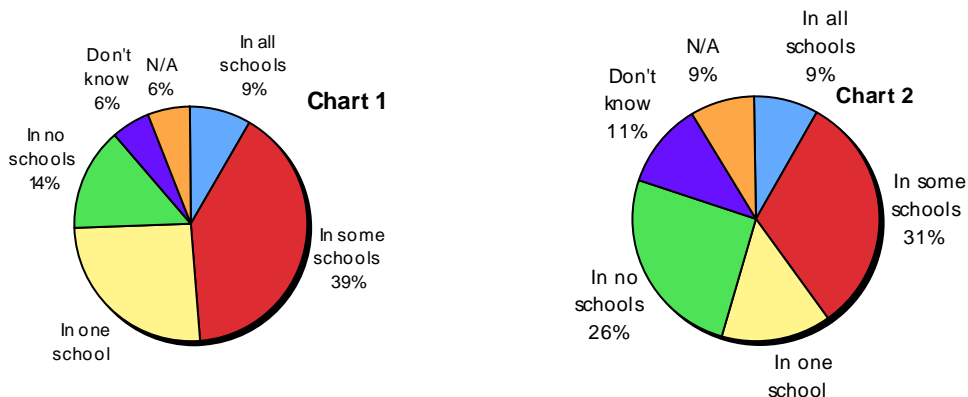
¶ 54 percent of respondents do not agree that the conflict resolution training for teachers and administrators adequately provides **middle school** teachers and administrators with tools to resolve conflicts. Only 17 percent of respondents agree.

¶ 49 percent of respondents do not agree that the conflict resolution training for teachers and administrators adequately provides **elementary school** teachers and administrators with tools to resolve conflicts. Only 14 percent of respondents agree.

As part of the DOE's July professional development training and at different times during the school year, voluntary conflict resolution training is offered to teachers. Each year, approximately 400 teachers[25] (out of 83,000 in the system) receive some sort of conflict resolution training. The majority of respondents to this survey believe that conflict resolution training provided by the DOE for teachers and administrators is inadequate. In addition to this finding, the Public Advocate's February 2007 report, "Between Policy and Reality," found that, in response to an earlier survey, 98 percent of high school administrators—and 82 percent of all school administrators—reported that "a few" teachers, or no teachers at all, in their school had received conflict resolution training.

Integration of Conflict Resolution Programming in Schools
Conflict resolution and social/emotional programming providers were also asked to assess the degree to which conflict resolution was a valued part of day-to-day life in the schools in which they work (pie chart 1) and if elements of conflict resolution were integrated into the curriculum of those schools (pie chart 2). Sixty-five percent of the respondents believe that conflict resolution is a valued part of the day-to-day life in the school, but 14 percent believe that none of the schools they work in value conflict

Chart 1

Don't know 6% | N/A 6% | In all schools 9% | In some schools 39% | In one school | In no schools 14%

Chart 2

In all schools 9% | N/A 9% | Don't know 11% | In some schools 31% | In one school | In no schools 26%
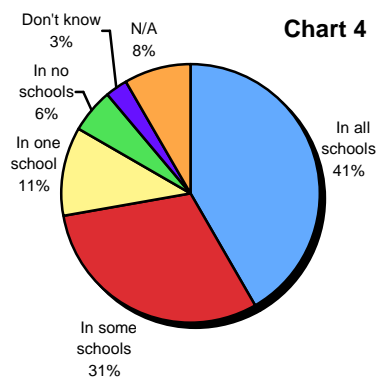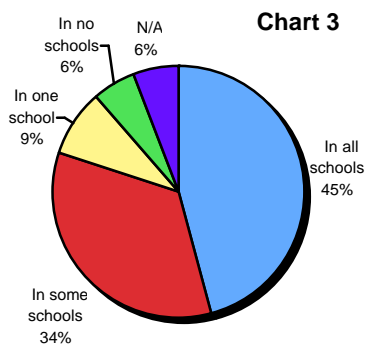
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[25] Toosi, N., "NYC Teachers Learn How to Deal With Classroom Conflict," *Associated Press,* July 20, 2006.

resolution strategies. Only forty-five percent work in schools that integrate elements of conflict resolution into the school curriculum, while twenty-six percent work in schools where elements of conflict resolution are not part of the curriculum at all.

Relationships Between Providers and Educators

Conflict resolution and social/emotional programming providers also believe that teachers and principals are largely supportive of conflict resolution programming in their schools (pie charts 3 and 4, respectively). The Public Advocate's above-mentioned survey of school administrators asked a similar question about the value and effectiveness of conflict resolution programs. Eighty-two percent of administrators believe that their schools would benefit from additional conflict resolution programming, and 80 percent believe that conflict resolution programming helps create a safe school environment. These findings suggest that support for additional programming exists at the school level. It is up to the DOE to make such programming a priority and readily available to all schools.

Chart 3

In no schools 6%
N/A 6%
In one school 9%
In all schools 45%
In some schools 34%

Chart 4

Don't know 3%
N/A 8%
In no schools 6%
In one school 11%
In all schools 41%
In some schools 31%

DOE "Zero Tolerance" Policies

¶ 63 percent of respondents who work in schools that employ "zero tolerance" policies do not agree that zero tolerance is a necessary approach to school discipline that is conducive to teaching and learning.

¶ 57 percent of respondents who work in schools that employ "zero tolerance" policies do not agree that zero tolerance policies work in concert with the programming their organization provides. Only 14 percent of respondents agree and 26 percent responded "don't know" or "not applicable."

The responses to the two questions related to the DOE's "zero tolerance" policy show that providers of conflict resolution and social/emotional programs generally do not support the practice of zero tolerance. It should be noted that the term "zero tolerance" is not defined in law or regulation, nor is there a single widely accepted practice definition.[26] The implementation of the DOE's "zero tolerance" policy in New York City schools is difficult to track, but the DOE makes it clear that zero tolerance is practiced in

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[26] Atkinson, A.J., "Zero Tolerance Policies: An Issue Brief," prepared for the Virginia Department of Education: November 2005.

"Impact Schools"[27] and in other schools with high rates of discipline code infractions.[28] The DOE does not limit the "zero tolerance" approach to serious offenses such as gun possession. Rather, it is often applied to truancy and other minor violations.

Part IV

Improving the social/emotional well-being of students and improving student achievement is not an either/or proposition. Research shows a substantial and statistically significant correlation between conflict resolution and social/emotional programming and improved student achievement. The implementation of the following recommendations would be a significant first step in aligning the DOE's school safety policy with its student achievement goals.

Recommendations

- **Create a central Conflict Resolution and Social/Emotional Programs Office**
  This office could be modeled on the old BOE Office of RCCP but would serve as a clearinghouse for all conflict resolution and social/emotional programs. Additionally, this office would be in charge of evaluating existing programs.

- **Establish a Conflict Advisor/Counselor Position in Select School**
  A pilot program should be launched in select schools to hire a full-time conflict counselor to work with students and lead community and family engagement initiatives. Alternatively, the advisor could be a teacher trained and certified in conflict resolution and social/emotional support, who could receive a bonus or stipend.

- **Comply Fully With the Dignity for All Students Act**
  Compliance with DASA is mandated by law, but there is no mechanism to assess the DOE's compliance. The DOE and, if applicable, the NYPD should report on the DASA trainings they have received and there should be a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of such trainings. Additionally, compliance with this law requires reporting on the rates of bullying and harassment. Meaningful and accurate reporting of this sort would help the DOE identify sites in need of additional conflict resolution and social/emotional programming.

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[27] The Impact Schools policy is modeled after the New York City Police Department's "Operation Impact," which employs crime data from the COMPSTAT computer system to identify high crime areas in the city and target them for increased police presence. Impact Schools are selected on the basis of higher-than-average numbers of criminal incidents, suspensions, and what the DOE terms "early warning problems," such as low school attendance and disruptive behavior. In its third year, the Impact Schools policy has included 22 middle and high schools from all five boroughs. The Impact Schools initiative employs three police department strategies for reducing crime in the public schools: dispatching large numbers of uniformed police officers to targeted areas, cracking down on minor incidents or disruptive behavior, and "spotlighting" and quickly suspending those who repeatedly violate even minor rules.

[28] DOE, "Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein, and Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly Present Progress Report for First Year of School Safety Initiative," January 3, 2005.

- **Establish a School Safety Planning Committee**
  The City should establish a School Safety Planning Committee, as was done by the Los Angeles Unified School District. In New York City, such a committee should include representatives of the DOE, teachers and principals unions, the Department of Youth and Community Development, the Administration for Children's Services, parents, parent organizations, community groups, and students. The committee would meet twice a month and advise the Chancellor on matters pertaining to the social/emotional health of the schools and on school safety in general. The committee would review policies and regulations and provide a forum for discussion and resolution of school safety and school climate issues. This committee would also create a set of standards for the implementation of programming that is proactive and preventive rather than punishment-based.

Appendix: Survey

1. Please enter your email address below. This information is used for validation purposes and will not be used to identify you or your organization.

2. What is your position at the organization where you work?

3. What type of organization do you represent? (check all that apply)

   a. Non-profit Organization

   b. Community Based Organization

   c. Higher Education Affiliated Organization

   d. Settlement House

   e. Social Service Organization

   f. Youth Development/Leadership Organization

4. What types of services does your organization provide? (check all that apply)

   a. Peace Education Programming

   b. Conflict Resolution Programming

   c. Peace Education Training

   d. Conflict Resolution Training

   e. Attendance Improvement/Truancy Services

   f. Guidance/Counseling (Behavioral)

   g. Guidance/Counseling (Academic)

   h. Mediation services

   i. Mediation training

   j. Crime Prevention

   k. Program Evaluation/Research

5. In what setting does your organization work? (check all that apply)

    a. Elementary School

    b. Middle School

    c. High School

    d. Alternative School Site

    e. Out-of-School Location (e.g. Community Center, Group Home, etc.)

    f. Juvenile Detention Site

    g. DOE Regional Facility

    h. Impact School Site

6. Where does your organization work? (check all that apply)

    a. Region 1

    b. Region 2

    c. Region 3

    d. Region 4

    e. Region 5

    f. Region 6

    g. Region 7

    h. Region 8

    i. Region 9

    j. Region 10

    k. Empowerment Zone

    l. District 75

    m. District 79

    n. Alternative District

    o. Impact School

    p. ALL Regions

7. Approximately how many New York City locations/sites will your organization work in over the course of this year? (insert number)

8. Approximately how many students will you serve this year? (insert number)

9. When does your organization perform its services? (check all that apply)

   a. During the school day

   b. After school

   c. Before school

   d. Weekend

   e. Summer school

   f. During summer break

10.   To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements about DOE school safety and discipline policies in ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS?

11.   To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements about DOE school safety and discipline policies in MIDDLE SCHOOLS?

12.   To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements about DOE school safety and discipline policies in HIGH SCHOOLS?

   a. The DOE school safety policies adequately address the social and emotional needs of the students.

   b. The DOE school discipline policies adequately address the social and emotional needs of the students.

   c. In general, DOE school safety policies are successful in creating a safe environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.

   d. DOE school safety policies effectively address the root causes of violence and disruptive behavior.

e. DOE school discipline policies effectively address the root causes of violence and disruptive behavior.

f. The current DOE school safety policies promote sustainable long-term results in dealing with violent and disruptive students.

  i. Strongly Disagree

  ii. Disagree

  iii. Neutral

  iv. Agree

  v. Strongly Agree

  vi. Don't Know

  vii. N/A

13. In general, principal suspensions are administered in a fair and balanced manner.

14. In general, superintendent suspensions are administered in a fair and balanced manner.

 a. In ALL the schools in which we work

 b. In SOME of the schools in which we work

 c. In ONE of the schools in which we work

 d. In NONE of the schools in which we work

 e. Don't Know

 f. N/A

15. To what extent do you agree or disagree that most of the conflict resolution training offered by the DOE adequately provides teachers and administrators with tools to resolve conflicts in:

 a. Elementary Schools?

 b. Middle Schools?

 c. High Schools?

       i. Strongly Disagree

      ii. Disagree

     iii. Neutral

      iv. Agree

       v. Strongly Agree

      vi. Don't Know

     vii. N/A

16.   In general, the response of school safety agents to student conflict is:

   a. Disproportionate to the Incident

   b. Overly Aggressive

   c. Fair and Balanced

   d. Soft and Ineffective

   e. Don't Know

17.   Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the statements below in relation to application of the DOE's Zero Tolerance policy in the school(s) you service.

   a. Zero tolerance is a necessary approach to school discipline that is conducive to teaching and learning.

   b. Zero tolerance policies work in concert with the programming my organization provides.

       i. Not applicable to my school(s).

      ii. Strongly Disagree

     iii. Disagree

      iv. Neutral

       v. Agree

      vi. Strongly Agree

      vii. Don't Know

     viii. N/A

18.   Please provide responses to the following questions concerning in-school relationships

    a. Conflict education and/or resolution programming is a valued part of day-to-day life.

    b. Themes of conflict education and/or resolution programming are integrated into various curriculums.

    c. My organization has a positive working relationship with school safety agents.

       i. Principals are supportive of the programming offered by my organization.

      ii. Teachers are supportive of the programming offered by my organization.

     iii. In ALL the schools in which we work

      iv. In SOME of the schools in which we work

       v. In ONE of the schools in which we work

      vi. In NONE of the schools in which we work

     vii. Don't Know

    viii. N/A

19.   Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement.

    a. My organization receives the necessary resources to provide its services.

       i. Strongly Disagree

      ii. Disagree

     iii. Neutral

      iv. Agree

       v. Strongly Agree

      vi. Don't Know

      vii. N/A

20.   What type(s) of funding do you receive? (check all that apply)

    a. Foundation Grants (Private or public foundations)

    b. City Grants (e.g. City Council, Department of Youth and Community Development, etc.)

    c. State Grants (e.g. Violence Prevention and Dropout Prevention, Attendance Improvement and Dropout Prevention, etc.)

    d. Federal Grants (e.g. Century 21, Title II, etc.)

    e. DOE Funds

    f. United Way CAPS Funding

    g. Principal/School Funding

    h. Private donations

21.   Does your organization have "listing application" status from the DOE?

    a. Yes

    b. No, tried to obtain

    c. No, have not tried to obtain

22.   Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

    a. Competition for DOE contracts/funding requires that my organization limit the scope of its programming, which negatively affects the quality of services we provide.\

    b. In general, the period between issuing a purchase order invoice and the receipt of payment is a reasonable amount of time.

    c. My organization has enough cash flow to cover any late or lapse payment from the DOE.

i. Strongly Disagree

   ii. Disagree

   iii. Neutral

   iv. Agree

   v. Strongly Agree

   vi. Don't Know

   vii. N/A

23.   Use the space below to provide any additional concerns you wish to share with us.

24.   Use the space below to provide any additional information and/or recommendations.

25.   As a participant of this survey you are offered the opportunity to receive an email with a copy of our final report. Would you like us to send you this report?

   a. Yes

   b. No

26.   Which email address should we use to send you the final report?

27.   Would you be available to participate in a focus group about Conflict and Peace Education in New York City public schools?

   a. Yes

   b. Maybe, please send me more information

   c. No

28.   Would you like to participate in a follow-up event to discuss the findings and next steps based on the findings?

   a. Yes, please send me an invitation

   b. Maybe, please contact me

    c. No

    d. Organization name (optional) and not linked to survey response

    e. Your name (optional)

    f. Contact Information (optional)

Your email address (optional)