



Peer Mediation: Student Peacemaking Leadership

Presenters:



Kathy Bickmore (Ph.D. Stanford University 1991) is Professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, and Comparative International and Development Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. Recipient of the 2010 OISE Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award, Dr. Bickmore teaches graduate courses on democratic citizenship education and teaching/practicing conflict resolution in schools (from a comparative international perspective), foundations of curriculum studies, and initial teacher education courses on managing conflict in classrooms and school workplaces.

Dr. Bickmore's research addresses conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and controversial issues in schools, and educating for democracy, social justice, and peace, in international comparative perspective. Her Ph.D. thesis won the Exemplary Dissertation Award of the U.S. National Council for the Social Studies in 1993. Her current research (funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada), "Peacebuilding Dialogue in Schools: Circle Processes for Restorative Problem-Solving and Democratic Learning," examines two broad types of conflict dialogue processes in public school settings: restorative (after incidents of harm) and educative (classroom pedagogies discussing conflict and justice issues). Dr. Bickmore's recent publications appear in books such as *Handbook of Research in Social Studies*, *The Challenge of Teaching Controversial Issues*, *The Sage Handbook of Education for Citizenship and Democracy*, *Vision in Global Education*, *Critical Issues in Peace and Education*, and journals such as *Journal of Education Policy*, *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, *Theory and Research in Social Education*, *Curriculum Inquiry*, *Canadian Journal of Education*, and *Journal of Peace Education*. She is author of *Alternatives to Violence: A Manual for Teaching Peacemaking to Youth and Adults* (1984) and co-editor of *Comparative and International Education: Issues for Teachers* (2008).



The Idea

Mediation is one process for facilitating conflict resolution: negotiation with assistance. An unbiased third party (mediator) helps disputants to clarify and resolve their mutual problem by talking about it and identifying alternative ways of proceeding. Mediators do not blame, judge, or counsel: they just facilitate peers' negotiation process. Mediation is voluntary: individuals or groups seek mediators' assistance to talk through problems — instead of either fighting or going through a formal discipline procedure. *Peer mediators* are trained student facilitators of conflict resolution dialogue. Peer mediation, along with the basics of conflict resolution on which it is based, may be taught in classrooms as part of the curriculum for all students (complementing language arts, health, or social studies), or in co-curricular leadership contexts. Quality peer mediation programming fosters nonviolent leadership among diverse young people, giving them tangible responsibility to initiate and guide peer conflict management dialogue.

Why It Matters

Conflict is inevitable in human life: it can be a *positive* force for learning, development, and change. The goal of *conflict resolution education* programming, including peer conflict mediation, is not to eliminate conflict: this is impossible. It is to reduce the disruption and harm that can arise when conflicts are mismanaged — by helping students and educators to develop skills, inclinations, relationships, and experiences that support constructive nonviolent conflict resolution. *Peer mediation* creates active roles for young people, and helps them to develop capacities for democratic citizenship (such as communication, critical reasoning and shared decision-making) and to help create peaceful school communities.

What We Know

Peer mediation follows a simple 5- or 6-step process like this:

- (1) Preparation & introduction to process
- (2) Gathering information: Telling the stories
- (3) Understanding the problem
- (4) Creating solutions: Brainstorming ideas
- (5) Negotiating to decide on a solution
- (6) Closing: Confirm agreement (later, follow up)

Solid research evidence confirms the effectiveness of well-implemented peer mediation programming in schools (especially at the elementary and middle school levels). Both curriculum-infused and co-curricular leadership peer mediation programs can improve diverse students' capacity and inclination to handle conflict nonviolently, their relationships with peers, and their attachment to school. Furthermore, such programs can reduce suspensions from school for violent activity, and help to increase achievement in literacy and citizenship. At the same time, good training is not enough: School-based program development requires support and clarity of purpose, to build programs that can grow and be sustained over time.



Organization of
American States



Agenda

12.15pm- 12.30pm	Technical testing (settings, and hardware tests).
12.30pm-12.35pm	Presentation: introduction of the Inter-American Teacher Education Network (ITEN) and Webinar Series (Adriana Vilela, Education Specialist, OAS).
12.35pm- 1.15 pm	Presentation
1.15pm - 1.30 pm	Q & A /discussion.

Time Expressed in Local Time of Washington, DC UTC/GMT - 4h (Eastern Daylight Time)
