

# Peer Mediation Training Guide

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Introduction

Picture It

Advantages to Establishing a Mediation Program

Questions to Consider When Initiating a Peer Mediation Program

### **TRAINING ACTIVITIES**

The Name Game

String Toss

Hello Bingo

Why People Have Conflict

Young Woman or Old Woman

The Maligned Wolf

Joe's New Bike

Effective Listening

The One Minute Report

Open Questions

Listening for Feelings

"I" Messages

Role of the Mediator

Mediation - The Process

The Puzzling Case

Good Resolutions

Steps in the Mediation Process

Mediation Role Play

The Missing Book

The Messy Desk

The Project

### **STUDENT PAGES**

Philosophy

Peer Mediator Guidelines

Active Listening

Active Listening Observer Checklist

Mediation  
Checklist for a Good Resolution  
Mediator's Promise  
The Mediation Process

**APPENDIX**

Sample Letter  
Sample Health Form  
Sample Peer Mediation Application  
Sample Mediation Training Agenda  
Sample Agreement  
Sample Mediation Report Form  
Sample Mediation Certificate

Questions and Concerns Commonly Raised  
Steps in the Mediation Process

## Introduction

In recent years, through the watchful eye of the media, we have become overwhelmed with statistical evidence of an alarming increase in antisocial behavior and violent offences by young people. In Nova Scotia, a survey conducted in 1995 by the Department of Education indicates that over one third of all eighth graders feels intimidated or unsafe in school. There are a number of theories that attempt to explain this trend; from changing family structure and the glorification of violence on television and in movies, to unemployment and poverty. The problem of increased violence among young people is one that concerns us all.

There is an ongoing debate about solutions. Some people believe that we should “get tougher” and impose more severe punishments. Past experience has shown us that, although coercive measures may stop violence in the short run, they often create negative emotions that start their own cycle of undesirable behavior. Suspensions, detentions and expulsions only partially address the issue of violating school rules. These responses do not address the students’ inability to resolve conflict effectively and often result in repeat offences. The *Discipline Handbook for Nova Scotia Schools* published by the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture in 1993 states:

It is recommended that out of school suspension be employed sparingly as there is little evidence that it accomplishes any real educational purpose or encourages any change in an individual’s behavior.(pg. 17)

The long-term solution is to create an environment in which aggressive behavior of any kind is considered to be socially unacceptable by students, teachers and parents. Since schools today are often the one remaining stable influence in the lives of most young people, many educators have come to the conclusion that it is incumbent upon them to equip students with the attitudes, knowledge and skills they need to become responsible, fully participating citizens. Against the backdrop of an increasingly violent society, many schools in Canada have sought out innovative programs to teach young people effective strategies to cope with the challenge of living harmoniously with one another.

Creating a safe and positive school climate takes time and commitment. Schools that have declared a commitment to creating a peaceful climate are seeking out programs and strategies to help them achieve this goal. Many schools are looking for effective strategies to deal with the conflict that is an inevitable part of daily life in all schools. Teachers and administrators traditionally spend a considerable amount of time dealing with interpersonal conflicts and, due to the limited amount of time available to them,

these conflicts are often left unresolved. As educators, we can help our students become effective problem solvers by giving them the knowledge and skills they need to allow them to deal effectively with conflict.

In schools in which students are actively learning to “live well together” and adults model peaceful ways of resolving conflict, a peer mediation program offers an effective alternative to historically traditional responses to conflict.

## PICTURE IT

*You are the principal of a middle school with an enrollment of 350 students. It's a slushy, cold day in February and just before lunchtime one of your duty supervisors called to let you know that she wouldn't be in. Normally you would go outside but today you have a meeting scheduled with an irate parent so you've asked one of the teachers to do lunch duty. Although she agreed, she mumbled something as she was putting on her boots.*

*Your meeting is not going well and you are becoming anxious as you realize that you have only 40 minutes to get to the Board office where you are giving an afternoon presentation to your colleagues.*

*The afternoon bell rings and as you make an effort to draw your meeting to a conclusion, you become aware of a growing level of noise coming from the hall directly outside of your office.*

*You excuse yourself to look out into the hall where you see nine students in wet clothing. Some are sitting on the bench and the remainder are leaning against the painted Valentine's Day mural which has already started to run and is now forming red and pink puddles on the floor. At this point, the teacher who has been out on duty comes in with two more students, one of whom is yelling at the other something about a destroyed snow fort. You then happen to glance up at the clock on the wall and realize that you could just make it to the Board Office in time if you left this minute.*

Anyone who has ever worked in a school setting can undoubtedly relate to this scenario. In a school with a peer mediation program in place, such line-ups outside the Principal's office need not occur. With mediation available to students in conflict, problems are resolved as they occur with little need for adult involvement.

### **Advantages to Establishing a Mediation Program**

There are many advantages to establishing a school-based mediation program.

1. Conflict is a natural state often accompanying changes in our institutions or personal growth. It is better approached with skills than avoidance.
2. More appropriate and effective systems are needed to deal with conflict in the school setting than detention, suspension, expulsion and court intervention.
3. The use of mediation to resolve school-based disputes can result in improved communication between and among students, teachers, administrators and parents and can, in general improve the school climate as well as provide a forum for addressing common concerns.
4. The use of mediation as a conflict resolution method can result in a reduction of violence, vandalism, chronic school absence and suspension.
5. Mediation training helps both young people and teachers deepen their understanding about themselves and others and provides them with lifelong conflict resolution skills.
6. Mediation training increases students' interests in conflict resolution, justice, and the legal system while encouraging a higher level of citizenship activity.
7. Shifting the responsibility for solving appropriate school conflict from adults to young adults and children frees both teachers and administrators to concentrate more on teaching than discipline.
8. Recognizing that young people are competent to participate in the resolution of their own disputes encourages student growth and gives students skills such as listening, critical thinking and problem solving that are basic to all learning.

9. Mediation training, with its emphasis on listening to others' points of view and the peaceful resolution of differences, assists in preparing the students to live in a culturally diverse world.
10. Mediation provides a system of problem solving that is uniquely suited to the personal nature of young people's problems and is frequently used by students for problems they would not take to an adult.

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(Adapted from: "Ten Reasons for Instituting a School-Based Mediation Program," NAME 425 Amity St., Amherst. MA 01002)



## **Questions to Consider When Initiating a Peer Mediation Program**

1. How will we generate initial support?
2. How will we create awareness among students, staff and community members?
3. How will students be selected?
4. How will the training be conducted?
5. Which issues will be referred to mediation?
6. Where and when will mediation sessions take place?
7. How will the program be monitored and maintained?

## 1. **How will we generate initial support?**

The success of a peer mediation program depends, to a great extent, on the support of the school administrative team. In schools where such programs are initiated by a handful of enthusiastic teachers without the commitment of the administrators, the eventual demise of the program is inevitable.

An introductory session for staff members (including all support staff) is vital. This session might include a brief overview of mediation, a role-play to demonstrate the process followed by a question and answer period. Many schools have successful mediation programs in place and finding an experienced school team to make this presentation is fairly straightforward.

Once support from staff has been generated, only a few key staff members are needed to coordinate the program. Some of the responsibilities of the coordinator include:

- overseeing the selection of students
- participating in the training
- developing a duty schedule
- holding regular meetings with the mediators
- keeping the school community informed of progress/new developments

## 2. **How will we create awareness among students, staff and community members?**

As mentioned previously, one key to the successful implementation of a peer mediation program is an understanding of the program by all members of the school community.

After the initial introductory session for staff, students and parents must be informed of the school's plan to introduce a mediation program.

There are many ways to create a general awareness among the members of the school community. Some ideas include:

- a bulletin board with articles and posters explaining the mediation process and the advantages of a peer mediation program (see pg. 7 )
- short skits presented to all classes
- an evening presentation for parents
- a supplement to the regular parent newsletter
- viewing commercially prepared videos which demonstrate the mediation process

- a school wide assembly with a presentation by an experienced “team”

### 3. **How will students be selected?**

The role of peer mediator is strictly voluntary. Students are usually chosen from the upper grade levels in elementary school and from all grade levels in junior and senior high. Ideally, the students chosen should represent a cross section of the school community. There are several options to consider when deciding how to select students.

Invite students to nominate classmates using some of the following criteria or guidelines:

The classmate you nominate should be:

- a good listener
  - fair
  - a good problem solver
  - concerned about others
  - able to communicate clearly
- Encourage students to apply to become a peer mediator.  
(See appendix for sample application form)
- Train an existing group (i.e. student council, safety club)

The number of students selected depends on the total student population and the needs of your school. Although there are certainly advantages to having all students trained in mediation, you may only need two to four peer mediators “on duty” each day.

### 4. **How will training be conducted?**

When introducing a peer mediation program in a school, the initial training session should be conducted by someone with both training and experience in school based mediation. Many questions will arise during the training which can best be addressed by someone with “hands-on” experience.

After the initial training session, the school coordinator usually plans and conducts the training sessions in subsequent years.

The initial training generally takes approximately 14-16 hours. (2 days) After this training session, the program coordinator usually meets with the mediators on a regular basis to further develop skills and discuss problems which arise.

There are many options for planning training sessions:

A two-day retreat, a weekend (on site), several after school sessions...

A decision regarding the training schedule is often based on funds available. If your school has a budget or a sponsor for this program, experience indicates that a 2-day retreat is an ideal setting for med. training. Costs include, rental of facility, meals, T-shirts (optional)

Included in the Appendix are samples of:

- a training agenda
- a letter to parents
- a health form
- a mediation certificate

##### **5. Which issues will be referred to mediation?**

Each school must decide which issues are “mediable” and which should be handled by staff. As a general rule of thumb, most schools do not expect students to mediate issues regarding serious physical violence, drugs, weapons or abuse. The majority of disputes are easily resolved through mediation if intervention takes place in the early stages. Making the decision about whether an issue is or is not mediable is best left to an adult. If a teacher, administrator or the program coordinator makes the referral, the school can keep an informal track of the nature of the conflict which is occurring in terms of frequency, type, and disputants involved.

Mediable disputes include:

- gossip
- damage to the property of others
- name-calling
- poor sportsmanship

**6. Where and when will mediation sessions take place?**

Ideally, the mediation program should have a designated room within the school. In the reality of overcrowded schools, however, this is not always possible. If possible, the space chosen to use should be close to a room with adult supervision.

Mediation sessions are usually conducted in private without the need for an adult to be in the room. This helps preserve the confidentiality of the sessions and also makes the disputants feel freer to speak openly and honestly.

The school staff will need to decide whether mediation sessions take place exclusively at recess, lunch or after school or whether, at times, they can occur during class time. Naturally, there are both advantages and disadvantages to conducting mediation sessions during class time and this is ultimately a school-based decision.

**7. How will the program be monitored and evaluated?**

After every mediation session, a report form is completed by the mediators involved. These reports provide a useful record of the types of conflict which occur, the students involved and whether or not the conflicts were resolved.

When the mediation process is unsuccessful and the disputants are not able or willing to resolve their dispute, it should be referred to the coordinator. At this stage, schools usually have an internal strategy in place to deal with the conflict.

As long as school staff members have a solid understanding of the mediation process and the school's policy regarding implementation, no further time commitment on the part of staff is necessary.

This is indeed, one of the many advantages of having a school based peer mediation program. Teachers are actually freed from the responsibility of resolving disputes that are so much a part of daily life in all schools.

## Training Activities

The Appendix includes a sample training agenda for the retreat model. There are many resources currently available which describe activities suitable for use during training. The following pages contain a sampling of activities from which to select.

### A. Getting Acquainted

- The “Name Game”
- String Toss
- Hello Bingo

### B. The Nature of Conflict

- Why People Have Conflicts.
- Young Woman or Old Woman?
- The Maligned Wolf

### C. Communication Skills

- Joe’s New Bike
- Effective Listening
- The One Minute Report
- Open Questions
- Listening for Feelings
- “I Messages”

### D. The Mediation Process

- Role of the Mediator
- Mediation – The Process (The Puzzling Case)
- Good Resolutions
- Steps in Mediation Process
- Mediation Role Plays

### E. Role Plays

- The Missing Book
- The Messy Desk
- The Project

## The Name Game

### Objective:

To provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves.

### Materials:

- ☐ chart paper or chalkboard
- ☐ markers or chalk

### Directions:

- Explain to students that this activity will give them an opportunity to introduce themselves and share some personal background information with the group.
- Begin by printing your name on the chart paper. Tell the students something about yourself related to your name, i.e. who you were named after, why your parents chose your name, your nickname, or anything else!
- Invite students to take turns printing their names (crossword puzzle style) connected to the letters already on the paper.

Ex:

**H E N D R I K A**

```
      E   L
      R   Y           D
E     S A M A N T H A
K   O           M
           N           I
                           E
                           N
```

## String Toss

### Objectives:

- To have students become acquainted with one another.
- To create a friendly atmosphere.
- To enhance listening skills.

### Materials:

- 1 a ball of yarn

### Directions:

- Ask students to stand in a circle.
- Explain that each person will have an opportunity to throw the ball of yarn to someone they do not know. To demonstrate, throw the ball of yarn to someone you do not know, introduce yourself to that person and tell one thing you like to do. (Make sure you hold onto your end of the yarn!)
- At the end of the activity discuss:
  - “What have we formed?”
  - “How is communication like a web?” (goes from one person to another, sometimes gets tangled)
  - “What happens if I pull my end of the yarn?”(others affected, tension felt by others)
- Reverse the process. The last person to receive the ball of yarn begins. As the ball is passed, say the receiving person’s name and what he/she likes to do.
  - “How did you feel when you first came in?”
  - “How do you feel now?”

Explain to the students that as mediators they will be expected to make students feel comfortable. Using their names will show respect.



## Hello Bingo

### **Objective:**

To help participants become acquainted with one another in an interactive manner.

### **Materials:**

- copies of “Hello Bingo”
- pencils

### **Directions:**

- Explain to students that the goal of this activity is to complete the Bingo sheet by circulating through the group, matching participants with the descriptions.
- Make it clear that each student may sign her/his name only once.
- When the sheet is completed, call “Hello Bingo!”

## Why People Have Conflict

### Objectives

- To identify the reasons why people fight or argue.
- To identify some of the common methods used to handle conflict.

### Materials

- chart paper
- markers

### Directions:

- Explain to the students that you would like them to think about some of the things people argue about and how these situations are typically handled.
- Create three groups. Give each group chart paper and a marker.
- Ask the first group to list things that children usually argue about and how they handle these arguments.

Do the same for the other groups, using adults for group two and world leaders for group three.

- Allow enough time for each of the groups to come up with a comprehensive list.
- Reassemble as a large group. Ask each group to share their ideas and hang the charts on the wall.
- For discussion:  
“Are there any common ways in which all three groups handle their arguments?”  
(There should be some recurring conflicts and ways of handling them in all three charts.)

“What have we learned about handling conflict from childhood, through adulthood and even as world leaders” (*response is often “nothing!”*)

Emphasize the fact that mediation offers a creative, nonviolent means of resolving conflict.

## Young Woman or Old Woman?

### Objective:

To understand that people may view the same event from different perspectives.

### Materials

- overhead transparency of “Young Woman/Old Woman”
- overhead projector

### Directions:

- Show the overhead transparency to the students.
- Ask students what they see in the picture.
- Select one student who sees the Old Woman and one who sees
  - the Young Woman and ask her/him to point out the features which she/he sees.
- Use the following questions as a guide for discussion:

“Is there a correct way to see the picture?”

“How did you feel towards those who saw the picture the same way as you did?”

“Did you feel differently towards those who saw the other picture?”

“Why is it important to recognize that there is usually more than one way to look at situations?”

“How can two people resolve a conflict if they each see the situation from a different point of view?”

## The Maligned Wolf

### Objectives:

To understand the importance of hearing both sides of an issue.

To encourage students to think about other familiar stories which are told from one character's perspective.

### Materials:

- a copy of "The Maligned Wolf"
- chart paper
- markers

### Directions:

- Prior to beginning this activity, draw a simple outline of *Little Red Riding Hood* on one sheet of chart paper and the wolf on another.
- Hang the drawings on the wall/chart stand/chalkboard.
- Ask students if they have ever heard the story of *Little Red Riding Hood*.
- Ask for words to describe Little Red Riding Hood and record these on the drawing
- Do the same for the wolf.
- Read "The Maligned Wolf."
- Ask the students how they feel about the wolf now. Do the same for Little Red Riding Hood.
- Ask the students to think about other familiar stories in which one of the characters may have been unfairly portrayed.
- Ask the students what they have learned from this activity.

## The Maligned Wolf

The forest was my home. I lived there, and I cared about it. I tried to keep it neat and clean.

Then one sunny day, while I was cleaning up some garbage a camper had left behind, I heard footsteps. I leaped behind a tree and saw a little girl coming down the trail carrying a basket. I was suspicious of this little girl right away because she was dressed funny - all in red, and her head covered up as if she didn't want people to know who she was. Naturally, I stopped to check her out. I asked who she was, where she was going, where she had come from, and all that. She gave me a song and dance about going to her grandmother's house with a basket of lunch. She appeared to be a basically honest person, but she was in my forest, and she certainly looked suspicious with that strange getup of hers. So I decided to teach her just how serious it is to prance through the forest unannounced and dressed funny.

I let her go on her way, but I ran ahead to her grandmother's house. When I saw that nice old woman, I explained my problem and she agreed that her granddaughter needed to learn a lesson all right. The old woman agreed to stay out of sight until I called her. Actually, she hid under the bed.

When the girl arrived, I invited her into the bedroom where I was in the bed, dressed like the grandmother. The girl came in all rosy cheeked and said something nasty about my big ears. I've been insulted before so I made the best of it by suggesting that my big ears would help me to hear better. Now, what I meant was that I liked her and wanted to pay close attention to what she was saying. But she made another insulting crack about my bulging eyes. Now you can see how I was beginning to feel about this girl who put on such a nice front, but was apparently a very nasty person. Still, I've made it a policy to turn the other cheek, so I told her that my big eyes helped me to see her better.

Her next insult really got to me. I've got this problem with having big teeth, and that little girl made an insulting crack about them. I know that I should have had better control, but I leaped up from that bed and growled that my teeth would help me to eat her better.

Now let's face it - no wolf could ever eat a little girl - everyone knows that - but that crazy girl started running around the house screaming - me chasing her to calm her down. I'd taken off the grandmother clothes, but that only seemed to make it worse. All of a sudden the

door came crashing open, and a big lumberjack is standing there with this axe. I looked at him and all of sudden came clear that I was in trouble. There was an open window behind me and out I went.

I'd like to say that was the end of it. But that Grandmother character never did tell my side of the story. Before long the word got around that I was a mean, nasty guy. Everybody started avoiding me. I don't know about that little girl with the funny red outfit, but I didn't live happily ever after.

## Joe's New Bike

### **Objectives:**

- To improve listening and speaking skills.
- To show how messages can change from one person to another.

### **Materials:**

copy of "Joe's New Bike"

### **Directions:**

- Ask for three volunteers who think they are good listeners.
- Ask two of the volunteers to leave the room. Read "Joe's New Bike" to the whole group, including volunteer #1.
- Ask volunteer #2 to return and ask volunteer #1 to retell the story from memory.
- Ask volunteer #3 to return and ask volunteer #2 to retell the story from memory.
- Ask volunteer #3 to retell the story to the group.
- Use the following questions for discussion:
  - “What happened to the information as it was passed along?”
  - “Was anything important left out?”
  - “How did that affect the story?”
  - “What are rumors?”
  - “What happens when a rumor is passed from one person to another?”

Remind the students that, as mediators, they will be involved in situations that include rumors. It is important to remind the disputants that rumors are not reliable ways to obtain information.

## **Joe's New Bike**

Joe finally had enough money to buy the Cannondale Mountain Bike he had been admiring in the window of the Trail Shop for the past six weeks. It was a lot of money - \$375.00 - but Joe had been saving his paper-route earnings for two years.

Joe beamed with pride as he raced home down Pine Avenue past Springvale School, where a group of his friends were playing soccer in the field.

Andrew, his best friend, hurried over to admire the new bike. He asked Joe if he could try the bike and Joe, reluctantly, said he could take it around the block.

When Andrew did not return after 10 minutes, Joe began to worry. He ran to the corner where he could see Andrew, in the distance, trying to straighten out the front rim. Three other boys were gathered around. Joe raced to where Andrew was bent over the bike and started yelling at his friend, only to look up and see his beautiful new bike safely resting against a fence. Andrew grinned as he explained that he had stopped to help Craig who had fallen and damaged his bike.



## Effective Listening

### Objectives:

To have students differentiate between effective and poor listening.

### Materials:

????? none

### Directions:

- Explain to the students that we hear a great deal about listening and how important it is. Ask, “What is the difference between hearing and listening? How do we know when someone is listening to us?”
- Explain that in this activity you will demonstrate the difference between effective and poor listening.
- Ask for two volunteers
- Ask the volunteers to leave the room and prepare a one-minute report on their favourite TV show/book/movie, etc.
- Tell students that when #1 begins talking, they should use effective listening behaviours.
- For #2, poor listening behavior. (Select a few so that it’s not too obvious.)
- Call the volunteers in and have them give reports.
- Ask #1 “How did you feel when you gave your report? Why?”
- Repeat for #2.

“It is important for mediators to be good listeners. This means looking at the person who is talking, sitting still, not interrupting. People like to feel that they are listened to when they are speaking. This is a sign of respect and trust.”

## The One-Minute Report

### Objectives:

To have students practice active listening skills.

### Materials:

“Active Listening” checklist on chart paper.

### Directions:

- Create groups of three: listener, speaker, observer.
- Explain that each student will have the opportunity to talk for one minute on any topic. Each student will take a turn being the speaker, listener, observer. The listener is to listen attentively without interrupting, but giving non-verbal encouragement. After the speaker has finished, the listener will paraphrase the story as accurately as possible. The observer will observe the speaker and listener and make comments about their observations.
- (see “checklist” on chart paper)
- Continue until all students have had a turn at being speaker, listener, and observer.

“Having good listening skills and being able to repeat what someone says are very important skills for mediators. When students in conflict come to you, they must feel that they can trust you to care about their problem. This means that you care what the person is saying and feeling. This type of listening is called active listening. It means listening without interrupting or judging.”

## Open Questions

### Objective:

To help students learn to ask questions that are non-judgmental.

### Materials:

- one copy of “Open Questions” worksheet for each student
- pencils

### Directions:

- Explain to the students that they will practice asking questions that will help the disputants uncover the complete story.
- Explain that closed questions allow for only short or one word answers and often place blame.
  - For example: “Did you steal his disc?”
- Open questions on the other hand allow the person to respond in a way that helps her/him get all of her/his thoughts or feelings out. Open questions do not place blame.
  - For example: “Can you explain how you got that disc?”
- Read the following closed questions aloud to the group and ask for volunteers to rephrase them as open questions.
  1. “Did you break his radio?”  
Ex. Response (“What happened to the radio?” “How did the radio get broken?”)
  2. “Did you call him a liar?”  
Ex. Response (“What did you say about him when you were talking to your friends?”)

In small groups, ask the students to turn the closed questions into open questions. (worksheet)

When most students are finished, ask for volunteers to share their responses.

This may be a difficult concept for some students to understand. Emphasize the importance of being non-judgmental.

## Open Questions

Rewrite the following questions as open questions.

1. "Don't you feel sorry for what you did?"

---

2. "Why don't you just apologize?"

---

3. "Which one of you is lying?"

---

4. "Are you sure you didn't call her a thief?"

---

5. "Why don't you like her?"

---

## Listening for Feelings

### Objectives:

- To learn to identify speaker's feelings.
- To increase the students' vocabulary of emotions.

### Materials:

- list of "Listening for Feelings" statements (cut into sentence strips)
- chart paper and markers

### Directions:

- Tell the students that it is important to listen to people's words but it is also important to listen for feelings.
- Pass out sentence strips randomly.
- As students read the statements (1-14) aloud to the group, ask the participants to identify the feeling that is behind the words.
- As students offer words to describe the feelings, record them on chart paper.
- Encourage students to use a broader range of vocabulary to
  - describe feelings.

## Listening For Feelings

1. "I just can't figure it out. I give up."

---

2. "Wow! Eight days until Christmas vacation."

---

3. "Look at the picture I drew!"

---

4. "Will you be calling my parents?"

---

5. "What a drag, there's nothing to do."

---

6. "I'll never do that well. He always does better than me, and I practice."

---

7. "You never get mad at him, always me."

---

8. "I'm getting a new 10-speed."

---

9. "I feel like writing in my book. It's mine anyway."

---

10. "Yeah, I guess I was mean to him. I shouldn't have done it."

---

11. "Am I doing this report right? Do you think it will be good enough?"

---

12. "I can do this part on my own. I don't need your help."

---

13. "Leave me alone. Nobody cares what happens to me anyway."

## **“I” Messages**

### **Objective:**

To teach students a way of expressing their thoughts and feelings in a non aggressive manner

### **Materials:**

- chart paper
- markers
- two puppets or volunteers

### **Directions:**

- Begin with an example of the difference between an “I” message and a “You” message. Using puppets, act out the following skits:
  - **Skit 1: “You” Message**
  - LAURA: I can’t believe you forgot to bring in the poster. You are so forgetful! Now how are we going to do our presentation?
  - PETRA: Well, you wouldn’t help me until last night. I was up late because of you and so I slept in this morning. I was in such a rush that I forgot the poster. It’s not my fault.
- Ask the children if they think Laura and Petra will be able to resolve this conflict. After a discussion, act out the second skit.

#### **Skit 2: “I” Message**

LAURA: Petra, I am very upset because we can’t do our presentation without the poster. I wish there was a way we could get it before this afternoon.

PETRA: I’m sorry that I forgot it. I was in such a rush this morning. Maybe my mom can bring it over on her way to work.



- Discuss the difference between these two skits. Explain that an “I” message tells how you feel without blaming or attacking the other person. When we use “I” messages, the other person realizes that we are upset, and because we are not blaming them they are more likely to try to come up with a Win - Win solution.
- A “You” message usually expresses anger and blames or criticizes the other person. People often react to “You” messages by defending themselves and finding a way to counterattack.
- On chart paper, print the following “I” message formula:

Use of the person’s name:	Jacklyn,
Tell how you feel:	I feel frustrated
Tell why:	when you interrupt me.
Tell what you would like:	Please wait until I am finished.

- Explain that during the mediation process there may be situations where it is necessary to deliver an “I” message to the disputants.
- Read the following scenarios and ask the students to compose an “I” message for each one.
- The disputants keep interrupting each other. You have reminded them of the ground rules several times.
- You hear two opposing stories from the disputants.
- One of the disputants is very angry. She snaps at you and says, “Get off my back. You think you’re better than me anyway.”

## Role of the Mediator

### Objective

To introduce students to the philosophy and role expectations of the Peer Mediation Program.

### Materials

chart paper, markers

### Directions:

- Announce to students that they will see a role play of a conflict. Tell them to watch and listen carefully to what the helper does and how the disputants respond.
- After/during conflict role play, the helper will take sides, give advice, not listen carefully, impose solutions, etc.
- Questions for discussion:
  - “What things did you see the helper doing?”
  - “How did the disputants respond?”
  - “How did disputants seem to feel as a result of the help they received?”
  - “What might the helper have done differently?”
  - “Was the problem solved?”
- Repeat role play conflict using mediators.
- Ask same discussion questions.
- Ask students:
  - “What do you think a mediator is?”
  - “What do you think a mediator is not?”
- Record on chart paper.

\* (You will need two experienced mediators to demonstrate the mediation process in this activity. This demonstration is quite effective if two of the teachers or other adults attending the training suddenly begin arguing about a realistic issue i.e. - One forgot to bring the video or was late picking the other one up. The “helper” should also be an adult who has been prompted in terms of how to intervene.)

## Mediation – The Process

### **Objective:**

To introduce the mediation process by explaining the steps through a role-play demonstration.

### **Materials:**

4 copies of “The Puzzling Case”  
an outline of the steps in the mediation process on chart paper

### **Directions:**

- **??** Prior to this activity, select four students who are willing to dramatize the role-play “The Puzzling Case.” Allow these volunteers time to rehearse prior to the demonstration.
- Ask the volunteers to role-play “The Puzzling Case” in front of the group. Freeze the action after:
  - Introduction and Ground Rules
  - Telling the Story
  - Finding Solutions
  
  - At each of these pauses, explain the steps which the students have just witnessed and answer any questions.
  
  - (To make it easier for the students to follow the process, you might consider using a differently colored marker for each of the 3 sections.)
  
  - Students can follow the process on page 5 of the student handbook.

## The Puzzling Case

**Situation:** Andrew has been working on a puzzle during the lunch hour and is almost finished. The puzzle is spread out on the floor in one corner of the classroom. Bianca has been asked by the teacher to finish a mural and needs the floor space that Andrew is using.

Bianca and Andrew are arguing when the lunch monitor walks into the room.

**MONITOR:** Looks like you two have a problem. Would you like help solving it?

**BIANCA:** Yes, please! I don't have much time to finish this mural.

**ANDREW:** I wish you could help. Bianca won't listen to me.

**MONITOR:** Well, Marisa and Emily are the mediators on duty today. Let me go get them. I think they may be able to help.

**MARISA:** Hello, our names are Marisa and Emily. What are your names?

**ANDREW:** I'm Andrew.

**BIANCA:** And I'm Bianca.

**EMILY:** We are student mediators. Our role as mediators is to help you talk about your problem but we will not judge who is right or wrong. Would you like us to help you try to solve your problem?

**ANDREW:** Yes, please.

**BIANCA:** Yes, and we don't have much time.

**MARISA:** Before we begin, we need you to agree to four rules:  
no interrupting  
no name-calling or put downs  
agree to tell the truth  
agree to try hard to solve the problem.  
Can you both agree to these rules?

**BIANCA:** I can.

**ANDREW:** Me, too.

**EMILY:** Bianca, will you please tell us what happened?

**BIANCA:** Ms. Burchell asked me to finish this mural before the bell rings. This is the only corner in the room without carpet so I need to work here on the floor. Andrew is only putting a puzzle together and he won't move. This mural is much more important.

**EMILY:** So, you're saying that you have a mural to finish before the bell rings and Andrew won't move the puzzle he is working on to let you use this floor space?

**BIANCA:** Right!

**EMILY:** How do you feel about this, Bianca?

**BIANCA:** Well, I feel very frustrated because I need to finish this and I am running out of time.

**EMILY:** You feel frustrated because you are running out of time and you have a project to finish?

**BIANCA:** Exactly.

**MARISA:** Andrew, will you please tell us what the problem is?

**ANDREW:** This is a very hard puzzle and I'm almost finished. I just can't pick it up and move it. Bianca expects me to destroy an hour's work. Besides, I was here first!

**MARISA:** So, you want to finish the puzzle you were working on and you can't move it easily.

**ANDREW:** Yes, and this is the only floor space that I can use, too.

**MARISA:** How do you feel, Andrew?

**ANDREW:** I feel angry because Bianca just came over here and told me to move. This puzzle has taken a long time and no one else has been able to do it.

**MARISA:** You feel angry because Bianca wants you to move and you would like to finish this puzzle?

**ANDREW:** Right!

**EMILY:** Bianca, what do you think you could do to solve this problem?

**BIANCA:** Well—I suppose I could help Andrew finish the puzzle so that I can work here. I did that puzzle once last year anyway. It wouldn't be too hard for me.

**MARISA:** Andrew, what can you do to help solve this problem?

**ANDREW:** Maybe Bianca could help me move the puzzle. I don't think we have time to finish it. We could slide a piece of cardboard under it and move it to the table.

**EMILY:** Any other ideas?

**BIANCA:** I think moving the puzzle is a good idea. Then I still have time to finish this mural.

**ANDREW:** I could help you with the mural. I can at least paint in the background.

**MARISA:** Sounds like you two have worked out your problem.

**BIANCA:** Yeah, thanks for your help.

**EMILY:** Bianca, what would you do differently if this problem happened again?

**BIANCA:** Well—I shouldn't have told Andrew to move. I know that it is a hard puzzle and he was here first.

**MARISA:** Andrew?

**ANDREW:** Next time I start a puzzle, I'll work on a piece of cardboard so that I can move it easily.

**EMILY:** Is your problem solved?

**BIANCA and ANDREW** (in unison): Yes!

**EMILY:** Congratulations on a successful mediation. We need to fill in a report form and we will come back later when you are finished the mural for your signatures.

## Good Resolutions

### **Objective:**

To make students aware of what makes a realistic, effective resolution.

### **Materials**

Chart paper & markers  
"Good Resolutions Checklist" (S6)

### **Directions:**

- Explain to the students that, as mediators, they will need to know what makes a good resolution and how to work with students to help them find a resolution that is workable.
- Ask student to come up with aspects of a good resolution. Record their ideas. When all ideas have been offered, refer them to pg. 6 of the student handbook.
- Discuss the items on the checklist to be sure students understand the rationale for each.



## Steps in the Mediation Process

### **Objective:**

To review the steps in the mediation process in an interactive manner.

### **Materials**

copy of steps provided (You may want to adhere these pages to cardboard and laminate for future use.)

### **Directions:**

- At random, pass out the cards to students.
- Explain that you would like these students to line up in the appropriate order in complete silence holding up their cards for the remaining students to see. i.e. no talking.
- The students observing may help if the participants run into difficulty.
- When the cards are in order, ask each participant to read his/her card out loud.

(If you have less than 28 participants, you may need to be somewhat creative in adapting this activity... 2 cards per person, line the cards up on a ledge or the floor, etc.)

## **Mediation Role Play**

### **General Instructions:**

- Give a copy of the problem and the appropriate role to each disputant.
- Give a copy of the problem and both disputant roles to the mediators.
- Allow the participants enough time to read the material and think about their respective roles.

You will need to make three copies of each page for each group of 4 participants-one for each of the 2 mediators and the third to be cut in half with the appropriate half given to each of the two disputants.

## The Missing Book

### **Problem:**

Terence and Ryan sit beside each other in class. Ms. Myers, their teacher, has asked each student to buy a copy of **Island of the Blue Dolphins** for a novel study. Ryan has not bought his book yet so Terence loaned his copy to Ryan over the lunch period. When Terence comes back from lunch he asks Ryan for his book. Ryan says that he put it back on Terence's desk.

### **Terence**

Your book is missing and you feel Ryan is responsible. You really didn't want to loan it to Ryan in the first place because Ryan had a month to buy his own copy. He simply didn't bother. Now, English class is about to begin and you need your book.

### **Problem:**

Terence and Ryan sit beside each other in class. Ms. Myers, their teacher, has asked the students to buy a copy of **Island of the Blue Dolphins** for a novel study. Ryan has not bought his book yet so Terence loaned his copy to Ryan over the lunch period. When Terence comes back from lunch he asks Ryan for his book. Ryan says that he put it back on Terence's desk.

### **Ryan**

You don't know what happened to Terence's book. You put it back on his desk and when you came back from the washroom, Terence had returned from lunch and asked for his book.

The book costs \$7.98, and your mother has not given you the money yet even though you have asked her for it a number of times. You are embarrassed to tell Ms. Myers that you do not have money to buy the book.

## The Messy Desk

### **Problem:**

Leah and Danielle share a desk. They are in grade 6 and have been friends for a few years. The storage space under the desktop is not divided so Leah, who is a collector, has papers and books spilling over into Danielle's side. Danielle is very neat and organized and is frustrated by continually having to tidy up this storage space. One day, out of frustration, Danielle empties everything onto the floor and is in the process of throwing out a pile of papers when Leah walks into the room.

### **Leah:**

You struggle with homework and projects and feel that you need to save rough notes and worksheets in case you need them to complete an assignment. You are upset because you have just failed a math test and Danielle made 96.

### **Problem:**

Leah and Danielle share a desk. They are in grade 6 and have been friends for a few years. The storage space under the desktop is not divided so Leah, who is a collector, has papers and books spilling over into Danielle's side. Danielle is very neat and organized and is frustrated by continually having to tidy up this storage space. One day, out of frustration, Danielle empties everything onto the floor and is in the process of throwing out a pile of papers when Leah walks into the room.

### **Danielle**

Being neat has been emphasized by your mother for as long as you can remember. Although you like Leah, you cannot understand why she can't keep her side of the desk in order. Her papers which spill over into your side look like they belong in the trash. You are fed up and decide to clean out the entire storage space.

## The Project

### **Problem**

Arup and Jane have a science project due in two days. Although they are partners, Jane has done most of the work. They are having lunch together and Jane is calling Arup “irresponsible” and “lazy” in front of their friends.

### **Arup:**

You did not really like the topic of your project but agreed to it because Jane was very persistent. Jane seems to be taking the lead; telling you what to do and how to do it. You have your part of the project completed but left it in the car when your mother drove you to school.

### **Problem**

Arup and Jane have a science project due in two days. Although they are partners, Jane has done most of the work. They are having lunch together and Jane is calling Arup “irresponsible” and “lazy” in front of their friends.

### **Jane:**

You have always been interested in whales. Your mother is a biologist and has access to a lot of information.

You are very organized and like to have assignments passed in ahead of time. You really wanted to do this project on your own but your teacher assigned everyone to a partner.

## **Philosophy**

Conflict is a natural part of living together and it can be an opportunity for learning important life skills.

Mediation offers a means of resolving conflicts cooperatively. Mediators help people who are having a conflict listen to each other and find a solution to their problem. The goal of mediation is to help each person listen to the other person's side of the story so that she/he can see the whole story and not only her/his point of view. The disputants (people having the conflict) are responsible for finding a fair solution to their problem.

As a mediator you will use good problem solving and communication skills to help others solve their problems.

S 1

## Peer Mediator Guidelines

A mediator ...

Listens carefully ... does not interrupt.

Communicates clearly.

Treats each person with respect.

Remains neutral ... does not take sides.

Does not give advice or offer an opinion.

Does not look for innocence or guilt.

Helps the disputants find a solution to their problem.

S2

## **Active Listening**

Active listening is when a listener tries to understand both the facts and feelings of the speaker. The listener then restates what s/he has heard to make sure s/he has heard correctly.

### **A good listener shows understanding through ...**

- tone of voice
- facial expressions
- gestures
- eye contact
- posture
- asking questions to understand

### **A good listener does not ...**

- interrupt
- offer advice
- give her/his opinion
- bring up similar feelings or problems
- agree or disagree with what is being said



**Active Listening  
Observer Checklist**

**Speaker:**

Looked attentively at the other person.

Spoke clearly.

Used gestures.

Used appropriate facial features.

**Listener:**

Looked attentively at the speaker

Listened without interrupting.

Used non-verbal encouragement (head nodding, facial gestures, etc.).

Used verbal responses (uh-huh, yes, etc.).

Summarized accurately what was said.

## Mediation

### Introductions and Ground Rules

- Introduce yourselves and explain your role as mediators.
- Have the disputants agree to four ground rules:
  - listen without interrupting
  - no name-calling or put downs
  - agree to tell the truth
  - agree to try hard to solve the problem

Explain that you will keep everything said during the mediation confidential.

### Telling the Story

- Ask disputant #1 to tell what happened.
- Summarize what was said.
- Ask disputant #1 how he or she feels about what happened and why.
- Summarize the feelings.
- Ask disputant #2 to tell what happened.
- Summarize what was said.
- Ask disputant #2 how he or she feels about what happened and why.
- Summarize the feelings.

### Finding Solutions

- Ask disputant #1 what he or she can do to solve the problem.
- Ask disputant #2 what he or she can do to solve the problem.
- Get agreement to a solution from both disputants.
- Ask disputant #1 what he or she would do differently if this problem happened again.
- Ask disputant #2 what he or she would do differently if this problem happened again.
- Congratulate the disputants for solving their problem.
- Fill out the report form.

### Checklist for a Good Resolution

1. Is the resolution specific enough? Does it tell:
  - When
  - Where
  - How
  - Who
2. Is the resolution balanced? Do both disputants share responsibility for making it work?
3. Can both disputants do what they promise?
4. Will the resolution solve the problem?
5. Will the resolution solve the problem for good?

S 6

## Mediator's Promise

### I Promise

- To be fair and honest.
- To keep what is said in mediation sessions confidential.
- To resolve my own conflicts peacefully.
- To make up work I miss in class.
- To attend mediator meetings
- To serve as a mediator for at least one year.

Student's Signature:

Parent's Signature:

Teacher's Signature:

Date:

## The Mediation Process

### Introduction and Commitment:

- Introduce yourselves and ask the disputants if they would like help solving their problem. If both say yes, explain your role.
  - *We can help you talk about your problem but we will not judge who is right or wrong. We will not tell you what you should do to solve the problem but we will help you solve it yourselves.*
- Tell the students that everything said is confidential. (*You may need to explain 'confidential' to younger children.*)
- Ask each disputant:
  - *Do you agree to listen without interrupting?*
  - Do you agree to no name-calling or put-downs?*
  - Do you agree to tell the truth?*
  - Do you agree to try hard to solve the problem?*

**NOTE:** Disputants must agree to these rules to continue. If they start but break one of the rules, you can give them a warning. If they continue to break a rule after the warning, you must stop the mediation and tell your coordinator that you were not able to continue.

### Telling the Story:

(Decide who will start) It is often a good idea to ask the student who appears to be most angry begin.

- Ask disputant #1      *What happened?*
- Summarize
- Ask disputant #1      *How do you feel about this?*
- Summarize
  
- Ask disputant #2      *What happened?*
- Summarize
- Ask disputant #2      *How do you feel about this?*
- Summarize

### **Finding Solutions:**

- Ask disputant #1      *What can you do to solve this problem?*
- Ask disputant #2      *What can you do to solve this problem?*
  - You may have to brainstorm some ideas to assist with solutions!!!!
- Get an agreement to a solution from both disputants. Think about the “Checklist Resolution.”
- Ask disputant #1      *What would you do differently if this problem happened again?*
- Ask disputant #2      *What would you do differently if this problem happened again?*
- Congratulate the disputants on solving their problem
  - or
- Refer the situation back to an adult if after approximately 25 minutes you seem to be at a standstill.

### **Reporting:**

- Fill out the mediation report.
- Ask the disputants to read the report and sign it if they agree that it represents their solution. If an agreement is not met and you had to refer back to an adult, indicate this on your report.

S 9

9 September xxxx

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Your child has been selected to become a participant in a peer mediation program that will be initiated in school this fall.

A training camp has been organized for the weekend of September 17 – 19 at Milford House in South Milford, Annapolis Valley. There will be 10 student representatives attending this camp from each of the schools listed above. As well, the students will be accompanied by teacher coordinators who will work with the students within their own schools as the program grows throughout the year. Peer mediation is being introduced in our schools as an alternate way to address the problem of settling disputes and reducing conflict. The mediation process is simple. Students trained as mediators meet with the students in conflict to help them work out their differences in a positive constructive manner. Usually the mediators work in pairs with the disputants in a private setting within the school. This program has met with success in a number of Canadian schools. The success of the program is due in part to the non-judgmental approach and the absence of an adult authority figure.

The students chosen to participate have qualities and skills that will ensure the success of the program. We ask for your permission to include your child in the peer mediation program.

Further details will be available in the near future. If you have any questions please call the school and I will be happy to address any concerns or provide any additional information you wish.

\_\_\_\_\_  
School Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_  
I \_\_\_\_\_ give permission for  
my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in a weekend peer mediation  
training camp at Milford House, Annapolis County, September 17 – 19, 1993.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**HEALTH FORM**

**NAME:**

**ADDRESS:**

**PHONE NO.'S - HM:**

**WK:**

**IN EMERGENCY NOTIFY**

**NAME:**

**RELATIONSHIP:**

**PHONE NO.'S: HM:**

**WK:**

**HEALTH CARD #:**

**FAMILY DOCTOR'S NAME:**

**TEL. NO.:**

**DATE OF LAST TETANUS SHOT:**

**MEDICAL CONDITION:**

**ALLERGIES/REACTION/TREATMENT TO BE GIVEN/IF ANY:**

In case of emergency I, \_\_\_\_\_ give permission  
for my son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ to receive medical treatment.

**PARENT (S) SIGNATURE:**

Please use the back of this form to indicate any other information such as special diet,  
present medication, etc.



## Peer Mediation Application Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been in a leadership position?  
(Cubs, Guides, Youth groups, etc.)

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Why do you want to become a peer mediator?

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Why do you think you would be a good peer mediator?

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---

---

Signature:

---

Parent's Signature:

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## Mediation Training Agenda

### Wednesday, September 18

- 6:00 - 7:30** Arrival, cabin assignments
- 7:30 - 8:30** Welcome (general introduction, logistics)  
Goals for training session (brief agenda review)  
*"String Toss"*  
*"Hello Bingo"*  
Job sign-up
- 8:30 - 9:15** Storytelling and snack

### Thursday, September 19

- 7:15 - 8:00** Wake-up/Morning walk
- 8:00 - 8:30** Breakfast
- 9:00 - 9:15** Make name tags
- 9:15 - 10:00** *"Role of the Mediator"* (role play demonstration)
- 10:00 - 10:30** Video (Fistful of Words) and discussion
- 10:30 - 10:45** Break and snack
- 10:45 - 11:30** Active Listening  
*"Joe's New Bike"*  
*"Effective Listening"*  
*"One Minute Report"*
- 11:30 - 12:00** "I Messages"
- 12:00 - 1:30** Lunch and outdoor activity
- 1:30 - 2:00** The Nature of Conflict  
*"Why People Have Conflict"*
- 2:00 - 2:15** Other Points of View  
*"The Maligned Wolf"*

<b>2:15 - 2:45</b>	<i>"Mediation – The Process"</i> <i>"The Puzzling Case"</i> Children role play and discuss
<b>2:45 - 3:00</b>	Break and snack
<b>3:00 - 3:30</b>	Role play practice in groups of four
<b>3:30 - 3:45</b>	Debrief
<b>3:45 - 4:15</b>	<i>"Open Questions"</i>
<b>4:15 - 4:30</b>	<i>"Good Resolutions"</i>
<b>4:30 - 4:45</b>	Role play practice
<b>4:45 - 5:00</b>	Debrief
<b>5:00 - 5:15</b>	Break and exercise
<b>5:15 - 6:15</b>	Supper
<b>6:15 - 9:15</b>	Walk, games, stories, free time
<b>9:15</b>	Snack

**Friday, September 20**

<b>7:15 – 8:00</b>	Wake-up/Morning walk
<b>8:00 - 8:30</b>	Breakfast
<b>8:30 - 9:00</b>	Empty cabins, assemble belongings for loading into cars
<b>9:00 - 9:15</b>	<i>"Steps in Mediation Process"</i>
<b>9:15 - 9:45</b>	Role play practice
<b>9:45 - 10:15</b>	Discussion and questions
<b>10:15 - 10:30</b>	Pledge and certificates

**AGREEMENT**

**between**

**and**

We have taken part in a mediation session and we have voluntarily agreed to the following:

1.

2.

3.

We believe that this agreement is fair and we agree to live up to it.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mediator Report Form**

**Mediators:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Students Involved in Conflict:

Student A: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Student B: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Conflict:

\_\_\_\_\_ **Fighting**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **Friendship**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Teasing**                                      \_\_\_\_\_ **Name-Calling**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Threatening**                                      \_\_\_\_\_ **Property**

**Other** \_\_\_\_\_

Conflict Resolved:

\_\_\_\_\_ **Yes**

\_\_\_\_\_ **No**

Student A agrees to:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Student B agrees to:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions and Concerns Commonly Raised

### ***“Will I have to step in when I witness an argument or a fight?”***

It is recommended that all referrals to mediation be made through an adult. It is often difficult for students to determine what is mediable and what is not. In cases involving physical violence, most school administrators deal with these incidents or disputes according to the protocols in the school discipline policy.

### ***“Will mediators miss a lot of class time?”***

Very often, conflicts occur at recess and lunchtime. The mediators on duty usually handle these conflicts as they occur.

Deciding whether or not to hold mediation sessions during class time is a school-based decision to be made collaboratively with staff, keeping in mind that one of the criteria for the selection of students to be trained in mediation is that they be willing to take responsibility for catching up on missed class work.

Students in dispute may find it difficult to concentrate on the lesson or task at hand as they expend their emotional energy thinking of ways to get even or simply focusing on their feelings of anger, frustration, etc. Once again, the referral is made through the teacher who needs to make a judgement call based on the particular incident in question.

### ***“How much time will the mediation sessions take?”***

This is a difficult question to answer because of the many variables involved. As a rule, if a mediation session at the elementary level takes longer than 20 to 25 minutes, the coordinator may need to become involved. Since most disputes are relatively simple and the disputants are there because they have agreed to participate, the process should be quite efficient.

### ***“Where will the mediations take place?”***

Ideally, the peer mediation program should have a room of its own. If at all possible, this room would be adjacent to the administrative office or the room or office of the program coordinator.

It is comforting for the mediators to know that adult assistance is close at hand should it be required.

Within the mediation room you will need a table and four chairs.

***“Will students request mediation in order to avoid “punishment?”***

Most interpersonal conflicts between students do not involve a violation of a school rule. The purpose of mediation is to resolve disputes.

When a student is discovered writing graffiti on the walls of the washroom or throwing a rock at a classmate, obviously mediation is not appropriate and these incidents are dealt with according to school policy. Mediation does not compromise the school’s discipline policy. It is important that work be done with all students in the school to enhance their understanding of mediation and its applications.

***“What about disputes involving violence?”***

Schools deal with these disputes according to the policies developed internally. Often, students involved in these incidents, if serious in nature, are suspended from school for a period of one to five days. However, when these students return, they usually do so with the dispute left unresolved and it may flare up again. It would certainly be beneficial to offer mediation to allow the students an opportunity to work out the unresolved dispute between them.

***“Does the coordinator need to be present during the mediation sessions?”***

One of the advantages of running a mediation program is that the disputants feel freer to talk to their peers than a teacher or administrator. In knowing that the role of the mediators is one of facilitation, not judgement or punishment, students will feel more comfortable in telling their stories openly and honestly.

Once the mediators are trained and comfortable with their role and the process, there is really no need for an adult to be in the room during the mediation session. Initially, after training, the coordinator may wish to observe the mediators in action in order to give feed back and suggestions. As a courtesy, it is good practice to ask the disputants if they would allow you (the coordinator) to observe.

During the session, it is very important not to intervene, as difficult as that may be at times!

***“How do we respond to the parents of the mediators when they express concern about the safety of their children during and after the mediation sessions?”***

First, as previously mentioned, an adult should always be close at hand when a session is underway and potentially “dangerous” conflicts are not sent to mediation.

Because peer mediators do not take sides, or impose punishments, experience has shown that the disputants are usually grateful to have an opportunity to talk through their problem and it would be most unusual for any form of retaliation to take place after the mediation session.

The mediators’ assurance of their confidentiality is another factor which makes the disputants appreciate the process and develop a genuine respect for an confidence in the mediators.

Once parents have developed an understanding of the mediation program, they are often its most vocal supporters!