

Peers Making Peace

Website: <http://www.paxunited.org>

Peers Making Peace is a peer-mediation program aimed at teaching students prosocial, peaceful conflict resolution skills. The goal is to improve the school environment by reducing violence and discipline referrals and increasing academic performance. The program is based on a combination of strategies that include life and social skills training, conflict prevention and resolution, and peer-led modeling and coaching. Student teams are trained to serve as drug-free role models and “neutral third parties,” acting as mediators in peer conflicts.

Target Audience

The target audience is students in grades K–12 in public or private elementary, middle, and high schools. The program has been replicated in urban, suburban, and rural environments and has been proven effective with all racial and ethnic groups served. It has also worked well in universal, selective, and indicated populations.

Program Components

Peers Making Peace comprises five program components: (1) life and social skills training, (2) training in conflict prevention and resolution, (3) parental involvement in conflict resolution education, (4) peer-led modeling and coaching, and (5) creation of a supportive school environment. Each school selects a group of 15 to 24 students who represent the community's racial, ethnic, and gender demographics. Students learn skills such as resolving conflicts, communicating nonverbally, questioning, and maintaining neutrality. The training activities for students vary in length from 10 to 45 minutes. The maximum training time each day varies by age group.

Training and Technical Assistance

A three-day facilitator training provided by the developer, paxUnited, is required. This training prepares teachers, counselors, administrators, and support staff to implement and coordinate Peers Making Peace in their schools. After the training, participants are invited to join the Peace Partners Network, which provides ongoing technical assistance and networking opportunities with other program coordinators.

Costs

There is no cost to train Texas participants, as the training is underwritten by a grant from the Criminal Justice Division of the Texas Governor's Office. For non-Texas participants (or those attending trainings in locations outside of Texas), the training is \$850 per participant, not including the cost of materials. The cost of the *Implementation Kit* (including a manual, workbooks, and two videos) is \$275. PaxUnited also provides fee-for-service training and will contract with organizations to provide on-site training.

Evaluation Results

The evaluation of the Peers Making Peace program used a pre-post quasi-experimental design with six experimental and six comparison schools in two school districts. Data from 360 students were collected prior to initiation and after completion of the program. Key outcomes included the following:

- In the six schools that implemented Peers Making Peace, there were 1,305 mediations involving more than 2,400 students. Results indicated that 1,275 (97.7%) mediations resulted in an agreement.
- Discipline referrals decreased by 57.7% in Peers Making Peace schools, but increased by 8.4% in control schools.
- Assaults decreased by 90.2% in Peers Making Peace schools, but increased by 33% in control schools.
- Expulsions decreased by 73% in Peers Making Peace schools, but increased by 6.2% in control schools.