



United States Department of Education
Awards *Peers Making Peace*®
Promising Program for Safe, Disciplined and
Drug Free Schools

Program Description *Peers Making Peace (PMP)* is an innovative peer-mediation program that uses a preventative approach for handling conflicts both in and out of school. The program's goal is to improve school environments by reducing violence, assaults, discipline referrals, and increasing academic performance. This is accomplished by training teams of students to act as peer mediators on their school campuses.

Research has established that children have risk factors for substance abuse and for becoming victim to or perpetrators of violence. However, children also have resiliencies, which protect them and help them overcome risk factors. **This program develops and enhances these resiliency assets while providing a strong, clear “no use” message.**

The program is designed to impact students in pre-k through grade twelve with research-based, age-appropriate, and developmentally sound curricula for each level. Each participating school selects a group of 15 to 24 students that represent the community's racial, ethnic, and gender demographics. Students learn skills such as conflict resolution, non-verbal communication, refusal skills, 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: elementary students receive no more than three hours a day on three different occasions; middle school no more than four hours on three different occasions; and high school students no more than five hours on three different occasions. Selected students apply the skills they learn by serving as **third party** mediators to help those involved in conflict reach mutually satisfactory agreements. Most mediation takes place before or after school, during lunch, or during activity time. Students take responsibility for solving their own problems, which allows teachers to concentrate on teaching. A pre-training needs assessment with materials assists schools in preparing for program implementation.

Professional Development Resources and Program Costs There are three different coordinator manuals that contain detailed instructions and guidelines to

implement the program. Student workbooks for training are provided. Videos are also provided for orientations to both students and adults. Additionally, the developer provides ongoing technical assistance. Costs to maintain the program are minimal.

Program Quality Inviting and encouraging the participation of the whole community while at the same time keeping the program peer-led is likely to achieve the program's desired goals. **Reviewers found the goals of this program to be succinct, clear, and measurable and noted that materials effectively align with the program's goals.**

Usefulness to Others *Peers Making Peace*® provides excellent guidance and step-by-step procedures for implementing the program effectively, making it easily replicable according to reviewers. Reviewers noted that the most important element for effective replicability is that all participants buy into the program and support it. The multiple training manuals and materials are helpful to anyone considering implementing the program.

Educational Significance Reviewers stated that this program represents education in its truest sense--providing students with new knowledge and skills to apply it. The program also provides students with the kind of insight and techniques that will serve them throughout life. **Reviewers lauded the program for not detracting from regular instruction, but rather molding itself to the character of the school and its atmosphere.**

Reviewers also found that this program does an excellent job of documenting its research-based rationale and the practices all reveal logical theoretical underpinnings. The program was noted for its cultural and ethnic sensitivity, the seemingly bias-free training, and the video's excellent representation of diverse populations which send a message of inclusion, according to reviewers.

Evidence of Efficacy The evaluation of the *Peers Making Peace* program used a pre-post, quasi-experimental design with six experimental and six comparison schools that were regarded as similar based on demographics, socioeconomic levels, population, and incidence of violence and substance use. Results demonstrated that experimental schools experienced a **drop of 34% in initial drug use** while comparison schools experienced an increase of 12%, experimental schools experienced a **drop of 73% in expulsions** while comparison schools experienced an increase of 6.2%, a **drop of 90.2% in assaults** while comparison schools experienced an increase of 33%, and a **drop of 57.7% in discipline**

referrals while the comparison schools experienced an increase of 8.4% Results were uniformly positive in the experimental schools.

Reviewers agreed that the evaluation results were useful for assessing program potential. They noted that the treatment schools' reduction in drug use and violence was believable and impressive. Reviewers found that the program reported evidence of efficacy based on a methodologically sound evaluation, despite the lack of randomized assignment and a lack of clarity about sample selection and attrition issues. Reviewers determined that the evaluation used outcome measures that were from reliable sources and that the measures had face validity.

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