

Subject Area: Social/Emotional/Behavioral

Grade Level: High School

Title of Instructional Method: Peer Mediation/Peer Mentoring

Description of Instructional Method:

Research has shown that both peer-mediation and peer-mentoring interventions produce positive academic outcomes for a wide range of students. Peer mediation is a process in which a neutral third party assists in helping two or more parties in reaching an agreement to a dispute. The goal of the peer mediation process is to come up with a resolution which benefits both parties. It is important for those involved to understand the process of conflict resolution and its positive outcomes.

Peer mentoring programs often match older youth with young students in one-on-one relationships to provide guidance for the children. Peer mentors hold the responsibility of providing meaningful advice for those who truly need it. The issues that are most often addressed during peer mentoring sessions may include: peer pressure, family issues, and problems with schoolwork. Peer mentoring programs provide younger children with the opportunity to form meaningful relationships that will benefit them greatly in the future.

References:

- Ryan, J.B., Reid, R., & Epstein, M.H. (2004). Peer-mediated intervention studies on academic achievement for students with EBD. *Remedial and Special Education, 25*, 330-341. Retrieved on January 16, 2007, from ASAP Plus database.
- Dopp, J. & Block, T. (2004). High school peer mentoring that works! *Teaching Exceptional Children, 37*, 56-62. Retrieved January 15, 2007, from Expanded ASAP Plus database.
- Cutshall, S. (2001). Mentoring makes the grade. *Association for Career and Technical Education, 76*. Retrieved on January 16, 2007, from ASAP Plus database.

How-to Information:

Peer mediation and peer mentoring are two very successful practices that can positively impact the lives of students across all ages. Peer mediation provides these students with a positive alternative to conflict. The mediation sessions may occur in a variety of settings, including at school and home. Students benefit most from peer mediation when a particular problem remains unsolved.

Peer mentoring is another practice that can be used effectively, especially in the classroom. Students involved in peer-mentoring relationships have been shown to be less likely to experiment with drugs, less likely to be physically aggressive, and less likely to skip school than those not involved in such programs. Peer mentors provide the important extra support that many younger people need to make it through the difficult times in their lives. To be effective, a mentoring program requires special training for potential mentors, careful matching of mentors and children being mentored, and ongoing support to maintain and improve the mentoring process.

For a teacher to implement both of these methods, he or she would have to become familiar with any conflict occurring during the school day. Gaining such knowledge will make the task of identifying the students in need of either peer mediation or peer mentoring much easier. Teachers must use their best judgment concerning the individual needs of their students. For example, two students who have not gotten along during the entire school year may require the assistance of a peer mediator. It is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that steps are taken in order to get the process of conflict resolution started. Teachers may also find that a particular student could greatly benefit from having a peer mentor. For example, a student having difficult time dealing with the death of a parent may receive the necessary attention and support from a peer

mentor.

Peer tutoring is another way for peers to become involved with each other. The demand for peer tutors has been increasingly emphasized. Evidence proves that giving disruptive students the responsibility of being peer tutors often boosts their self-confidence. This responsibility helps them realize that someone believes in them. In turn, there is a significant improvement in their behavior, as well as their academic performance. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1998) reviewed the effectiveness of peer tutoring with tutors and tutees with special needs and concluded:

1. Students with special needs benefit academically whether tutors or tutees.
2. Tutors benefit less academically if there is no cognitive challenge for them.
3. Participants benefit more if carefully selected and trained.
4. Participants benefit more if progress is continuously monitored.
5. Improved attitudes to the curriculum area are frequent.
6. Improved interactions with partners outside tutoring sessions are frequent.
7. More generalized attitudinal or interactive gains are less consistent.

Implications for Practice/Other Considerations:

Pros:

- Makes school a safer place to be and learn
- Increases academic performance
- Decreases disciplinary referrals
- Decreases assaults
- Decreases expulsions
- Positive relationships formed
- Increased self-esteem

Cons:

- Cultural issues between parties
- Misplaced feelings
- Match between parties is not appropriate

“How-To” Information:

Different situations may call for peer-mediation and peer-mentoring relationships across a variety of areas.

For example:

- School: *A peer mentoring relationship formed between an older student and a younger student.*
 - This can be an extremely beneficial process for those involved because they can help each other through whatever they are having a difficult time with (school problems, family issues, peer pressure, etc).

- Extra-curricular Activities: *Peer mediation sessions recommended for two students who have not been caught fighting in the dugout during their baseball games.*
 - This can be an extremely beneficial process for those involved because the peer mentor can help the other two parties reach an agreement to their ongoing problem.

Additional Links:

http://www.bbbsi.org/www_index.htm

This website is for the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. It includes helpful information regarding the program's history, as well as the essentials needed for it to succeed.

<http://www.peer.ca/broch.html>

This website is an online brochure with great information pertaining to peer helping. It discusses the idea of peer helping and includes a number of reliable resources concerning the topic, as well.

<http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/youthbulletin/9907-4/mentor-1.html>

This website includes extensive information about the subject peer mentoring. It is extremely easy to follow and encourages the use of peer mentoring across a variety of life settings.

<http://www.schoolmediation.com/books/html>

This website provides many meaningful resources concerning peer mediation in schools. There are a number of books and videos listed for teachers to use while learning more about this subject.

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