

PROGRAM AND TRAINER SELECTION CRITERIA

Selecting Programs

Conflict resolution programs provide a foundation for students to learn to value human life and to share in the responsibility of creating home, school and community environments that are free from violence and fear. These programs teach students to use methods other than violence to resolve disputes so that both parties of the conflict emerge as winners. Although developed by a variety of organizations, conflict resolution programs tend to have common elements and supporting principles. Assessing the extent to which these elements and supporting principles are addressed will assist a school in determining the program's effectiveness and adaptability in meeting the unique needs of the school community. What follows is a list of criteria for schools to consider when selecting a conflict resolution program.

Evaluation and Research

Is the program research-based? Can the developers provide research and evaluation results that verify the program's effectiveness? Are there built-in features for continued evaluation or accountability? How well does the program match the school's particular needs? What evidence does the program provide related to its effectiveness in various settings?

Cultural, Ethnic, Developmental Approach

Does the program provide for a culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate approach? Can students from a wide array of cultural and ethnic backgrounds learn from the program? Are materials available in languages other than English? Are examples and assumptions presented in a culturally sensitive manner?

Student-Focused

Is the program student-focused? Are there opportunities for active engagement? Is the program accessible to all students? Do the role-play activities offer real-life scenarios that are credible and relevant to students?

Professional Development

Does the program include professional development? Does it include opportunities for ongoing training and technical assistance to ensure sustainability?

Scope of Curriculum

Does the program include a K-12 curriculum? Do lessons accommodate the various learning styles of students? Are lessons designed to provide sufficient and diverse age-appropriate activities that give students opportunities to practice and evaluate new information? Do the materials include ideas for integrating conflict resolution in a variety of content areas? Are the materials user-friendly, providing clear directions and formats? Does the information build from one grade level to the next?

Parent/Community Initiatives

Does the program include opportunities for parent/community involvement? Can the knowledge and skills students receive in the classroom be consistently reinforced and integrated in other parts of their lives? Do activities extend to the home/community? Does the program keep parents informed? Does it provide parents with information, resources and skills that enable them to enhance and support what their children are being taught at school? Does the program offer suggestions and ideas for supporting conflict resolution in the school, home and community so students are able to adopt nonviolent attitudes and behaviors?

Implementation Support

Does the program offer school personnel ideas, suggestions and guidance for implementation and program operation? Does the program provide everything necessary for its full utilization? To what extent is the program adaptable to local needs and conditions? How easy is it to incorporate the program into the school's overall instructional program? Does it offer suggestions and ideas for schoolwide reinforcement?

Basic Conflict Resolution Concepts

How well does the program address the underlying concepts of conflict resolution (separating people from the problem; focusing on interest, not positions; creating win-win options; and using accepted fair standards and fair procedures)? Does the program include opportunities for developing an operational understanding of the conflict resolution concepts? To what extent does the program emphasize learning and applying problem-solving strategies?

Cost Effectiveness

How cost efficient is the program? Besides the initial purchase price, what are the costs of teacher training, replacement materials, and costs associated with the time teachers will need to prepare to teach the program? When compared to other approaches that may achieve similar results, how costly is the program under consideration?

Selecting Trainers

The ideal trainer is one experienced in resolving conflicts and in implementing school-based conflict resolution programs. Successful implementation of a conflict resolution program in large part, will be determined by the quality of the staff development component and the competency of the staff development provider/trainer. Consider interviewing several providers before making a commitment. Seek opportunities to observe the provider conducting a training session and contact others who have used the provider's services in the past. Criteria to consider when choosing a staff development provider include:

- Experience in the field of conflict resolution, particularly school-based
- Experience in the implementation of school-based conflict resolution programs
- Experience as a mediator if offering mediation training
- Ability to assist the school in assessing its needs and designing a long-range comprehensive plan
- Willingness to consult with the planning team during the design phase of the training and ability to customize training to meet the needs of the school as identified by the planning team
- Commitment and ability to work collaboratively with the planning team to ensure that the training program is developed jointly; including an explicit statement of outcomes — exactly what awareness, knowledge and skills participants will acquire by the end of the training
- Ability and commitment to building the capacity of the school to conduct its own trainings in the future
- Willingness and ability to assist the group in anticipating the types of mediation cases the program might encounter so that the role-playing activities reflect real-life situations
- Experience in dealing with multicultural issues and bias awareness, and the ability to provide skills for addressing cross-cultural conflict resolution
- Extent to which technical assistance is provided while the program is being implemented
- Availability of future advanced training