

Western Justice Center's School Peacebuilders Program

Evaluation Results 2009-2010

During the 2009-2010 academic year, researchers from California State Northridge conducted an **extensive evaluation** of several WJC programs that touched several Pasadena elementary school (ES), middle school (MS), and high school (HS) students. The evaluators used **both survey and focus group methodologies** to reach their conclusions, which paralleled the results of evaluations of other high quality school based conflict resolution education programs. Specifically, well-run conflict education programs **improve students' communication and conflict management skills, foster growth in students' sense of leadership, and reduce detentions, suspensions, and violence due to conflict.**

In their 92-page report, the CSUN evaluators concluded that WJC programs improve student's outlook about themselves, changed their individual behavior, and improved the atmosphere of the school. The focus group interviews were conducted after the trainings were completed, and the surveys were conducted before and after the trainings were administered. The survey results below indicate changes that appear to be the result of the WJC training.

Changes in student's view of themselves

- 12% more MS students reported feeling supported by the school in taking leadership to make the campus safe
- 17% more MS said they realized that they often **not** think enough about the consequences of actions
- 29% fewer HS students said that problems could be solved by ignoring the emotions of others
- 18% fewer HS said that problems could be solved by taking sides or judging one another
- 14% more HS students thought of themselves as community leaders
- 16% more HS students thought they were good problem solvers

Changes in behavior

- 17% more ES students said they would listen to others while disagreeing with them
- 22% more ES students reported they worked cooperatively with others to find solutions to conflicts
- **15% fewer ES students said that intense conflicts tended to end in physical fights**
- Much fewer ES students said they deal with conflict by turning it into a joke (23%), or changing the subject (18%)
- 14% more ES students said they tried to find the middle ground when conflict arose
- 15% fewer MS students said they often just tried to avoid the person
- 12% more HS students reported they were able to manage their emotions
- 26% more HS students said they were aware of the importance of body language when communicating
- 13% more HS students said they expressed their feelings in a non-blaming way during conflict

Changes in the School Environment

The CSUN evaluation indicated that the programs were associated with significant improvements in the schools where the programs were offered. Compared to before their school had received the training, 12% more elementary school students said that students "mostly got along" after the entire class received the training. In addition, 17% more said students try to help solve disagreements when they occur. The impact of WJC programs on both individuals and schools was evident in the focus group research, which focused on middle schools. The most significant findings from each focus group were:

Faculty/Staff focus group: There is **significantly less violence** due to conflict than there was before the conflict resolution training. In addition, there are **fewer incident reports** that must be referred to the administration.

Student focus group: The training **increased students' skill in active listening and teamwork;** in addition, they noticed they **used their mediation skills with their families** and non-school friends.

Parent Focus Group: The training has had a significant impact on their child's **willingness to speak out against bullying,** to listen carefully, and to pay attention to their environment.