

Step Four: Teaching All Students To Mediate Schoolmates' Conflicts

All students are taught the procedures and skills they need to mediate their classmates' conflicts of interests (Johnson & Johnson, 1995a). A mediator is a neutral person who helps two or more people resolve their conflict, usually by negotiating an integrative agreement. Mediation is usually contrasted with arbitration. Arbitration is the submission of a dispute to a disinterested third party (such as a teacher or principal) who makes a final and binding judgment as to how the conflict will be resolved. Mediation consists of four steps (Johnson & Johnson, 1995a):

1. Ending hostilities: Break up hostile encounters and cool off students.
2. Ensuring disputants are committed to the mediation process: To ensure that disputants are committed to the mediation process and are ready to negotiate in good faith, the mediator introduces the process of mediation and sets the ground rules. The mediator first introduces him- or herself. The mediator asks students if they want to solve the problem and does not proceed until both answer "yes." Then the mediator explains:
 - a. "Mediation is voluntary. My role is to help you find a solution to your conflict that is acceptable to both of you."
 - b. "I am neutral. I will not take sides or attempt to decide who is right or wrong. I will help you decide how to solve the conflict."
 - c. "Each person will have the chance to state his or her view of the conflict without interruption."
 - d. "The rules you must agree to are (1) agree to solve the problem, (2) no name calling, (3) do not interrupt, (4) be as honest as you can, (5) if you agree to a solution, you must abide by it (you must do what you have agreed to do) and (6) anything said in mediation is confidential (you, the mediator, will not tell anyone what is said)."
3. Helping disputants successfully negotiate with each other: The disputants are carefully taken through the negotiation sequence of (a) jointly defining the conflict by both persons stating what they want and how they feel, (b) exchanging reasons, (c) reversing perspectives so that each person is able to present the other's position and feelings to the other's satisfaction, (d) inventing at least three options for mutual benefit, and (e) reaching a wise agreement and shaking hands.
4. Formalizing the agreement: The agreement is solidified into a contract. Disputants must agree to abide by their final decision and in many ways the mediator becomes "the keeper of the contract."

Taken from: <http://www.co-operation.org/pages/peacemaker.html>