

# Proven Benefits of Conflict Resolution Education Research

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# Defining CRE

- Conflict resolution education “models and teaches, in culturally meaningful ways, a variety of processes, practices and skills that help address individual, interpersonal, and institutional conflicts, and create safe and welcoming communities. These processes, practices and skills help individuals understand conflict processes and empower them to use communication and creative thinking to build relationships and manage and resolve conflicts fairly and peacefully” (Association for Conflict Resolution, 2002).

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# Introduction to CRE

- CRE programs include a variety of efforts which share various emphases:
  - An understanding of conflict
  - Social, emotional and cognitive processes related to constructive conflict management
  - principles of conflict resolution
  - process steps in problem solving
  - skills required to use each of the steps effectively

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# CRE Program Models

- Mediation program approach
  - Peer mediation, stand alone program
- Process curriculum approach
  - Specific curriculum of conflict content, like Workable Peace, PYN
- Peaceable classroom approach
  - Whole classroom methodology, curriculum infusion
- Peaceable school approach
  - Comprehensive whole school methodology

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# Goals of CRE

- Enhance Students' Social and Emotional Development
- Create a Safe Learning Environment
- Create a Constructive Learning Environment
- Create a Constructive Conflict Community

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# Enhance Students' Social and Emotional Development

- increase perspective-taking
- increase empathy
- improve emotional awareness and management
- reduce aggressive orientations and hostile attributions
- increase use of constructive conflict behaviors

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# Create a Safe Learning Environment

- decrease anti-social behavior that leads to violence
- decrease conflicts between groups of students
- decrease suspensions, absenteeism, and drop out rates
- decrease incidents of violence

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# Create a Constructive Learning Environment

- improve school climate
- improve teacher/administrator/student relationships
- increase valuing of diversity and practice of tolerance
- promote a respectful and caring environment

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# Create a Constructive Conflict Community

- increase parental and community involvement
- link school CRE with larger community CRE efforts
- develop more peaceful/peaceable school community

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# DOES IT WORK?

- Given the emphasis on proven effectiveness of programs, links to funding and other institutionalization issues, there is a need to review the research in terms of whether CRE programs achieve their stated goals.

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# DOE Symposium

- In March, 2000, a gathering of educators, practitioners, and researchers took place in Washington D.C. in a research symposia sponsored by the United States Department of Education and convened by the Conflict Resolution Education Network.
- Jones, T. S., & Kmitta,. D. Eds. Does It Work: The Case for Conflict Resolution Education in our Nation's Schools, 2000) from the Association for Conflict Resolution (web site [www.acresolution.org](http://www.acresolution.org))

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# Benefits: Enhance Students' Social and Emotional Development

- CRE INCREASES

- Perspective taking (Jones et al, 1998; Lane-Garon, 1998 )
- Constructive conflict behavior (Johnson, Johnson, & Dudley 1992; Johnson, Johnson, Dudley & Magnuson, 1995)
- constructive CR at home and school (Sandy & Cochran, 1999)

# Benefits: Enhance Students' Social and Emotional Development

- CRE DECREASES
- Aggressiveness
  - (Jones et al, 1998)
    - 3 x 3 (program model – peer mediation v. peaceable classroom v. control; educational level – elementary, middle, high) in three cities (27 schools, 8500 students, 700 teachers/staff)
    - Verbal aggressiveness and aggressive orientation
  - (Aber, Brown & Heinrich, 1999)
    - Hostile Attribution and aggressive orientation

# Benefits: Create a Safe Learning Environment

- CRE decreases
  - Discipline referrals/suspensions for violent incidents
    - (Shapiro, Burgoon, Welker, & Clough (2002))
      - Grades 4-8, n = 2,000, urban, pre-post and control
      - 41% decrease in aggression-related disciplinary incidents
      - 67% reduction in suspensions for violent behavior
    - (Farrell, Meyer, & White, 2001)
      - Grade 6, pre-post and control, urban
      - Impact on violent behavior was more evident for those with high pretest levels of problem behavior
      - Impact maintain at 12 month follow-up
  - General discipline referral (Barnett, Adler, Easton & Howard, 2001)
  - Discipline Referral in Special Needs Population (Jones & Bodtke, 2000)

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# Benefits: Create a Constructive Learning Environment

- Increases Academic Achievement
  - (Stevahn, Johnson, Johnson, & Shultz, 2002)
    - 9<sup>th</sup> grade, pre-post, randomized assignment, control groups
    - Integrating CRE into academic course promoted higher academic achievement, greater long-term retention of academic learning, and greater transfer of academic learning in social studies to language arts
- Increases academic performance and work readiness (Aber, Brown & Heinrich, 1999)

# Benefits: Create a Constructive Learning Environment

- Improves Classroom Climate
  - Jones, Sanford, Bodtker (2002), National Curriculum Integration Project
    - 4 middle schools, academic year period, pre-post, control groups
    - NCIP had a very strong, positive impact on classroom climate.
    - NCIP had a profound influence on students' perceptions of their learning environment
  - Johnson, Johnson, Dudley & Magnuson (1995)
    - Elementary schools, semester period, pre-post, control groups
    - Significant improvement in student perceptions of classroom climate in treatment classes

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# Benefits: Create a Constructive Learning Environment

- Improves School Climate
  - Jones et al., (1998)
    - 3 x 3 design, pre-post, data collection over two year period, control
    - Using Organizational Health Inventory
    - Improvement in school climate different for education levels; elementary schools had greatest increase in climate; but at all levels CRE schools had significantly better, sustained school climate than control schools

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# *Institutionalization of CRE*

- CRE institutionalization is more likely when there are adequate resources (e.g., there is a specific person to oversee the effort and adequate teacher training)
- Support from top levels of administration is key to institutionalization
- Publicity about CRE enhances institutionalization

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# *Institutionalization of CRE*

- Infusion of CRE into on-going curricula increases chances of institutionalization
- Clarification of CRE and CRE standards enhances institutionalization
- Support from professional associations (e.g., the Bar Association) enhances institutionalization
- Institutionalization is facilitated in states where CRE can be linked to general standards or principles of education.

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