

Evaluation of Ohio's School Conflict Management Program

The Problem

Students must feel safe and secure at school in order to learn effectively. However, some schools experience high rates of conflict and aggressive behavior that impact students' abilities to succeed in school. In response, many schools have adopted prevention programs aimed at reducing interpersonal conflict and aggression.

The Ohio School Conflict Management program is one promising program. Used by more than 800 Ohio schools during the past 15 years, this program is attractive to schools because of its adaptability to local concerns and relative ease of implementation. As a program that has been developed and shaped by the demands of practice, it is an ideal candidate for an evaluation study to examine its effects.



PRI is performing a four-year study to evaluate the Ohio School Conflict Management program in Ohio middle schools. The study is funded by a grant from the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Education.

The Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Do middle schools who participate in the Ohio School Conflict Management program show less student-student and student-teacher interpersonal conflict?
2. Does participation in the Ohio School Conflict Management program improve school level rates of academic performance, attendance, and truancy?
3. How do the effects of the program vary in relation to the nature and extent of implementation and the general characteristics of the participating schools?

The Research Design

In partnership with the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management, PRI determined a research design to track the effects of the school conflict management program. The randomized field trial included 25 schools randomly assigned to receive the conflict management program and 25 schools assigned to the control condition of practice as usual. Middle

school students completed survey questionnaires related to school interpersonal conflict in the spring semester of the year prior to program participation (2006), and again in the spring semesters of 2007 and 2008.

Teachers, principals, and other school staff also completed survey questionnaires in the three study years and provided information about school interpersonal conflict and program implementation. Additional academic performance, attendance, and truancy data were collected from the Ohio Department of Education.

The evaluation phase of the study will examine whether middle schools participating in the conflict management program report levels of student and educator reports of interpersonal conflict (e.g., verbal, relational, and physical aggression) that are lower than those reported in schools not participating in the program. Additional analysis will examine program differences in school performance, attendance, and truancy rates. The final phase of analysis will examine whether implementation levels influence the program effects on interpersonal conflict outcomes.

For More Information

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