

To: Education Commissioner, Dr. Brenda Cassellius, State of Minnesota

From: Alexander Celeste, Program Coordinator/Math, Avalon School

Re: Statewide Implementation of Peer Mediation Programs in All High Schools

Date: December 17, 2012

Main points for the peer mediation program proposal are listed below. All the relevant details can be found in the full memo; this is just a bulleted list giving you the main points to gain a basic understanding before reading the full memo.

Three Approaches to School Violence

- Crisis Management
- Integrating Conflict Resolution Training into the Curriculum
- Peer Mediation

Why Have Peer Mediation in all state high schools?

- Decrease in suspension will aid the achievement gap closure
- Fits into parts of the 7-point plan
- Empowers students
- If implemented well positively affects academic learning

Criticism of Peer Mediation

- Largely unknown if they are successful or effective
- Need to understand conflict well in order to manage it constructively
- Schools are representative of our crime-crazy society. . .
- Conflict is competitive, not cooperative
- Some discussion of topic oversimplifies the mediator's role

How Peer Mediation Fits the 7-point plan

- Erodes gaps between students, hence the first point
- Depending on level of agency support, point seven
- An initiative in part built from the ground up

Highlights of Avalon's Peer Mediation Program

- Mostly student managed coordination
- Student (peer) mediators
- Disputant-initiated mediation request
- During independent work time in private room

Issues to Work out in Adaptation in Designing a Statewide Program

- Staff member as only coordinator as students in classes all the time
 - Who? New hire, counselor, or staff member chosen by students
- Peer mediators and disputants that match being available for mediation
- Private room being important for successful peer mediation

Three Models to Enforce Schools Implement this Program you can choose

- Grant individual schools and/or districts can apply for
- Mandate, either funded or unfunded
- Incentivized

Legislative Support

- Whatever program you design you should make sure those sitting on the K-12 Education Reform Committee are in agreement with it in all respects
- Don't need support to fully have authority to implement the program, but is good to have anyways