

## Chapter 6

# Examining the Drivers of Success in the Peace Foundation Aotearoa/New Zealand Peer–Mediation Programs

**Christina Ann Barruel**

*The Peace Foundation Aotearoa/New Zealand, New Zealand*

**Marie Nissanka**

*University of Otago, New Zealand*

### ABSTRACT

*The 2016 evaluations of New Zealand’s Cool Schools and the leadership through peer mediation (LtPM) programs revealed positive results regarding improved self-esteem among peer mediators, increased perceptions of safety in the schooling environment, and increased conflict resolution and interpersonal communication skills. This chapter highlights the contribution of these peer-mediation programs. The authors then turn to problems, inequalities, and peace education practices within the New Zealand schooling environment to explain how the Cool Schools and LtPM programs are relevant in solving wider societal problems. The chapter finally focuses on examining the drivers of success in both programs and the broader ethos of the Peace Foundation Aotearoa/New Zealand, which enables its success.*

### INTRODUCTION

*‘He aha te mea, he aha te taonga o te iwi?*

*He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.*

*What is the main thing, what is the treasure of the tribe?*

*It is people, it is people, it is people.’*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3001-5.ch006

Numerous studies demonstrate that school-based peer mediation programs can contribute to a reduction in bullying and an increase in empathy, and can promote positive relationships within the school environment (Bickmore, 2002; Burrell, Zirbel, & Allen, 2006; Harris, 2004; Sullivan, 2010; Barnes, 1994; O'Meara, 1996; Moses, 1998). The Cool Schools and Leadership through Peer Mediation (LtPM) programs run by The Peace Foundation Aotearoa/New Zealand elevate students' resilience to conflict by teaching them practical skills to cultivate peaceful relationships. Through these programs, students also develop empathy, responsibility, conflict resolution skills, and effective communication strategies. These outcomes have in turn reduced bullying in schools by preventing disagreements from escalating further.

The Peace Foundation Aotearoa/New Zealand is a non-governmental organization that promotes building peace in New Zealand's schools and communities. Under the Foundation, The Cool Schools Peer Mediation Program began as a peace education program in primary schools during 1992 and LtPM was established in secondary education in 1994. The Cool Schools program has also developed an international profile, with schools in Australia, Fiji, Hong Kong, Iceland and the USA having been introduced to the program (Barruel, 2011). The success of both peer mediation programs can be attributed to the philosophy, vision, and culture of the Peace Foundation Aotearoa/New Zealand. The Foundation facilitates community education by offering multi-level interventions that include the family, peer groups, school and wider community. This is in line with New Zealand's Agenda for Children (Ministry of Social Development, 2002) which emphasizes a systems approach to educating the whole child.

The paper examines the drivers of the successful 2016 evaluation results by examining the overarching principals of the Peace Foundation Aotearoa/New Zealand that contribute to how Cool Schools and LtPM are implemented. The short-term, direct success of peer mediation programs refers to the direct consequences of measurable behavior change in the school environment (Smith, Pepler, & Rigby, 2004). For example, the peer mediators who participated in the 2016 Cool Schools evaluation stated they experienced improved self-esteem, as well as improved conflict resolution and interpersonal communication skills. The peer mediators and Program Coordinators also reported an increased perception of safety among students in general (Nissanka, 2016). These recent findings concur with prior research conducted on the Cool Schools Program (Ministry of Education, 2004; Barnes, 1994; O'Meara, 1996; Moses, 1998), that reported a decrease in the numbers of bullying incidents and an increase in positive behavior on the playground; improved self-esteem among peer mediators; a reduction in bullying; and a reduction in the time teachers spent resolving conflicts.

The longer-term, indirect, success of peer mediation, peace education, and conflict resolution programs include their potential ability to create a peaceful society, contributing towards peace *writ large* by reducing social inequalities and conditions that escalate conflicts into violence, crime, and war (Lederach, 2005; 2010). While it is not possible, at this time, to evaluate or attribute the longer-term success, the authors highlight the problems, inequalities, and peace education practices in the New Zealand schooling environment, to explain how the Cool Schools and LtPM programs are relevant in resolving wider societal problems.

Drawing on international research, the paper first discusses the broader theory behind the practice of peace education, to contextualize peer mediation as a process of conflict resolution. The authors expand upon the inequalities in education which give rise to a need for peer mediation programs. The paper then explores the various conflict resolution practices undertaken in New Zealand schools before proceeding to expand upon the rights-based principles and policies of the New Zealand government curricula that are used to address violence in schools. Finally, the paper elaborates on the vision of the Peace Foundation Aotearoa/New Zealand that enables the key success factors of the Cool Schools and LtPM

20 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/examining-the-drivers-of-success-in-the-peace-foundation-aotearoanew-zealand-peer-mediation-programs/210510](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/examining-the-drivers-of-success-in-the-peace-foundation-aotearoanew-zealand-peer-mediation-programs/210510)

## Related Content

---

### Domestic Violence and Criminal Legal Instruments of the State Response: Reality or Not?

Dragana Cvorovic (2022). *Fighting for Empowerment in an Age of Violence* (pp. 116-136).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/domestic-violence-and-criminal-legal-instruments-of-the-state-response/310989](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/domestic-violence-and-criminal-legal-instruments-of-the-state-response/310989)

### Examining Oppressions as a Way of Valuing Diversity: Using a Critical Multicultural Lens in Educating Students for Intercultural Engagement

Otrude Nontobeko Moyo (2020). *Handbook of Research on Diversity and Social Justice in Higher Education* (pp. 55-77).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/examining-oppressions-as-a-way-of-valuing-diversity/253792](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/examining-oppressions-as-a-way-of-valuing-diversity/253792)

### E-Government and Related Indices: Telecommunications Infrastructure, Human Capital, Institutional Efficacy, and Online Services

Kathleen M. Boyer-Wright and Jeffrey E. Kottemann (2020). *Open Government: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1810-1824).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/e-government-and-related-indices/235256](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/e-government-and-related-indices/235256)

### The Difficulty of Teaching Historical Landscape: Observations Starting From the Italian Situation

Antonio Pasquale Brusa (2020). *Handbook of Research on Citizenship and Heritage Education* (pp. 378-407).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-difficulty-of-teaching-historical-landscape/246792](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-difficulty-of-teaching-historical-landscape/246792)

### The Reality of 21st Century International Relations

(2022). *Contemporary Politics and Social Movements in an Isolated World: Emerging Research and Opportunities* (pp. 1-24).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-reality-of-21st-century-international-relations/288619](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-reality-of-21st-century-international-relations/288619)