<center>**Policies and programming for safer schools:**

Are 'anti-bullying' approaches impeding education for peacebuilding?</center>

Abstract: Prevailing anti-violence practices in public schools, especially in the context of recently-increased emphasis on bullying, often allocate more resources to surveillance and control than to facilitation of healthy relationships or conflict/peace learning. This policy emphasis increases the risks of marginalization and reduces opportunities for diverse students to develop autonomy and mutual responsibility. This qualitative study examines educators' contrasting interpretations of various school safety and conflict management initiatives in practice, in peaceful and less-peaceful schools serving stressed urban populations, and points out spaces for potential policy shifts and clarifications that could enhance sustainable peacebuilding in schools.

There is widespread concern about what schools can and should do to prevent violence and foster peaceful relations, inside schools and generally in the lives of youth and communities. Anti-violence efforts teach about conflict explicitly — through lessons and communication of rules — and also implicitly — through patterns of practice, language and silences, reinforcement of 'appropriate' identities and behaviors (e.g. Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Williams, 2004). In that light, this paper discusses results from a qualitative study of peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding policies, and programming in three large, urban school districts with diverse student populations. In particular, the paper examines the range of ways selected educators understood and responded to the problem of 'bullying,' and the implications of those approaches for diverse students' conflict management participation and learning.

Youth and schools today: Violence, bullying, bias and punishment

In Canada and the United States, in direct contrast to general public perceptions, evidence indicates that youth violent crime, especially at the most serious levels, is not increasing inside or outside schools, either among females or among young people in general (Brooks, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg, 2000; Doob & Cesaroni, 2004, p. 118). However what *has* certainly increased, in contrast to actual evidence of violence, is widespread fear and concern about youth violence. Some of this concern is fueled by sensationalized reporting of violent incidents in mass media, and some

probably responds to other social climate changes such as ethno-cultural heterogeneity and reduced deference to authority. In response to this social fear, *responses* to youth infractions, especially in schools, are often increasingly punitive (*ibid*). The behaviours that are actually severely punished are often defiance, drug, or property offenses, *not* necessarily violence (also Bickmore, 2004). In schools, economically marginalized and visible minority male students are often most harshly and disproportionately blamed and punished (Adams, 2000; Jull, 2000; McCadden, 1998; Verdugo, 2002). Meanwhile, equally-destructive but more covert conflict behaviour —such as bias-based and gendered relational aggression and exclusion— may be ignored by typical school conflict management practices (Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, & Lichty, 2009; Bergsgaard, 1997; Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Wiener, 2005).

In practice, the label 'zero tolerance' refers to a wide range of policies. These are inequitable and ineffective where school management and discipline systems emphasize and rely upon restriction, blame of individual students, punishment, and exclusion. Where standards for nonviolent behaviour are communicated clearly and upheld in an equitable manner, as part of a broad repertoire of conflict management and restorative practices, strict punishment (reserved for only the most serious violent behaviours) may form a defensible part of a comprehensive anti-violence system (Claassen & Claassen, 2004; Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter, 2004). The challenge of implementing such goals is compounded where poor and visible minority students are often clustered in under-resourced schools with less-experienced teachers and administrators (Jonathan Kozol, cited in Johnston, 2000).

In recent years, there has been an especially evident concern and discourse about 'bullying.' Scholars generally agree that bullying involves an imbalance of power between perpetrators and victims, intent to harm or intimidate, and usually a pattern of repeated aggression or aggressive exclusion (physical, verbal, and/or relational) over time (e.g. Coy, 2001; Pepler & Craig, 1994). In schools and the public, however, the term is understood in varying ways, and often used as a blunt instrument referring to any kind of aggression. Bullying activity often occurs in public areas of schools such as hallways and washrooms, but it can occur anywhere. An increasingly-prominent arena for bullying is electronic communications in cyber-space (Keith & Martin, 2005). Students' rates of reporting that they have been bullied, and/or have witnessed peers being bullied, are often considerably higher than school staffs' awareness of such problems; students and parents sometimes report that teachers and administrators don't take sufficient action to stop bullying activity (Olweus, 1997). As with violence in general, there is little persuasive evidence that the problem of bullying is any worse today than in previous generations, but clearly it has become unacceptable in principle, and there is widespread worry and concern about it.

Bullying is a social phenomenon. Not a simple matter of disputes among peers, it usually

involves direct or indirect participation of groups. "Bullying unfolds in the social context of the peer group, the classroom, the school, the family, and the larger community" (Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Wiener, 2005, p.719). Context matters: Some school and classroom environments are more conducive to bullying, compared to others (also Aronson, 2000). Criminalization of bullying — blaming and punishing individuals understood to be perpetrators, as for example in Edmonton's recently-adopted anti-bullying bylaw (Teotino, 2003) — seems unlikely to mitigate this complex problem, and could exacerbate the inequities often associated with punitive attempts at peacekeeping.

'Harassment' is essentially bullying behavior reinforced by bias and inequity such as racism, sexism, social class discrimination, and heterosexism. For example, a 2003 survey of 887 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in 48 US states showed that the *majority* of these young people felt unsafe in school, and were frequently verbally and/or physically harassed based on their sexual orientation or gender expression (Kosciw, 2004). Female and visible minority students are also at higher risk of being harassed than their dominant peers in many environments. Harassment often reflects and sustains a climate of inequity, disrespect and exclusion. Unfortunately hierarchy, social inequity, and intolerance are ignored in much of the theory and research about bullying. Too often, as Juanita Ross Epp laments, there is a double standard in the ways disrespect is normalized or punished: "When we respond to violence in schools, if we respond at all, it is to the children who are violent. … When a student embarrasses, ridicules or scorns another student it is harassment, bullying or teasing. When a teacher does it, it is [seen as] sound pedagogical practice" (in Epp & Watkinson, 1996, p.20).

As with bullying in general, bias-based harassment flourishes in some environments more than others —unfortunately, the discriminatory climates that fuel such aggression remain widespread. For example, school climate surveys in the USA and in Nova Scotia show Black students to be more likely than students from white or other groups to believe that teachers don't respect students, that racism is a problem in their schools, and/or that they are not treated equitably (Conrad, 2006; Gewertz, 2006). Complex social behaviors such as bullying and bias-based harassment may be among the types of victimization least effectively controlled by typical approaches to school discipline. There is good reason to find more equitable and effective approaches to handling conflict, violence, and social exclusion in schools.

Research on reducing violence among youth

Research on a range of anti-violence programs shows that effective remedies must be multifaceted, implemented thoroughly including professional development support for teachers, and sustained in frequency and duration. Meta-analyses of evaluations substantiate the effectiveness of explicit (separate or curriculum-infused) programs of instruction and practice that facilitate young

people's development of social and cognitive competence, respect and tolerance across differences, inclusion of marginalized students, and opportunities to be positively involved and to build strong relationships — in clear contrast to punishment-heavy approaches (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002; Erickson & McGuire, 2004; Hazler & Carney, 2002; Osterman, 2002; Scheckner, Rollin, Kaiser-Ulrey, & Wagner, 2002; Schwartz, 1999). Programs focusing on conflict resolution appear at least as effective as other kinds of violence prevention (Jones, 2004; Skiba, 2000). One study of system-level factors in 37 countries demonstrated a solid correlation between academic achievement variation (wider differences between the most- and least-successful students) and levels of school violence, independent of general crime rates in those countries (Akiba, LeTendre, Baker, & Goesling, 2003) — suggesting that efforts to improve diverse students' opportunities to succeed might also facilitate reduction in destructive competition, alienation, and therefore violence. While the evidence is clear that well-implemented, high-quality programming with the above characteristics are reliably effective, many violence prevention initiatives actually implemented are of lower quality and/or not fully developed and sustained. For example a US survey of 886 K-12 principals found that schools implemented a huge array of programs, but with a low average quality of implementation (Crosse, Burr, Cantor, Hagen, & Hantman, 2002). Thus much is known about effective ways of reducing violence, but what is typically implemented in schools does not approach that standard.

The above evidence demonstrates that development of students', teachers' and administrators' constructive conflict resolution skills, mutual respect, and related social competence is a crucial element in any effective anti-violence initiative. Such skill-building initiatives are probably effective not only because they broaden individual and community capacity to handle conflict nonviolently, but because in the process of facilitating that learning through participatory processes, relationships would be strengthened. The cognitive and social-emotional aspects of conflict resolution education contribute to academic engagement and learning as well as to violence reduction.

The most widely researched type of conflict resolution education initiative is peer mediation, which includes both actual intervention to manage disputes and development of awareness and skills through guided practice. Peer mediation programs may operate in the co-curriculum or in regular classrooms. Adequately-implemented peer mediation programs have impressive positive effects, reducing destructive aggressive behaviour (and associated suspensions) and developing participants' understanding, reasoning and social skills, and openness to handle conflict constructively and nonviolently (Bickmore, 2002; Burrell, Zirbel, & Allen, 2003; Harris, 2005; Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2005; Jones, 2004).

The effectiveness of other kinds of co-curricular and whole-class conflict resolution education programs is also well-substantiated (Brann-Barrett, 2005; Breunlin, Cimmarusti, Bryant-Edwards, & Hetherington, 2002; Jones, 2004; Jones & Sanford, 2003; Stevahn, 2004). For example, a meta-analysis of 32 quantitative studies found that the average effect size of these conflict resolution education programs would translate into a reasonable prediction of 2/3 to 3/4 reduction in incidence of students being bullied, harassed with hate language, or involved in fights (Garrard, 2005). Such initiatives are most effective when they are part of a comprehensive, long-range approach to both explicit instruction and regular practice in conflict management, equity, and restorative practices in schools, and when they include support for teacher development (also Opffer, 1997). Conflict resolution learning expectations are now typically infused in official curriculum requirements in a variety of subject areas (Bickmore, 2005a), but often without adequate support for teachers' development of capacity to effectively facilitate such learning (Bickmore, 2005b).

A number of scholars state categorically (though not always with robust evidence) that negotiation-based approaches are ineffective or even harmful as responses to bullying and harassment (e.g. Larkin, 1994). The target of harassment indeed could be seriously disadvantaged in a negotiation with a bully (who by definition has been able to leverage power over the target) — perhaps even more so if the dialogue were facilitated by an inexperienced peer mediator. Similarly, implications in many anti-bullying materials that the least-powerful participants in social interaction should be responsible for avoiding being bullied, by applying social skills, is at best naïve and unfair to victims.

Yet other approaches to dialogic problem-solving —such as class meetings, group conferencing and other circle processes conducted by skilled and equity-conscious facilitators— hold substantial promise as part of a comprehensive response to harassment problems. Facilitated circle processes can mitigate particular wrongs and prevent further harm, and at the same time they are arenas for developing participants' awareness and capacity to recognize and resist such victimization (Morrison, 2007; Palazzo & Hosea, 2004). Some currently-available anti-bullying programs also include a peer action component, in which students (who might otherwise have been passive bystanders) are trained to intervene to help de-escalate bullying situations. Thus communication and conflict resolution skill development can form an important *part* of a larger violence-prevention effort, even in cases of bias-based harassment or other bullying.

Beyond equitable and non-punitive discipline and conflict resolution education, one more element is crucial to sustainable violence prevention: the development and restoration of healthy relationships, within schools and between schools and communities, by addressing equity issues, building a sense of community, and acting to repair or mitigate the harms people cause one another.

Strong, respectful and equitable relationships provide both a motivation for nonviolent behavior and a resource (social capital) for constructive conflict management (Claassen & Claassen, 2004; Gladden, 2002).

In-classroom pedagogies, such as inclusive cooperative learning, can help to build such healthy and equitable relationships and to reduce violence (Aronson, 2000; Romo, 1997). Open, facilitated discussion of meaningful issues in classrooms is an effective way to develop skills, awareness, relationships, and inclination to participate in democracy (Angell, 1996; Hahn, 1998; Hess & Posselt, 2002; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schultz, 2001). In the rare cases when moral and existential issues are discussed in classrooms, students often report that these are among their most memorable and meaningful learning experiences (Simon, 2001). Effective and sustainable peacebuilding requires a comprehensive system of nurturing equitable relationships, conflict resolution and anti-bias education, and accessible opportunities for negotiated and restorative conflict management, to radically reduce the need for reactive or punitive security interventions. Only such comprehensive peacebuilding is powerful enough to actually prevent serious covert and overt bias-based harassment and other bullying.

Research method and sites

The project (2002-2007) was a qualitative examination of the range of intervention and prevention programming actually enacted to address violence and foster citizenship learning for sustainable peace, in three different socially and economically stressed urban school districts with diverse student populations. The goal was to understand educators' interpretation and implementation of a wide range of intersecting anti-violence, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding education policies and learning activities. Together, all of these policies and activities are conceptualized as a lived (implicit) curriculum for conflict management and citizenship. This paper highlights in particular 'anti-bullying' discourse and initiatives. It is based primarily on interviews with a wide range of staff in the largest of the school districts. Additional background information about each board's programming and policies was collected from local newspapers and school, program, school board, and provincial government documents.

Interviews took place between spring and fall 2005 in Board (district) A, which is profiled in this paper. Board A is a major urban school district, comprising several hundred schools enrolling about 300,000 students, of whom about half are foreign-born and over 40% are visible minorities from a wide variety of ethnic origins. For comparison, smaller studies were conducted in Board B (nearly 150 schools, over 50,000 students, about 10% foreign-born and about 10% visible minority, including an historically Black community in part of the city) and Board C (almost 100 schools and

35,000 students, about 12% foreign-born, about 10% Native/aboriginal, and about 15% other visible minorities). Boards A & C had comparable per-pupil funding, in each case some of it explicitly targeted to the especially high-needs schools focused upon in this study. Board B had considerably lower per-pupil funding than the other two districts, unevenly distributed across the district.

Purposive samples of key informants were selected for interviews based on their high levels of activity and leadership in efforts related to peacekeeping, peacemaking, and/or peacebuilding (intervention, prevention, and equity) in classroom and school-wide programming and policy. Interviewees, identified through public documents and recommendations by colleagues, represent a wide range of relevant program activities, ethnocultural and gender identities, organizational roles, and viewpoints. Racial and ethnic representation in the samples approximately reflects the demographic proportions in each district's staff, but unfortunately visible minorities make up such small proportions of those staffs that minority interviewees are not identified as such, to protect anonymity.

In board A, there were a total 51 interviewees, of whom 34 were in five focus schools (see below). Four interviewees were involved in exemplary peacemaking-related programs in other schools in the board. The remaining 13 interviewees were centrally-assigned (including one in a provincial government role relevant to this school board's work in this area). The Board B and C comparison studies include 16 and 22 interviews respectively, during winter and spring of 2006, with similar proportions of school-based, centrally-assigned, and provincial staff, but no 'focus' schools.

Focus schools —2 high schools (AHS & BHS), 1 K-6 elementary school (CES), and 2 K-8 elementary schools (DES & EES)— were identified by centrally-assigned school board staff, using agreed-upon criteria: (1) All were among the least privileged environments in the district — with ethnically diverse student populations, low average household incomes, high proportions of recent immigrants learning English, and high rates of mobility in and out of the schools. (2) At the same time, significantly higher suspension rates at BHS and EES (compared to AHS, CES & DES) indicated that these schools were having divergent experiences managing student conflict and violence. We interviewed 5-12 people per school, depending on school size. As with the wider sample, we sought in these schools interviewees who were involved in various curricular and/or co-curricular activities related to safe and inclusive schools and conflict-related education.

School-based interviewees are identified by codes indicating their general role (teacher = T, administrator = P, student support = SW), location at a high school (HS) or elementary school (ES), and gender (F or M). Centrally assigned interviewees are identified by codes describing their general role and gender. Data are illustrative, not necessarily generalizable to others in those schools or districts.

Interviews were voluntary, confidential (masking identifying details), semi-structured, and usually audio-recorded, usually lasting 35-50 minutes. In interviews, participants were invited to describe current, recent, and planned programs, procedures, and activities they saw as relevant to any aspect of the following: *peacekeeping* (security measures, intensive individual interventions for serious problem behavior); *peacemaking* (conflict resolution); and/or *peacebuilding* (broad-based, long-range opportunities for students and staff in conflict resolution education, diversity and equity, dialogue and decision-making about conflictual issues, and/or structures to strengthen community relationships).

Findings:

How is 'bullying' understood?

In Board A, as well as in comparison boards B and C, there had been some shift in attention away from broader conflict resolution approaches, toward framing more concerns and programming around bullying. In four of five focus schools, a concern about 'bullying' was prominent (even though interviews asked about conflict and violence, not naming bullying or harassment). Various centrally-assigned staff mentioned that in recent years they had heard "more talk about bullying, more awareness" (Student Services1F). Several school-based interviewees also noted that recent attention to bullying had seemed to eclipse other student conflict concerns and initiatives (CEST1F&T2M), and/or reported their own newly-kindled concern about bullying (DESP1M; DES3TsF; AHST1F).

Five of thirteen centrally-assigned staff raised (unprompted) a concern that resources and attention had been reallocated to anti-bullying, at the expense of peer conflict resolution (Province1F; Student Svcs3M) and other anti-violence programming such as child abuse prevention (Student Svcs2M). School-based interviewees reported a similar shift: "... children and teachers have learned to use that language: 'don't be bullied, use your words, tell somebody'… Teachers talk about bullying without really defining it as aggression with power. … It's a catchphrase right now" (DEST2F, also AHSSWF). Confirming this concern, some interviewees did refer to any physically aggressive behavior as bullying (DESP1M, DESP2F). It appeared that students were being taught to report to authorities ('tell somebody') every time there was even minor aggression or dispute: such authority-focused peacekeeping could encourage increased hierarchical monitoring and reduce opportunities for students to learn autonomous peer conflict resolution.

Harassment behavior was often simply labeled bullying, masking the bias elements that fueled the victimization, while any suspected aggression involving groups of non-white males was often referred to casually as a 'gang' problem. A centrally-assigned educational leader explained that

recent anti-violence initiatives "just label everything as bullying, they never look at the underlying things that bullying is about – race, gender, class equity" (Equity2F). Issues of bias were often ignored in peacekeeping approaches that focused on controlling symptoms rather than addressing underlying issues.

For example, an anti-bullying survey staff designed for one focus high school avoided any reference to bias, gender, or cultural diversity (AHSP1F&T1F). Another teacher in the same school pointed out in an anti-bullying committee meeting that the school calendar book (which includes rules and information for students) discussed harassment, "whereas we want kids to be willing to report a wider range of problems. The bullying term seems to be a more general and less loaded term; [it seems] less scary to name [problems] as that" (AHST4F). Clearly in any context of inequality, the dominant group are often relatively comfortable with the *status quo*. Labeling bias-based harassment as bullying could make it 'less scary' to name,' but it would redirect attention away from underlying social and systemic roots of the problem.

Centrally-assigned and focus school staff described race- and gender-based harassment that was exacerbated by particular global or local events. Some Muslim students —especially girls wearing the *hijab*— were harassed after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the USA, and some Chinese students were treated badly during the SARS virus scare in Toronto (Equity2F; BHST4M; EESP1M). Other high school teachers said boys from particular newcomer immigrant communities were making rude comments (in language staff did not understand) toward girls from their own backgrounds. "The girls feel trapped [by a] gender clash with their parents. They can't really go to the mums … They don't know what to say to the boys" (BHST1F). These interviewees believed that such complex inequity problems were not adequately recognized or addressed in prevailing understandings of bullying.

Thus peer disputes and bias-based harassment clearly occurred to some degree at all these schools, but educators' anti-violence energies were primarily focused on what they called bullying. 'Anti-bullying' programming, but not other conflict resolution or peacebuilding initiatives, were required in schools' annual plans. An elementary administrator described how, "knowing how to play the game," she had achieved extra funding for an anti-bullying program, while what she considered equally-worthy initiatives were turned down (CESP2F). Several educators lamented this disproportionate attention to bullying, because in the context of resource scarcity it meant relative inattention to other peacebuilding and anti-bias initiatives. For example, one leader saw "way more need for basic conflict resolution than there is for anti-bullying. Anti-bullying is important, certainly, but there's lots more we need to be doing: real preventative work…" (Province1F).

Different interpretations of peacekeeping social control policies

Contrasting beliefs and practices about how to handle 'bullying' tended to parallel educators' range of beliefs about handling aggression and conflict in general.

> I think there is still some division on the staff about how bullying should be addressed. One camp wants to come down hard, with programs like zero tolerance will deal with it so it won't happen again. Another camp wants to do some more proactive skill-building with the bully, understanding what the children need and asking what is making this happen and giving the students opportunities to be responsible, praising them when they do it right, and then a third camp says it depends ... (DEST2F).

In all three districts, centrally-assigned and school-based interviews pointed to considerable uncertainty and variation among schools in how to interpret the behavior policies. Some teachers and school-based administrators expressed a strong wish for clearer guidelines (BHST3F, AHST3F). Others seemed to think the board code of conduct was clear and inflexible: "It's the *law*" (EEST1F). Administrators sometimes chose not to give officially-mandatory suspensions for a given behavior: "we don't feel compelled to follow the policies to the letter, we can be more flexible… [For example] we will sometimes call parents to come and get their child, without calling it a suspension" (CESP2F, also EESP1M). Staff at other schools, who had interpreted the rules more literally, were instructed by supervisors to reduce their suspension rates (DES3TsF). Depending on administrators' biases, such flexibility or firmness could disproportionately (dis)advantage particular groups of students.

When school administrators perceived violence, threat of violence, or other infractions (drug possession, vandalism, robbery, defiance) as especially serious, centrally-assigned board staff became involved. Certain centrally-assigned staff spent the vast majority of their work time responding to serious individual incidents, after the fact, generally by suspending, expelling, and/or transferring individual students out of their schools. They also often referred these individuals to various voluntary programs for suspended students (Safe Schls3F, Safe Schls1M). Administrators who preferred to handle problems through support services such as counseling often called a different board office for help (BHSP1F; DESP1M). In other instances, school administrators called centrally-assigned safe schools staff because they knew of no other place to turn, but said what they really wanted was more student support services staff in their school. Under conditions of resource scarcity, clearly substantial staffing resources were allocated to policing and punishing, very few resources were allocated to conflict resolution or equity education, and there was a strong demand for more resources in student support services (also Equity1F; Province1F).

Six interviewees reported that in their experience males, and members of certain non-affluent visible minority groups (often African-heritage or recent immigrants from west Asia), were the students most often punished with suspension and expulsion (Student Svcs1F; Safe Schls1M; Safe Schls3F; Equity2F; Province1F; Equity1F). One school administrator indicated that students with identified behavior exceptionalities were the most frequently suspended in her school, although she was lenient when dealing with context factors and first offenses (CESP1F). Another administrator explained, "That's the problem with the zero tolerance – there are *always* extenuating factors, that you're weighing … Whereas if there's a weapon, then you do have to suspend" (DESP1M). There was no consensus in any of the districts about what would constitute sufficient consistency and firmness in discipline, yet sufficient flexibility and responsiveness to individual and social needs. At the same time, it was clear that certain populations of students (in Board A more than in Boards B and C), already living under challenging life circumstances, were disproportionately punished and excluded from school by the implementation of the discipline policy.

Other peacekeeping strategies implemented at various schools did not involve direct punishment — such as involvement of local police, rules disallowing clothing and accessories understood to be gang-related, hired hall monitors, video monitoring, and required ID badges that identified who was entitled to be in the school buildings. Interviewees who mentioned these measures all supported them (to varying degrees), although they saw them as minimal boundary-setting devices, not to be confused with actually resolving conflict (AHSP2F; AHST1F; BHST1F; BHST5F).

Targeted remediation and administrator-facilitated dialogue

In two of the five focus schools with lower violence rates, school administrators emphasized facilitating face-to-face dialogue between students in conflict. One elementary principal explained that his "strategy is mainly conversational," for example asking students who had been sent to his office for aggressive conflict behavior three questions (what happened, who do you think is responsible, how would you like to solve this?), and leaving them alone (when he considered this safe) to negotiate a set of answers that they would then discuss with him (EESP1M). A high school principal said the vice principal often "does mediation" with students in conflict, in which she encouraged students to reach understanding and "show remorse" for aggression (AHS P1&T1F). Clearly the power of the school administrator would influence the character of these conversations: In practice, this may involve more advising and arbitrating than autonomous student decision making. However, skillful facilitation of dialogue by an authority figure could potentially create a space for

some students involved in conflict to develop some understanding and empathy, while counter-balancing the power of those doing the bullying.

In the same high school that sometimes offered mediation by the vice principal, a guidance teacher described an "attitude adjustment program" they sometimes required for students accused of perpetrating bullying: "They have to [come in during their lunchtime or free period and] fill out a booklet, and watch a video, *Bully Beware*, and then there's another booklet they have to fill out" (AHS P1&T1F). This study found no evidence about the potential effectiveness of such an approach, in interviews or in research literature. On one hand, it is a peacekeeping intervention that triggers some effort at targeted remedial education, rather than simple exclusionary punishment. On the other hand, the approach is apparently based on an inaccurate understanding of bullying and its causes, blaming individual perpetrators and offering education in a form likely to be rejected by those individuals.

At the same high school, a social worker described how "obvious aggression … anything physical" was handled with often-severe punishment by vice principals (suspension and expulsion — she did not mention the mediation the principal had reported above), whereas if the problem involved "no physical bruises," especially patterns of relational aggression or threat, sometimes students would come to her for support, or be referred to her by a teacher (AHSSWF). She mentioned that where students had good relations with teachers, bullying and conflict issues could be handled more easily, often before they had escalated. Where such strong relationships had not developed, students were often reluctant to speak up, afraid of being seen as weak or "a rat" if they sought adult help.

The case of this high school shows how a range of different responses to violence may coexist at the same school. Clearly, different types of conflict and different student life situations do merit diverse responses. A student support services resource person explained, "Both [peacekeeping social control and counseling] are necessary, believe you me, but it's important not to get them confused" (StudentSvcs3M). Situations meriting conflict resolution (which is normal and should not be pathologized or punished) are distinguishable from situations meriting either counseling or punishment. At the same time, all of these responses to conflict operated in the shadow of the district's severe punishment rules, which sometimes took precedence over more restorative options. Questions about bias could arise wherever the distinctions among social control, therapeutic, and conflict resolution goals were not clear, and where this repertoire of responses were not in practice equally accessible to all members of a school community.

Resources for student support were scarce and unevenly distributed. Some schools had cooperative arrangements with local social agencies that provided various support for students and families, while other schools' resources were uncoordinated, or limited to occasional visits of school

board-employed support personnel. A centrally-assigned social worker said a substantial amount of his current workload was facilitating risk assessment and therapeutic support in severe situations of bullying and other violence. He said the character of this job had evolved: fifteen years ago, each social worker developed strong personal relationships with students, families and staff at just three or four assigned schools ("we were a real part of the school"). At the time of this study, each social worker was responsible for many more schools, worked through a peer support team. and (like other centrally-assigned staff) spent a larger proportion of their time in critical incident response (StudentSvcs3M).

To try to build capacity at the school level for non-punitive approaches, Board A's guidance department recently had developed and disseminated to each school a binder of print resources for handling bullying. Unfortunately, this was not accompanied by resources for professional development or staff planning time, so most school staff we interviewed had never opened the binder, if they knew it existed (e.g. DESP1M). Subsequent to the interviews, the provincial government allocated a sum of money to each school for anti-bullying programs and resources, but (as implemented in Board A) schools were given only a few days to figure out how to spend the money, which in any case was not sufficient to cover release time for staff learning or problem-solving (internal board memo March 22, 2006, forwarded by interviewee).

Choosing and communicating nonviolent behavior expectations

Interviews clearly showed that staffs at the focus schools with lower suspension rates were more comfortable (than those at the demographically-matched focus schools) with the ways they and their schools were currently handling student bullying and other aggression. Although the concern was most visible and strongly-felt at the schools experiencing more escalated aggression and punishment, throughout the system many interviewees expressed both uncertainty and concern about existing approaches to handling aggression and conflict education.

Virtually all the 89 educators interviewed for this study (in all 3 city school districts) reflected the increasingly-common understanding that nonviolent behavioral norms are learned, and that school staffs have a responsibility to communicate and teach explicitly the behaviors they want students to exhibit (see Schimmel, 1997). Educators frequently expressed desire for unified, consistent approaches to handling aggressive behavior.

> There are too many different approaches, and too many people trying to deal with the
> problem of bullying at the school – like the blind men and the elephant. Coming at it
> from different angles and not seeing the whole picture. … The anti-bullying [staff]
> committee here is trying to encourage a comprehensive approach to bullying

throughout the school. …[to have the] same language and approach used by kindergarten to grade eight teachers. By the time they reach grade 8, [students] would have had ten years of consistent approach and can act as mentors [to younger students] (DESP1M).

Whereas in other times and places perhaps homogeneous, culturally-rooted norms could have been assumed and implicit, these schools (with diverse, mobile populations) were attempting to make cultural knowledge and norms for handling conflict explicit through regularized programming. These strategies ranged from, "a safe schools assembly at the beginning of each semester, just to remind them of the rules" (BHSP1F) or having students "come up with the classroom rules at the beginning of the year" (DEST3F), to school-developed acronyms and keywords outlining expectations for handling conflict —"respect, responsibilities, attitude, choices and cooperation"— taught and used regularly in handling student conflict by all teaching and administrative staff in one school (EESP1; EES 3TsF). One could argue, with scholars such as Lederach (1995), that prescribing homogeneous responses to conflict would be impositional and limit cultural relevance. At the same time, social norms cannot grease the wheels of community if they are not at least partially shared.

In order to communicate such consistency to students, staffs first (through democratic deliberation, or by acceding to administrators' rules) have to reach consensus among themselves on basic approaches and principles. Because of limited resources and lack of consensus further up the hierarchy, such decisions were often left to school-based staffs to figure out. Time for school-based professional development and staff consultation was severely limited, making such collegial consensus building and strategizing a major challenge, especially in the schools that needed it most. One principal complained, "I feel that there is a strong message from the board to 'keep your schools safe,' though backed by little financial resource support" (CESP2F).

Recognition and extrinsic rewards approaches

A prominent way many elementary schools in Board A approached the goal of communicating common norms was through so-called character education programs in which adult staff were to 'catch students being good.' Individual students were given public recognition and/or other extrinsic rewards (such as tickets that could be redeemed for treats) that described and affirmed their 'good' behavior. Often these initiatives included monthly themes such as good listening or being helpful.

I think the school is evolving right now in how it's dealing with bullying. They're implementing more proactive strategies – not just reactive anymore. We're trying to

deal with the conflict before it happens. We're a Future Aces school: Teachers find
children showing inclusive behavior, looking out for peers, and so on: Their name
gets announced on the P.A. thanking them [pointing out a hallway bulletin board: 3
or 4 student names were posted with brief descriptions of their exemplary behavior.]
Past initiatives were poor … sending kids to the office … [just] following policy and
procedure. The school saw only physical aggression, regardless of the context.
Before, there was more about punishing behavior in relation to the policy. Now it's
more about communication (DEST2F).

Materials for these programs usually included suggested teaching activities focusing on each monthly
theme, but in practice implementation of these lessons was sparse, uneven, or not sustained after the
initial program start-up period. One teacher explained, "Everybody [teachers] used to have a [Future
Aces] folder to travel to classes, but I don't see many people using that now. We used to choose two
students (for good behavior) at the end of the month for an award, but that's about it – and no more"
(DEST1F).

Such programs are sometimes accused of indoctrinating culturally-dominant values and
compliant behaviors in an uncritical manner that could impede goals of creating welcoming,
supportive school climates (Otten, 2000). The unconscious biases of the people implementing the
program could exacerbate inequitable outcomes, if girls and boys of various ethnic origins tended to
get rewarded in ways that reinforced stereotypes. An assembly at the end of the month does not apply
what is known about effective teaching. One principal explained: "June was 'respect' month
[according to the Future Aces program]; so at the end of the month we have an assembly where we
hand out awards, and I see the other kids sitting there scratching their heads, wondering, 'how did that
kid earn that?'" (DESP1M). Similarly, a teacher leader explained: "My theory about reward and
consequence systems is that they need to be immediate. … daily, even more often with the littlest
kids, for example right after recess… Otherwise, they don't remember…. So, for elementary
students to get rewarded once a month makes no sense to me. I think they like getting an award, but
they don't understand what it was for" (CREEST1F).

Even in the unusual instance of thorough implementation that affirms cultural diversity and
offers immediate feedback on behavior, the literature offers no persuasive evidence of extrinsic-
reward character education programs' anti-bullying effectiveness. On one hand, these programs
(theoretically) could affirm students' bullying-resistant actions such as kindness or supporting a peer
rather than being passive bystanders. On the other hand, because bullying is a complex social
phenomenon and reward programs typically focus on assessing individuals, at the very least school
staffs would need quality training in recognizing, naming, and responding to subtle relational

behavior. Co-curricular extrinsic reward programs such as these are often initiated, not because they are known to be effective, but because they are easy to implement without professional development resources.

Opportunities for student 'leadership'

Students as well as adults thrive on opportunities to take initiative, build skills through guided practice, and share responsibility for peacebuilding. Interviewees lamented a change in priorities toward relatively controlling approaches, away from social skills and student leadership: "I think we haven't helped teachers to set up safe containers so that kids can have some freedom… I think we underestimate kids" (Province1F). Results of this study affirm the importance of such opportunities for peacebuilding, and focus schools provide some interesting examples of student initiative and leadership that have different implications for violence reduction, in particular anti-bullying.

A key factor that distinguishing the relatively peaceful focus schools from those with high violence rates was the quantity and variety of options for active student participation and student leadership in those schools. BHS had a remarkable range of autonomous student affinity and activity groups, facilitated by an active student council (BHST4M, BHSP1), although some teachers there still wished there were more such leadership initiatives, dedicated to peacemaking and equity education in particular (BHST3F; BHST5F). Students also had various helper roles that included training, for example mentoring immigrant newcomers to the school, or carrying walkie-talkies while assisting with first aid and safety. In addition, the principal met with selected diverse groups of about ten students per month, in which she told them, "you'll do the talking, and I'll do the listening." Initiatives that had arisen from those informal consultations included the principal and other staff volunteering to open the gym at lunchtime so that students could play basketball, in exchange for student participants' improved class attendance (BHSP1F). In one elementary schools, diverse students also were recruited for various peer leadership and helper roles, regularly and for special events such as a track and field day (EEST1M&T2F). In another elementary school, in addition to high-status, hand-picked peer monitors (see below), an equity club and other activities were designed to give a wider range of students opportunities for initiative (CEST3F). In contrast, in the one focus elementary and one focus high school with high violence rates, student leadership and autonomous activity was minimal and restricted to compliant students.

Several educators lamented cuts in Board A's budget (including release time for school-based teacher leaders and centrally-assigned staffing for student services and conflict resolution education) over the last dozen years, that had caused the demise of most of the student peacemaking leadership programs, in particular peer mediation (Province1F; CREEST1F).

I think something that was dropped, that we had worked hard on, was the development of peer mediation programs. Most schools have given up … It's important to have the kids participating and sharing the leadership… But these programs can't run without resources. They require funding, training, staff time, leadership, and good will to make them happen. … It's hardly happening across the system. … I think that peer mediation programs, when done properly, are incredibly positive programs with lasting benefits (SafeSchls1M).

Interviewees who had experienced successful peer peacemaking leadership programs in the past, especially those that kept diverse students successfully engaged, said they had had dedicated staff time available to develop and support the process (AHSP2F; StudentSvcs1F). This supports the findings of prior research on what makes such conflict resolution education programs effective, equitable and sustainable (Bickmore, 2001, 2002).

Teachers and administrators frequently mentioned that they would like to implement some kind of peer peacemaking leadership program, although their comments betrayed unclear distinctions among conflict resolution, counseling, monitoring, and other helper roles (e.g. DESP1M). A few educators (in contrast with scholarship cited above) believed that such student leaders could help to alleviate bullying (ibid, & AHS anti-bullying committee; AHSP1&T1).

One of the focus elementary schools had maintained for the past several years a peer monitoring program, described as "something like peacemakers" (CESP1F). These were high-status students from the school's oldest grade, selected by teachers and administrators who saw them as cooperative, 'positive' leaders. The program's advisor explained that they were "looked up to as role models and safety monitors for the other students. … The [monitors] do have some power, frankly: I don't want to put negative leaders in a position where they would potentially abuse that power" (CEST3F). These designated leaders were trained and met regularly with the teacher advisor. They served on duty in pairs at various stations during recesses, before and after school — reminding students to take turns, take hats off when entering the building, and so forth.

The [monitors] deal with the little, little things – obviously we don't want to put them in jeopardy. ... You know: he won't be my friend, or she pushed me, they won't play with me… Of course we always have teachers on duty when the kids are out there, so they're just another set of eyes… The [monitors] will go get the ice and the band-aids if someone falls, so we're not taking a teacher out of the yard to deal with something small. … And if it's something bigger, anything that's too aggressive – fighting or bullying – it comes to us, obviously, in the office (CESP1F).

Clearly these student leaders were not representative of the whole diverse population of the school. They did far more enforcing of rules (peacekeeping) than facilitating of autonomous peer problem-solving negotiations (peacemaking). At the same time, the monitors were clearly looked up to by peers (many wanted to become monitors), and performed a valuable service that was supported enthusiastically by all the CES staff interviewed.

Both administrators said that monitors' role was to handle very minor issues, but mentioned that they sometimes dealt with social exclusion situations ('they won't play with me' — above & CESP2F). This suggests that, here, bullying may have been understood primarily as physical aggression, while student leaders were being empowered to step into some relational conflicts without necessarily being fully aware of the ramifications. Thus this example of peer leadership raises some of the same questions raised by adult leadership, in particular how to distinguish social control and advising from conflict resolution facilitation roles — in order to better achieve each goal, and to broaden the opportunities for diverse students to influence their environment in positive ways. Scholars such as Aronson (2000) caution that empowerment of a few students by adults in a school may have unintended negative consequences for some marginalized students, since the elevation of some in a hierarchy (with limited space at the top) consequently demotes others.

In a few Board A high schools, selected students were able to receive credit (in guidance, under a course called GPP), and therefore dedicated meeting time and teacher staffing, for a one semester peer peacemaking leadership course. This took different forms in three programs examined in this research. In AHS, 20-24 students were taught by the designated course teacher, with some assistance from a guidance teacher, a community agency social worker, and an outside agency.

> We train them (in the first four weeks of the term) – team building, communication, and so on. Then they learn to do peer mediation, anti-bullying and conflict resolution and [they] begin to do that peer leadership in the school… A great deal of the time is spent discussing what's going on in the school. The students are very open and candid about [things like] bullying and who the loners are – stuff I wouldn't know about otherwise. … This enables me to facilitate learning to deal constructively with these issues (AHST2F).

Later in the term and beyond, the students were to move into a leadership role, working in pairs to offer peer mediations or visiting grade 9 classes to lead discussions on school issues including bullying. The designated teacher had found it difficult to sustain the program, so only a few mediations and about three class presentations had actually occurred (also AHST1F; AHSSWF).

AHS interviewees offered contrasting perspectives about which students were engaged in this leadership opportunity. Students were nominated for voluntary participation by their teachers, based on a sheet describing the program. All interviewees said that the vast majority of the students nominated and agreeing to participate had been girls. The teacher who did the selection and was managing the few remaining mediators said the group included both 'positive' and 'alternative' (or 'potential') leaders, but that all were compliant, responsible students (AHST1F). The teacher who led the course used the same language of 'alternative' leaders, but described a few student participants as having poor marks and even having been suspended:

> These kids have good rapport with the so-called 'bad kids' in the school – the ones
> that are always in the office, always in trouble. They have the 'coolness' factor.
> When those kids (who are often in trouble) see their peers talking sense to them,
> telling them we don't treat people like that here…they're more open to their peers'
> authority than to adults (AHST2F).

This teacher, who had been involved in the course for the first time the year of the interviews, made clear her enthusiasm for including such 'alternative leaders' in peacemaking leadership roles. At the same time, the role she describes sounds more like peer advising or monitoring than facilitation of autonomous peer decision-making (mediation). The principal and at least one teacher wanted to expand this program, to have these 'peer mediators' handle bullying cases. When asked whether they thought peer mediation was an appropriate process for such power-imbalanced situations, they said that it had not occurred to them that this might present a problem (AHSP1&T1).

For comparison, we interviewed the coordinator of a well-reputed peer mediation program associated with a GPP course at another Board A high school. That school offered a few sections of this course each year for voluntary enrollment, including students nominated by their teachers or self-nominated based on both 'negative' and 'positive' leadership qualities, plus a few students who "need help dealing with anger." The course focused on communication skills and discussion, including a strong literacy component.

> We do active listening and roadblocks and I messages, assertiveness training, conflict
> resolution and leadership skills training – all of these components include a literacy
> piece. The Ss have to keep a weekly journal. …The focus of the course is to talk
> about personal issues and how to be helpful with their peers. It's a leadership course.
> … There is an interview required [to join the course]. We have rarely turned anyone
> away. … The filling of the groups is not difficult, although it's the girls that want it

much more than the guys. I have to talk some of the guys into it. The groups

average about a quarter males (CREHS1T2F).

Out of the concurrent GPP classes, about 12 students per year, reflecting the diversity of the student body, were invited to become peer mediators. The coordinator gave those students an additional full day of training, building on the conflict resolution education already delivered in the GPP course.

This program had been sustained for at least ten years in that school, offering conflict mediation upon referral by administrators, teachers, and directly from peers. Peer mediators worked in pairs, sometimes with experienced mediators trained in previous years. The coordinator, student participants, and most school staff were, by this time, familiar with the types of conflict appropriate to refer to peer mediators — distinguishing disputes and misunderstandings that could be negotiated from situations requiring counseling or adult intervention. While serious bullying conflicts were not mediated by these peer mediators, the larger GPP courses from which the mediators were drawn offered education and a facilitated space for such matters to be discussed.

Substantiating the findings of research literature cited earlier, student participants in all the above initiatives seemed to gain deeply significant learning opportunities while also expanding the human resources available for peacemaking at the schools. However, this benefit to the school required infusion of solid, sustained adult support for the students' and programs' development. The monitor program at CES and the peer mediation program at CREHS1 were built into each school's staffing and timetable, so that qualified adults were available to mentor student leaders to carry out well-defined tasks. At AHS, a miscellany of so-far unsustained resources had been applied to start the mediation program, and currently-assigned program staff were unclear about which kinds of conflicts peer helpers should handle, and whether they would mediate or counsel. This program had evident potential, having been assigned timetable and staffing space at least for one semester per year, but so far it suffered from staff's lack of access to professional development and guidance to develop a coherent and sustainable program.

A different approach to anti-violence youth leadership, instead of assigning specific intervention roles such as mediator, brought volunteer participants together to develop awareness, and then encouraged them to design their own initiatives to influence peers. The most widespread such program across Board A was the network of ESP (Empowered Student Partnerships) clubs, sponsored by community liaison police officers. Student volunteer members of these clubs were typically successful students whose jobs and family responsibilities did not impede their attendance. Participation counted toward community service hours required for graduation. Unlike many other peacemaking leadership activities, they were often about 50% male. The ESP group at AHS was not particularly active the year of the interviews, but the ESP group at BHS was. ESP clubs' student

participants, with teacher advisors, were supposed survey their student body about concerns and chose a theme for each year's activities. The coordinator of the exemplary peer mediation program just described was also the ESP coordinator at her school: Her group had originally chosen bullying as that year's theme. However, she said the group had found that students knew the rhetoric about bullying, while the message "wasn't getting through," so they switched to a theme of helping students actually learn how to show kindness (CREHS1T2F). At BHS in the current year the ESP group's theme was theft; the previous year, the group had chosen "racial cliques" as its theme, and had held some interesting conversations between youth and police on racial profiling (BHST2F). ESP student participants did not have problem-solving roles in relation to threats of violence, but they were encouraged to report concerns to teachers and police partners to aid peacekeeping, as well as to initiate conversations and build relationships.

Another program framed as youth leadership focused on affirming cultural diversity rather than on controlling violence. Called SMILE, it involved multicultural leadership learning excursions, away from school sites, for small groups of selected students (meeting with students from other schools). Like ESP, SMILE did not create specific leadership responsibilities for participants, but focused on building their awareness, skills, and confidence to informally initiate anti-bias activities and peacebuilding. SMILE was intended to involve students of diverse cultural backgrounds and school experiences, not necessarily 'good' students in the narrow sense (BHSP1F; BHST2F). Unfortunately, SMILE had space for so few students (6 at one focus school that year, and none at the other) that one teacher I interviewed at the school that did have a program, who had been heavily involved in such co-curricular activities when they were more available in the past, thought that the SMILE program had ceased completely (BHST1F).

Another kind of peacebuilding youth leadership initiative was support and advocacy groups for particular populations of minority or marginalized students. These groups provided a space, and support from peers and an adult advisor, for students who otherwise may have felt excluded and/or harassed to develop skills, confidence, a secure sense of identity, and reliable social relationships to make their school experience more positively peaceful. From this base, some of these groups also initiated awareness or other advocacy activities for equity and inclusion. BHS, the more peaceful focus school, had several such groups, most focusing on ethnic or religious affinities. At AHS, a community social worker facilitated one 'be yourself' support and diversity/equity group that included a number of gay and lesbian students. After being approached by a student with the proposal, she had tried to start a Gay Straight Alliance: fearing reaction from the school's fairly large conservative religious population, the school's administration had not allowed the group name or publicity to mention homosexuality (AHSSWF; AHST1F).

Anti-violence peer leadership initiatives in Board A tended to be small, involving few students and often marginal to core activities such as classroom curriculum. This co-curricular marginality made these opportunities inaccessible to many students who could have benefited, and could have consequently contributed their leadership energies to building peaceful school communities. At the same time, according to interviewees who participated, the focused, co-curricular nature of these programs — and their emphasis on autonomous student leadership — allowed those initiatives to have remarkably positive (even transformative) effects on participants (ibid, & BHST2F).

Social skills and awareness programs

As one educator explained, "The kids need to be taught. We sort of pay lip service to soft skills (meaning teaching conflict resolution and social skills)… but I don't think people are taking that seriously these days – [curriculum activities are] all 'content'-driven now" (SafeSchls3F). A teacher, who worked with newcomer students for whom English was an additional language, pointed out that often aggression was provoked by frustration with communication: "What we need for peacemaking is proactive skill-building, giving every individual opportunities to succeed" (AHST3F).

Given scarce funding to release teachers for in-service professional development and planning, a common strategy for addressing social skill development was to bring in packaged programs or kits. Although their long-term goal was integrated programming adapted to their local contexts, several staff (especially at the most conflict-stressed schools) articulated remarkable faith and hope that they might find a particular program that would help to resolve their school's problems: "There's no [peacemaking] program here.… We're looking for programs. For example, students know alternate ways they could solve problems (rather than aggressively); they can tell you 'I know how to solve this,' but (in the moment) they don't put the words into practice. … We need something [a program] that's actually going to work" (DEST1F; also CEST1F&T2M). Not all social skills or peacemaking programs would be sufficient to handle bullying or bias-based harassment. However, clearly social competence development is an ingredient of any comprehensive peacebuilding strategy, and many programs claim anti-bullying benefits (especially in recent years, since 'anti-bullying' had become required and fundable through the schools' yearly action plans). A few social skills package programs, primarily produced by American companies for elementary classrooms, were well-known and across all three districts. Schools quite often switched packages, seeking a program that a sufficient proportion of staff would find workable and really implement in multiple grades (CESP1F). Administrators sometimes encouraged or required school staffs to adopt particular programs, but

administrators moved frequently and often programs were not sustained (EEST1F; CREES2P1M&P2F).

Second Step is a series of graded lesson materials intended to teach anger management, conflict communication skills, and empathy. Teacher training for this program was sometimes available, but in many cases teachers simply followed the instructions in the package kits, without extra training. Second Step is designed to be easy for teachers to use — for example, by showing the class a picture card portraying children in a conflict situation, while following a step-by-step lesson plan on the back of the card. Although kit materials pictured children with diverse ethnic appearances, to reduce the need for planning time the package offered teachers a rather narrowly-prescribed mainstream-culture script. A teacher who had used Second Step believed that, "there was not so much room for student initiative" (CEST2M). Many elementary schools owned at least a kit or two, although only about one teacher in each of two (of five) focus schools was actually using the materials at the time of the study. The possibility of using this package without special teacher training made these kits a moderate expense, but presumably limited the extent to which teachers really learned ways to teach or adapt materials to suit the cultures and conflict dynamics of their students, particularly in relation to complex social bullying situations. A teacher leader explained, "Second Step is a recipe book for preventing violent conflict in the classroom: It isn't going to work if teachers don't have time to sit down together and figure out how to implement and adapt the ideas in their classrooms" (CRE ET1F).

A package called Tribes, based on cooperative learning approaches designed to improve inclusivity and social competence (including conflict resolution), was popular in elementary focus schools and around Board A at the time of the study. Tribes required a training course by company-certified instructors as a prerequisite to accessing its materials. A few Board A personnel had completed the Tribes training required for trainers, so that they could offer the program to staff: However, even within-board trainings required a fee to the company and funding for release time (or, often, teachers' volunteer time in non-school hours), which made it a fairly costly resource. Various teachers reported using in their classrooms some of the activities they had learned in Tribes training, but not implementing the comprehensive program (DEST2F). Some said that Tribes reinforced the kind of teaching they were already doing: "basically, Tribes provides a name and a framework for things many teachers already do" (CEST1F). There was usually no follow-up consultation during the implementation process, so presumably teachers did select the Tribes practices with which they were most comfortable, thus tending to reinforce past practices even when alternative approaches were available in the package. The Tribes program is more explicitly multi-cultural, anti-discriminatory, and focused on inclusion than many commonly-available social skills (and cooperative learning)

packages. Also, because of the required training time and cooperative discussion approach, Tribes sometimes offered school staffs (if they did the training together) an opportunity for some joint deliberation and problem solving.

All of the elementary focus schools had a few teachers who had participated in training based on at least one of the social skills package programs. Usually such training had been only available to teachers who volunteered to participate on their own time, which tended to place it out of reach for teachers with children or other responsibilities outside school (CESP1F). This individual professional development, though sometimes important, could not substitute for collective discussion and problem-solving within school staffs, to achieve some level of consensus on schoolwide principles and practices for handling conflict.

Some interviewees reflected that developing peaceful classroom and school climates was not "so much [particular program] resources as a mindset, and strategies that can be shared …by teachers sitting down together in dialogue. But the time is really scarce for that" (DESP1M; also EES P1M).

> One of the criticisms about programs like Lion's Quest or Second Steps or Tribes… These programs are very expensive. To take 24-35 teachers out of school for several days for Tribes training, you can be talking about $20 grand, and that's just to cover the staff release time… and then there's the trainer cost, the materials…. The reality is that schools are assigned a couple of dollars per student for prevention: … that's not enough support or encouragement to do the prevention [on an on-going basis] (SafeSchls1M).

The scarcest resource for infusing effective peacemaking education, in order to prevent and resolve problems before harm would be done, was time for school-based in-service education and planning.

To support peacemaking-related programming where staff development time was scarce, Board A staff encouraged a number of partnership activities in which community agencies brought in outside people to offer educational initiatives in schools. Schools also made individual agreements with local social service agencies, and with local organizations who sold (or occasionally donated) their services as performers, speakers, and trainers. Approximately two dozen such organizations offered programs in Board A at the time of the interviews (SafeSchools1M; SafeSchls3F). Examples included *Roots of Empathy*, which involves bringing a parent and baby into a classroom for a series of monthly activities (DES3Ts), and *I'm a Great Kid,* a 6-week program that originally focused on sexual abuse prevention and social skills "and then it evolved more into bullying" (StudentSvcs2M). One of the largest such 'community partnership' arrangements, *Trinity Theatre,* was funded directly by the board administration to offer programs in several schools:

These programs develop skills with young people – they teach conflict resolution, anti-racism, anti-homophobia and so on. … Their approach [of the theatre programs we fund] is to train students to lead their peers…to teach the skills they learn to the younger students. They have done some mediation programs, but it's more [student] leadership programs, anti-bullying, anti-violence, saying no to the use of guns or drugs… We [school board staff] don't have anywhere near the resources to make [peacemaking education] happen on our own. [Programs run by, for example] Trinity Theatre don't require having to release any teachers, so they're affordable (SafeSchls1M).

Note again how interviewees noticed that some of these programs had reoriented toward the currently emphasized and funded goal frame, anti-bullying. There was no central system for assessing, vetting or coordinating such community-based educational initiatives, nor for sharing information about what resources were available.

Each school found, often through personal connections, particular resources. For example, one of the focus elementary schools had drama programs each year that emphasized social skill development, offered by an organization called *Prologue* (EES3Ts). Other elementary schools had hired a local organization called *Community Builders* to lead pull-out workshops for students in bias awareness and conflict mediation (CREEST1F). One of the focus high schools had an Issues Day for grade 10 students in which a whole range of community as well as board resource people led workshops on such topics as internet bullying, saying no to violence, and anti-homophobia (AHSP2F). The same school had had five different agencies come in over the last dozen years (once each, with short-term funding) to train peer mediators: They had heard about the most recent trainer because one of the teachers' husbands worked there (AHSSWF; also AHSP2F). These programs had offered little or no staff support for program development, nor follow-up, thus were generally not fully implemented or sustained.

Interviewees spoke highly of the few remaining centrally-assigned equity educators who were sometimes available to offer support for teachers, or workshops directly with students, on anti-discriminatory educational themes such as anti-racism and anti-homophobia (Equity1F; StudentSvcs2M). However, given reduced resources for such support staffing in Board A, it required luck to find out about these resources and access them — for example, one teacher happened to find out about the equity department's resource library when an equity staffperson came as a guest speaker to a graduate course the teacher took (BHST5F). Schools' access to particular resources, partnerships and services was distinctly uneven, depending on short-term windows of funding availability and on which community agencies and board personnel individual school staff happened to know. School

staffs' access to relationships for working the system was uneven, such that in practice the focus school that needed the most help had the fewest such resources actually available to it.

Board A leadership understood the need for much more comprehensive support for on-going, integrated school programming, but felt that existing resource priorities did not allow them to make that commitment.

> There's no time for the more relationship-based program development. …I don't think we have any system plan for doing proactive and long-term [peacemaking education or violence prevention]. …In the end, you have to make it work at the school level. Safety in itself won't make a school effective. … It's not as simple as putting Tribes into school A: That's not the fix, though it might be a support. We don't have the staff to make that happen (SafeSchls2M).

Essentially all Board A interviewees agreed that peacemaking education with sufficient depth, breadth, meaning, and sustainability would require more equitable and effective system-wide dissemination of resource information, and dedicated staff support for school-level change. Analysis of interviews at comparison Boards B and C demonstrated that such dissemination was feasible, even with considerably less per-student funding.

Peacebuilding for the long term: Infusing and supporting education and healthy relationships

To adequately and sustainably deal with the complex social challenges at the roots of bullying, bias-based harassment, and other destructive conflict patterns requires (re)building healthy, reliable, inclusive and equitable relationships that are embedded in the regularized business of living together. In schools, this means changes in core activities — curriculum and pedagogy (academic and explicit as well as lived and implicit) and human relationships between teachers and students. Of course no change this major can happen all at once: The programs and practices described above each represent places where schools might begin the transformation process. At the same time, if the difficult long-term goals of building just and healthy relationships become obscured by the minutia scratching the surface of daily school life, violence prevention will retain an unfortunate, self-sustaining pattern: coping with surface conflagrations and never getting to their sources.

A centrally-assigned student services leader reflected on the importance of communication among school staffs, families, and wider communities to nurture students' whole environment:

> We are realizing that a lot of what we thought worked really doesn't. We used to send [individual] kids to children's mental health centres, and to provide social skills training to kids identified as having deficits. … Now, I firmly believe that this is

about more than targeting kids: We need to target whole communities… We are

recognizing the importance of a whole school approach: There really needs to be

involvement by all staff, parents and the community… With social skills training, the

kids might get it intellectually, but then once they're left in a particular environment

(where there are inconsistent or damaging approaches to dealing with behavior, and

so forth) and their behaviors change (StudentSvcs2M).

Similarly, a principal at one of the more peaceful focus schools reflected on the implicit curriculum of
modeling and practice that's embedded in teachers' relationships with students:

I'm not a big fan of any of the programs, frankly. I think that 99% of the safety in

the school comes from what the staff do all day long. The important thing is the

relationships the students have with their teachers and what the expectations are in

their classroom around mutual respect, positive choices, attitudes, problems that can

be openly and positively solved. … What is most important is setting tone and having

discussions (EESP1M).

To accomplish these goals, this principal facilitated the same kinds of problem-solving discussions
among adults at staff meetings that he wanted his staff to conduct with their students. He taught his
staff, explicitly and through modeling and practice, "that even what we would call appalling behavior
has reasons, and we have to take care of those [underlying problems]" (ibid).

A teacher at another focus elementary school with a more challenging and violent climate
reflected a similar understanding of what matters, but made clear that she and her colleagues needed
leadership and support to learn how to accomplish that:

All day we deal with interpersonal skills. It's in everything we [teachers] do all

day… (But) I think part of the problem is, I don't think teachers are particularly well

versed in what to do … There's a lot of literature out there, but we don't know

interventions that work. …A lot of teachers don't know that bullying is learned, that

empathy can be learned, or how to make that happen (DEST3F).

Conflict resolution, bullying awareness, cross-cultural and anti-discriminatory learning
expectations are all officially required in provincial curriculum in various subject areas (Bickmore,
2006), and of course some teachers did carry out such curriculum and pedagogy regularly in their
classrooms. For example, some elementary teachers held class meetings or circles regularly in their
classrooms, to model and facilitate constructive communication and collective problem solving
(EESP1M; CEST1F&T2M; CEST3F). English teachers taught conflict communication and dialogue

skills, and practiced them through discussion of controversial issues, debate, and role playing (AHST3F; BHST2F). A social sciences teacher addressed issues of political conflict and cultural difference, including an oral history assignment in which students interviewed peers who were recent immigrants from origins different from their own (BHST5F). A health teacher spent substantial time on conflict resolution and bullying awareness (AHST2F). Centrally-assigned curriculum leaders — although staffing resources for dissemination were scarce — frequently infused conflicting perspectives, justice issues, and conflict communication skills into their academic support resources for teachers (Curriculum1M&2F).

At the same time, some of the above and other teachers interviewed seemed unaware that these kinds of peacebuilding education were, in fact, built into curriculum requirements rather than 'extra' (ibid & BHST3F).

> The big problem is seeing … these [conflict resolution] techniques as outside the curriculum. …Helping teachers to understand that this is a process that should be woven into their curriculum. Kindergarten and grade one teachers often are good at this, but then in the later grades, it gets lost. …Practicing communication is what's going to help them in their classroom (Province1F)

Communication, dealing with multiple viewpoints, and problem-solving are basic to every area of learning. The largest proportion of school time and energy, by far, goes into implementing classroom curriculum in various subject areas, yet there were minimal provincial or Board A resources available for pro-active curriculum leadership at the time of the study. The most under-funded and under-utilized resource for peacebuilding in schools is to clarify and strengthen the peacebuilding-related education already embedded in official subject-area curriculum requirements (Bickmore, 2005b).

Despite official curriculum requirements, in-depth diversity and equity education seemed rare in the regularized, frequent and sustained curriculum (or even co-curriculum) in the schools in this study. Thus even where issues of violence and bullying were addressed, the problems of bias that often motivate or exacerbate the problem were barely mentioned. One high school teacher, an advocate for student co-curricular activity, reflected, "Some of the problems that we may have in a school like this is simply the clash of cultures … the lack of knowledge about the other cultures. The more we can get cultures to meet and discuss what they are, who they are … [the more peaceful the environment will be]" (BHST4M). A colleague at the same school, similarly, advocated equity education as a key element of peacebuilding:

> I think that a good 50-60% of the conflicts [in this school] have an equity element – either race, religion, sexuality, or sexism. There is tension that a student holds in

after hearing an oppressive comment, and then eventually they explode. …Anytime you can facilitate equity in a school, you are facilitating peace in general, because you are facilitating acceptance and appreciation (BHST5F).

Clearly, such peacebuilding education requires resources, in order to eventually change schools sufficiently to reallocate resources from peacekeeping control and post-incident coping toward more proactive, humane and effective facilitation of conflict-related learning and healthy relationship development. A leader described the staffing resources for systematically supporting such communication and equity-building that had been lost in Board A over the past dozen or so years, including school-community liaison workers, student program workers, heritage language educators, and others who had facilitated communication and cooperation between diverse communities and schools: "They, too, could help us understand what's happening in particular communities… Now, without those, we're not really aware, until some tragedy occurs" (Equity2F).

Concluding discussion

Based on extensive analysis of documents and 89 in-depth individual interviews, this study has described the wide range of anti-violence-related discourse and initiatives enacted in three urban school districts serving diverse populations, and explored educators' interpretations of the meanings and ramifications of the various programming choices. While variation within districts was at least as large as between districts, in general Board A, profiled in this paper, showed an even more marked redirection of energies and activities than the other two — away from supporting autonomous student problem-solving or social action to redress inequities, for example in peer peacemaking facilitation or anti-bias workshops, toward initiatives emphasizing surveillance and control, often framed as 'anti-bullying' efforts. The diversity among initiatives and priorities, in particular between the more-peaceful and less-peaceful focus schools in Board A, helps to illustrate the important implications of these choices for citizenship and educational relationships in schools.

While the research team did not access confidential budget information, punitive responses to violence-related rule infractions seemed to take up large and increasing amounts of human resource, especially in Board A (indicated by allocation of staff time to post-incident fact-finding, exclusion proceedings, and remedial activities targeted to students who had been violent or disruptive). Again without access to systematic demographic data, interviews substantiated the findings of other research (e.g. Jull, 2000; Skiba & Peterson, 1999) that such control-oriented (peacekeeping) approaches seem to disproportionately harm the relationships of particular populations of racialized and economically marginalized students with their schools. Extending these findings, this study's findings suggest that even the gentler forms of peacekeeping, such as peer monitoring, tend to reinforce predictable status

hierarchies that disadvantage the same populations, for example by empowering a few 'good' students at the expense of most students' autonomy. Many of the anti-violence efforts described in school documents and interviews did not embody the sorts of multidimensional, long-term developmental approaches that research has shown to be effective in reducing violence (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002; Erickson & McGuire, 2004; Gladden, 2002).

Most of these initiatives, of course, were conducted with the best of intentions, understood through discourses on bullying and individual culpability for violence. However, as Noguera (1995) and others have argued, their unintended consequence may be to undercut the healthy relationships, especially with racially marginalized youth, that would make sustainable violence prevention possible.

Dialogic conflict resolution approaches to violence prevention tended to be few and shrinking in number and small in size in Board A, in contrast with Board B (despite its lower per-pupil funding) and Board C. In Boards A and B, funding (including staffing) for such programming had been reduced significantly over the last few years. However, all three districts did retain some such peacemaking initiatives, including peer-facilitated mediation programs and adult-facilitated problem-solving dialogue including restorative justice peacemaking circles. Interviewees who were engaged in such programming reinforced the findings of prior research that, when implemented inclusively, these dialogic approaches are effective in building important, academically-relevant social skills as well as reducing violence by addressing its causes and involving participants in learning to resolve their own problems (Bickmore, 2002; Harris, 2005; Jones, 2004; Morrison, 2007). At the same time, presumably due to the dearth of professional development and adult resource support (especially in Board A), in a remarkably high number of schools these ostensible peacemaking programs as implemented looked remarkably similar to more control-oriented peacekeeping; only a few programs successfully empowered a diverse range of students to actually conduct autonomous problem-solving dialogue (see also Bickmore, 2001).

Sustained, non-trivial programming initiatives designed to transform school and classroom curriculum and pedagogy to redress inequities, facilitate engagement, and rebuild relationships (long-term peacebuilding) were few and far between, and had suffered evident budget and staffing cuts especially in Board A. Although there were quite a few marginal and/or rhetorical efforts at equity pedagogy and inter-group bridge-building, most of these involved isolated one-day activities such as international fairs or issue-based theater presentations. In Board A more than the comparison districts, much of this prevention-oriented activity relied on outside organizations as presenters or trainers of (volunteer) teachers, thus little embedded capacity was developed within the board's own staff. Attention to gender equity was noticeably absent, and gender-, sexuality-, or racially-motivated

harassment tended to be addressed generically as bullying, without much attention to causes such as social bias. Focused support for student-centered conferences and classroom activities on racism and other equity matters had been scaled back in Board A. However, the most noticeable difference between the more peaceful focus schools than the less peaceful focus schools in Board A, in keeping with prior research (Aronson, 2000; Bickmore, 2008; Gladden, 2002; Simon, 2001), was that the peaceful schools had implemented relatively rich networks of student engagement activities, whereas the schools with high violence rates put higher proportions of energy into control and punishment. Clearly a study of this design, conducted at one point in time, cannot adequately substantiate a causal relationship between these elements. However, the impression of many interviewees was that recent cuts in resource allocations to equity and other peacebuilding activities had severely increased a sense of alienation among large groups of students, and impaired their capacity to build healthy, inclusive, nonviolent learning communities.

The strength of this study design was the large number and diversity of school-based as well as centrally-assigned key informant interviewees, who discussed a wide range of school climate, peace/conflict education, and anti-violence-related activities that have been usually studied in isolation from one another. In particular, the study juxtaposes implicit with explicit human relations (citizenship) learning opportunities. However, one major study limitation points to a paradox that deserves further study: The study's framing of issues and snowball sampling methods unintentionally seems to have over-sampled educators engaged in co-curricular activities (including discipline, peacemaking, and equity work). How might have activity inside (more) classrooms have compared with this co-curricular activity? A few interviewees pointed out that the inclusion of peacemaking and inclusive peacebuilding expectations in formal curriculum mandates had been presented as a rationale for cuts to co-curricular learning activities along those lines. On one hand, those co-curricular initiatives provided committed staffing and focused student time devoted to equity, conflict dialogue, and other peacebuilding activities. On the other hand, by definition such co-curricular activities are relatively marginal to the large numbers of students, and allocations of time and teaching resources, engaged in core classroom curriculum. Peacemaking and peacebuilding-related expectations are indeed increasingly included (although still mostly marginal and sometimes buried in the massive amounts of content mentioned) in formal curriculum mandates (Bickmore, 2006): future research is needed to understand how those expectations might be implemented, and how teachers may be supported to implement them effectively as peacebuilding citizenship education.

Peacebuilding requires a comprehensive array of intervention, prevention, and education. Somehow the balance, especially at Board A, had tipped too far toward labor-intensive, painful post-incident reaction and attempts at controlling bullying and other aggressive behavior, and too far away

from what schools do best: on-going developmental education, providing opportunities for diverse students to learn, to shine and to contribute. One of their own leaders offered this challenge and vision:

> The [Board A] should be bold. We should assign several million dollars to prevention. ... There should be staff… constantly reminding them to do prevention: Don't let it get away from you! … What's important is the human element, meeting and greeting … Everyone's so busy [now]… there's no time to be creative or innovative. We need to do way more, to make all kids feel cared for, loved and welcomed (SafeSchls1M).

The interviewees in this study have pointed to many spaces of possibility, to begin to bring this vision of inclusive, humane, educational work to fruition.

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