acting against Bullying
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COOLING CONFLICT
Action research 1996-2006

1996-1998 DRACON with Sweden and Malaysia
1999-2012 Cooling Conflicts NSW
ARC Linkage Grant followed by implementation in over 100 schools
ACTING AGAINST BULLYING

THE PROJECT

- ARC Linkage Grant with Education Queensland
- Implementation in 23 schools
- 2010 – 2012 Implemented in a range of challenging schools settings
ACTING AGAINST BULLYING

THE PROJECT

• **Empowers** students to deal with bullying
• **Democratic** - centred on students themselves
• **Helps students understand** the nature & causes of bullying
• **Provides strategies** to manage bullying
ACTING AGAINST BULLYING

THE AIMS

• To learn about how bullying happens
• To explore the dynamics of bullying and power imbalances
• To discover how everybody can be a bully, a victim or a complicit bystander in context
• To try out safely different ways of preventing or combating bullying
ACTING AGAINST BULLYING

THE TECHNIQUES

- drama and ...
- peer teaching used ...
- within the curriculum in an ...
- ongoing whole-school project
ACTING AGAINST BULLYING

DRAMA

• Provides models for investigating bullying
• Allows students to explore the nature and effects of bullying safely
• Allows students to experiment with possible ways to deal with bullying
• Provides contexts for exploring the behaviour of bully, bullied, and bystander
PEER TEACHING

• Reinforces the knowledge for the ‘teachers’
• Allows students to learn from people close in age who understand their problems
• Democratizes bullying management by:
  - providing a ‘mentoring’ web of support
  - giving the students the tools to take control of their own actions
  - giving the students tools to start to change the culture of schools
# Table A

## The Project in the School

The diagram illustrates the key class that teaches the following relay classes:

1. **1st Relay Class**
   - **2nd Relay Class**
     - **3rd Relay Class**
   - **2nd Relay Class**
   - **3rd Relay Class**

2. **1st Relay Class**
   - **2nd Relay Class**
     - **3rd Relay Class**
   - **2nd Relay Class**
   - **3rd Relay Class**

The relay classes proceed onward and downward.
WHAT IS BULLYING?

BULLYING IS THE ONGOING MISUSE OF AN IMBALANCE OF POWER CAUSING FEAR, SUFFERING OR HUMILIATION TO OTHERS LESS POWERFUL

• Physical
• Verbal
• Psychological
• Social/ Cyber
• Sexual
THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

- Bully
- Bullied
- Bystander

Anybody is capable of taking any of these roles depending on the context
THE STAGES OF BULLYING

Any bullying situation can be described as having three stages of development

• **Latent** – the conditions and tension exist
• **Emerging** – some bullying behaviour becomes explicit and recognisable
• **Manifest** – bullying is ongoing and its impact is clear to all parties
CHANGING STAGES

Bullying can

• Escalate
• Continue
• De-escalate

Bully, bullied and bystander all bear some responsibility and have some power to de-escalate or end the bullying
ADDRESSING BULLYING

Strategies to address bullying

• Confronting and acknowledging the bullying
• Avoiding the bullying situation
• Mediating in the bullying
• Appealing to others to help end it
THE PROCESS IN DETAIL

PHASE 1

THE KEY CLASS LEARNS

a senior drama class learns to understand bullying through drama
the key class teaches junior secondary (non-drama) classes through drama about bullying
THE PROCESS IN DETAIL

PHASE 3

THE 1st RELAY CLASSES
PEER-TEACH
THE
2nd RELAY CLASSES

The 1st relay classes hand the baton of knowledge about bullying to upper primary classes through drama
THE PROCESS IN DETAIL
PHASE 4

THE 1<sup>ST</sup> RELAY CLASSES PEER-TEACH THE 2<sup>ND</sup> RELAY CLASSES

The 2nd relay classes hand the baton down in turn…

AND SO ON DOWN THROUGH THE SCHOOL
THE KEY DRAMA TECHNIQUE
Enhanced Forum Theatre 1

Playbuilding a bullying scenario from real life or fiction (Augusto Boal)

Constructing the bullying play in three scenes – latent, emerging, manifest

Enhanced with process drama techniques and extensions
Enhanced Forum Theatre 2

Terminology

- **The Host** – The master of ceremonies, who controls the play and interventions
- **Intervention** – Audience members take the place of a character to try and change the outcome
- **Magic** - When something isn’t realistic
- **Hot Seating** – Questioning to establish background and motives of a character
- **Thought Tracking** – Questioning to determine what is going on in the minds of characters at one moment
- **Role Circle** - An entire group fictionalises the protagonist by creating personality and experiences
THE KEY DRAMA Technique
Enhanced Forum Theatre 3

The play is first performed three times led by the Host

• Performance 1 - straight through
• Performance 2 - enhanced with hotseating and thought tracking
• Performance 3 - the audience intervenes to try and de-escalate or end the bullying
Scene 4 Extension

The audience constructs alternative scenarios to deal with the bullying away from the battlefield portrayed in the original play.

The actors try out these scenarios.

The MC leads reflective discussion on the situation and fictional solutions.
The Impact of AAB on the Students

• Students from ages 5 – 18 were able to explore a range of real and fictional bullying situations in the safe environment of drama. They were also able to experiment with changing the bullying being enacted, thereby learning both how to, and how not, to deal with a range of bullying experiences.
The Impact of AAB on the Students

During three years of the project in 23 Queensland schools, the percentage of students indicating on questionnaires that they thought bullying could be prevented, de-escalated or stopped increased from 55% at the end of the first year in to 87.1% in the second year and reached 92.1% in at the end of the project.
The Impact of AAB on the Students

- The percentages of students indicating that they could manage bullying situations better after doing the program for one year was 61%. This rose to 63% in year 2 and to 70.3% in the final year. The percentage of students more likely to do something about a bullying situation in order to de-escalate or end it also reached 64.3% at the end of the project.
The Impact of AAB on the Students

The program gave students the opportunity to change actual bullying situations and to act differently in the drama, exploring ways they could have acted differently in the real life experience.

As a result, the percentage of students who indicated that they were more likely to intervene in a bullying situation as a bystander reached 73.5% by the end of the research.
The Impact of AAB on the Schools

• In NSW where the Cooling Conflicts project has run in over 100 schools, it not only had a significant effect on the incidence of conflict and bullying in the schools, but in many cases where the project ran for more than 5 years, and continues to run in whole clusters of schools, the culture of the schools themselves has changed.
In terms of managing conflict and bullying, 85.7% of the teachers involved in the project indicated that they felt more confident in dealing with both their own classes and with other students in the school.
SUMMING UP

The Program can work, and has done so with striking effect. In a significant number of high schools, the combination of drama and peer teaching has been almost universally empowering and educative for the students involved, and has changed the culture of the schools.

- However, the program is demanding and complex to implement, and requires the support of the whole school to work effectively.