
Project Peace teaches students the process of problem solving (mediation) with their peers. Project Peace is a nationwide program. Locally, the Erie County Bar Association sponsors the program by teaming a local attorney (Harbor Creek Resident Brian Fife) with our three elementary schools here in Harbor Creek. Klein Elementary piloted the program three years ago in an attempt to cut down on some of the discipline problems that were occurring during less structured time periods such as recess and lunch. Rolling Ridge and Clark Elementary Schools came on board a year later with the hopes also of eliminating some of the less severe discipline problems that develop from a lack of positive communication skills when conflicts arise. The program doesn’t stop at the elementary level, as students will have the same opportunities to utilize the program at the Junior/Senior High School as they move along in their education.

Students in grades four through six have the opportunity to apply at school to become mediators. The application process includes some basic information about the student in addition to an essay that explains why they feel they would make a good peer mediator. Interviews may also take place to aid in the process. The actual mediation process was initiated to target students in grades four through six, however the process is available to students in the lower grades if necessary.

Students can choose to take problem situation to mediation by completing a one-page questionnaire that briefly describes the problem, as the students understand it. A coordinating teacher then matches up both students with two trained student mediators. The students involved are notified as to the time and place of the mediation. The assigned mediators follow a simple script to assist the two disputants in talking out their problem situation. A teacher trained in the process of the program is also on hand to monitor the process. Through the process of mediation, everyone involved hears what has happened (both sides of the story) and what each student would like to see occur to solve the problem. Many times, after listening to the other student’s point of view, both students are very willing to come to some form of compromise to solve the situation and that is the end of it.

The whole process is confidential. This allows everyone to feel confident that others won’t become involved in a manner that is private. It helps to eliminate the negative peer pressure that may have been involved in the initial problem.

Please contact your school office should you have questions concerning the program.