

## **The No Excuses Mediation (NO XQZz)**

Though there are many other steps to fully putting the 100% Campaign in place, I'll move now to one of our most effective restorative practices: The No Excuses Mediation. In this mediation format, the goal is to have the participants take responsibility for their actions and 'repair the harm' or 'clean up the bad situation that you made'.

Basically, after an incident, the students are worked with by one of the Deans, a Guidance person, their advisor or anyone else with who they have a trusting relationship. The goal of the discussion is to talk them through the incident 2x. First to let the student vent about it and the second time, once they're calm, to reflect upon their behavior and analyze it. Here, you work with them to look for points where they chose to escalate the situation rather than deescalate it, identify what they could have done differently and brainstorm what they can do to help make things better right now. This type of serious self - reflective conversation gives young adults an avenue in which they can analyze their behavior, and take responsibility for it by doing what they can to 'make amends'. In other words, they can act like mature adults.

Examples of such repair would be: for vandalism or theft - fixing the damaged object or paying for it; for a fight, - both combatants apologizing to each other for their parts in escalating the conflict and then taking a joint 'speaking tour' where they visit classes on their grade and share their insights with classmates about better ways to resolve conflict. In this model, we have created the space in which they can learn and then go out and teach others. This is very powerful. And, therefore, suspensions can be legitimately reduced. In the fight example, a typical 5 day suspension has many times been reduced to one day with the above protocol being followed. And, that one day was usually the day of the fight when students needed to be sent home anyway to cool off.

## **Successes**

One instance of the No Excuses Mediation format working well involved a 7th grade female student and a female teacher who were always butting heads/engaging in a power struggle in front of the class. After the instructor wrote the young lady up 3x and kicked her out of class once, I asked if they would like to do a NoXQZz mediation. They both agreed and I worked with each one separately to get down to what was going on within each of them, how it was manifested in class and what they could do differently. When they got together, each, (with some coaching!) was able to admit to what factors were triggering them.

In brief, our 13 year old was in a power struggle with her mother at home and any form of order giving by her teacher set her off. Similarly, the teacher, having been raised in a culture where children were expected to 'do as they were told', could not tolerate any defiance and always met such defiance with a great show of force. With this all on the table, they both were able to apologize to each other and make agreements which would avoid each other's triggers in the future. The next time class met, they told jointly of their successful mediation. This let the class know that neither had 'won'; but that they had both won through the hard work of self - reflection and compromise.

Another example that showed the efficacy of having and using the 100% RESPECT! Guidelines occurred in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade history class. Here, a young man, for a variety of reasons, was resting his head on the desk. This clearly annoyed his teacher and a few times she went over and either woke him up or reminded him that such behavior was violating RESPECT! Guideline # 3 of the Student to Teacher list. Unfortunately, a few minutes later, the teen had his head on the desk again. The instructor, frustrated, blew up and ordered him to leave the classroom and go to the Asst. Principal's office. Now on the spot and being called out in front of the whole class, the young man responded with a string of curses and stomped out of the room.

Later in the day, a student in the class who was a RESPECT! Rep, came and told me about the incident. She asked me to "do something about it", as both people had clearly been in the wrong. I encouraged her to bring the issue up to both the teacher and the student and suggest that they do a mediation with me. Since confronting her teacher was more than she felt ready to do, we compromised and decided that I'd go with her for support when she spoke to her teacher. During that conversation, our RESPECT! Rep explained how humiliated the male student felt and that she and others in the class felt that Teacher - Student RESPECT! Guideline # 9 had been violated.

Ms. X, who was a strong supporter of the Campaign, quickly understood the error she had made and offered to mediate with her student, which we did the next day. After a successful dialogue both student and teacher were able to stand before the class later in the day to apologize for their causing the class to lose learning time. Importantly, Ms. X, took responsibility for making it in to a public scene by losing her temper when her private entreaties failed. Once again, adult and teen adversaries had worked through a typical classroom misunderstanding. And, with mutually agreed upon behavioral norms as their guide, were able to grow as individuals and teach others through their mistakes!