



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Welch

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Baltimore City Public Schools - Non-violent Conflict Resolution Curriculum

FOR the purpose of urging the CEO of the Baltimore City Public School System to develop a non-violent conflict resolution curriculum and to require every student in grades 3 through 12 to take an age-appropriate course on non-violent conflict resolution before graduating from the Baltimore City Public School system.

Recitals

Recent media reports of incidents that involved Baltimore City public school students behaving violently toward teachers, the general public, and each other emphasize the need for young persons to be educated about alternative means of addressing differences with others and to be given the tools to resolve conflicts so as to reach more acceptable outcomes.

In October 1996, recognizing the need to arm America's youngsters with non-violent conflict resolution alternatives, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education of the U.S. Department of Education jointly developed and published Conflict Resolution Education: A Guide to Implementing Programs in Schools, Youth-Serving Organizations, and Community and Juvenile Justice Settings.

The publication forward states that "the safe and orderly environments in our Nation's schools are essential to promoting high standards for learning and ensuring that all children have the opportunity to develop to the fullest potential. No teacher should ever fear to walk into a classroom, and no child should stay home from school because he or she is afraid. Too often, however, young people face conflicts before, during, and after school. They are subjected to bullying, teasing, and senseless, sometimes fatal, disputes over clothing and other possessions. Many of these conflicts either begin at school, or they are brought into school from the home or the community."

To address the issue of conflict resolution, the BCPSS currently presents a Code of Conduct, with age appropriate explanation for Grades 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12, containing the following principles:

- I respect others and myself. I am kind and courteous. I demonstrate positive verbal and nonverbal communication and positive behavior.
- I am responsible for my behavior and its consequences.
- I come to school on time, focused, and prepared to work.
- I demonstrate behaviors that promote a safe and civil learning environment
- I respect school property and the property of others.
- I present myself in an appropriate and orderly fashion at all times and in all settings. I demonstrate honesty and integrity at all times.

Recent events point to the need of far too many students for a more intensive approach to understanding and achieving respect for self and others. The federally sanctioned program presents compelling, valid reasons for every school to implement a program to teach youth conflict resolution:

- The problem-solving processes of conflict resolution (negotiation, mediation, and consensus decision making) can improve the school climate.
- Conflict resolution strategies can reduce violence, vandalism, chronic school absence, and suspension.
- Conflict resolution training helps students and teachers deepen their understanding of themselves and others and develops important life skills.
- Training in negotiation, mediation, and consensus decision making encourages a high level of citizenship activity.
- Shifting the responsibility for solving nonviolent conflicts to students frees adults to concentrate more on teaching and less on discipline.
- Behavior management systems that are more effective than detention, suspension, or expulsion are needed to deal with conflict in the school setting.
- Conflict resolution training increases skills in listening, critical thinking, and problem solving - skills basic to all learning.
- Conflict resolution education emphasizes seeing other points of view and resolving differences peacefully - skills that assist one to live in a multicultural world.
- Negotiation and mediation are problem-solving tools that are well suited to the problems that young people face, and those trained in these approaches often use them to solve problems for which they would not seek adult advice.

Statistics from the BCPSS show that, while short-term discretionary suspensions have decreased, long-term nondiscretionary suspensions for violent offenses, including assaults on teachers, have increased. It is apparent that more must be done to educate our children on the importance of non-violent conflict resolution in successfully co-existing and excelling in their schools, in their homes, and in their communities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That this Body urges the CEO of the Baltimore City Public School System to develop a non-violent conflict resolution curriculum and to require every student in grades 3 through 12 to take an age-appropriate course on non-violent conflict resolution before graduating from the Baltimore City Public School system.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the CEO of Baltimore City Public School System, the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly, the Director of the Mayor's Office of State Relations, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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