

10.4.94 p. A2

MARY McGRORY

Finally, a SCORE Worth Settling

Hope is on the way for city schools where violence is not in the curriculum but is on the daily agenda. It is an antidote administered by the students themselves; a program called School Conflict Resolution Experts. It was initiated in Massachusetts, whose attorney general, Scott Harshbarger, was here last week to collect a \$100,000 grant from the Ford Foundation and the John F. Kennedy School of Government to tell the rest of the country about it.

A pilot program of SCORE, coordinated by mediation expert Kathy Grant, was in place when Harshbarger came into office; and he greatly expanded it. Today, across the Bay State, mediators are in 26 high schools; 300 students have been trained in skills they had never heard of, such as listening and to both sides of a story, talking instead of fighting and persuading peers that it is cool to walk away from somebody you can't stand. Harshbarger's office claimed 2,500 successes.

SCORE proved its worth in December 1992, when Medford High School boiled over with racial strife. The question was whether the school would have to be closed down. Harshbarger called the police chief and the superintendent of schools and volunteered his services. They accepted. Coordinator Grant raced to the site, having garnered mediators from her reserve list. They worked all weekend.

The students were requested to name their leaders. Mediators insisted on diverse groups, with every ethnic group and both sexes represented.

"They were told to sit down with both sides and work out a solution agreeable to both sides," Harshbarger recalled. "Mediators are told not to decide who's right and who's wrong but to find out why the two sides feel the way they do about each other. Trace down the rumor that may have set them at each others' throats in the first place."

Student mediators are chosen with an eye to leadership qualities not academic

The information is strictly confidential. What they do is not so different from what Jimmy Carter, Colin Powell and Sam Nunn did two weeks ago in Haiti. They try to find out the fears—and price—of the troublemakers.

As for the applicability of their new skills to daily life, Harshbarger cites one of his student mediators who found himself at a midnight basketball game with a gun pointed at his head. He went into the routine: "Why do you feel this way? Don't you understand that if anything happens to me, you'll get life?"

What distinguishes SCORE is that it provides a full-time adult mediator at a troubled school, someone whose job it is to keep in touch with the principal and the faculty and the local police chief, to train student mediators. The state provides \$50,000 for the program. The community is expected to match it. Harshbarger's idea of reaching down to elementary schools for this alternative to fighting was tested last year at the inner city Anthony Bowen elementary school. Trouble came with the consolidation of Bowen with a nearby school that was closed down. Students from the closed school resented eviction. Bowen students resented the invasion. Principal Rosalie Huff recruited a small army of psychologists, parents and trained volunteers who helped tamp down the hostility.

Now a permanent program with funds from a Substance Abuse Prevention program is being put in place, and training for mediation duty begins in the fourth grade. Says Principal Huff, "Children have acquired control and the courage to walk away from a confrontation. It is no longer necessary for them to be thought of as chicken by the others. They know they have choices."

Meade High School, the Anne Arundel County school that blew up last Friday into something like a race riot, might have been better off with SCORE. Harshbarger thinks they should rush in an emergency mediation team to help keep the school open.

The whole question of peaceful resolution of student conflict has taken

accomplishment—"You don't look for National Merit scholars." Harshbarger explains. Gang leaders are considered excellent material because they have sway over their membership and remove any suspicion that only finks and nerds need apply. They undergo 20 hours of training. They are always available to fellow students who want to tell them about an ugliness brewing.

on a particular urgency in light of the Chicago Board of Education's recent ruling that saving children's lives is not part of a teacher's job. Last week, it reversed itself and granted compensation to Clarence Notree, who took a bullet while shielding his children from a gunman. But going to school and teaching it should not be so dangerous. SCORE should make it less so.



City of Cambridge

19.

IN CITY COUNCIL

October 17, 1994

COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
COUNCILLOR DUEHAY
COUNCILLOR MYERS
VICE MAYOR RUSSELL
COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU
COUNCILLOR WALSH

WHEREAS: Urban violence is a recognized national health epidemic for our youth; and

WHEREAS: This City has recognized this unfortunate problem by recently funding and staffing a position, through the Health and Hospitals and Human Services budgets, to develop and implement a program to help combat this health problem; and

WHEREAS: Attorney General Scott Harshbarger's Office has developed a program, Student Conflict Resolution Experts (SCORE) and this program has been implemented in various high school throughout the Commonwealth with tremendous success; and

WHEREAS: This program has proven to be invaluable in reversing the trend of violence in our schools and a cost-effective form of public protection; and

WHEREAS: SCORE teaches young people that there are alternatives to violence and in the last year SCORE trained student peer mediators have restored order in times of major school crises and helped to change attitudes and behavior; and

WHEREAS: SCORE has recently received recognition and a grant from the Ford Foundation and the Kennedy School of Government as one of the ten national winners of the "Innovations in State and Local Governments Award," (see attached article); and

WHEREAS: Many lessons learned in the school translate to useful tools outside the school setting; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this order congratulating the Attorney General and his staff for a job well done; and be it further

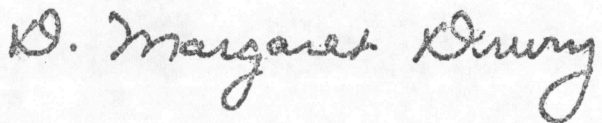
ORDERED: That the City Manager is hereby requested to confer with the Superintendent of Schools to apply for a SCORE program at CRLS.

In City Council October 17, 1994.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:- 

D. Margaret Drury,
City Clerk



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Duehay, Russell, Trantafillon,
Walsh Myers,

R-666

Consent Order #19

Councillor Sullivan re: Implementing Student
Conflict Resolution Experts (SCORE) in Cambridge
Schools.

In City Council October 17, 1994

Order adopted