**Beginning of the Year Tips for Coordinators**

by Nicky Lawson (Waterloo Primary School)

I am honoured to be able to share with you my handy hints for setting up a successful Cool Schools Peer Mediation programme in your school. These are the things that I do every year without fail and have found that they really help to lay the groundwork for a successful year of peer mediation. They will work well for both a large school like my own as well as small schools.

**Long term plan:**

- Before the school year begins, work out when the peer mediation events will occur. I

* always include training days, road shows, peace week and any other events that the mediators will be involved in.
* Share this with the rest of the staff, it will help everyone know what to expect and when.

**Communication:**

* Share your plans and ideas with your management/leadership team. You will need their support throughout the year for the events you have planned.
* Share some handy hints with the wider community through the school newsletter.

**Preparation:**

Be well prepared with all your resources and planning ready to go before the new year begins. I like to do the following:

* Make copies of the Peer Mediator’s Handbook for each new mediator.
* Prepare the playground mediation clipboards, name tags and other resources.
* Make copies of the mediation agreement forms, stickers and goody slips.

**Initial Mediation Assembly:**

* Arrange with your management team to have this happen at the conclusion of the mediators’ training and before the road shows.
* Use this to highlight and model any mediation tips you would like the whole school to work on e.g. listening skills or using “I” statements.

**Training:**

* Have this as early as you can.
* Use the mornings to work on mediation skills and knowledge.
* The afternoons should be left for assembly and/or road show preparation. I find that the mediators are often tired after a full morning of learning.
* Have some of last year’s mediators help you with the training.

**Playground duty:**

Before the new peer mediators begin their role in the playground it is important that all staff understand the mediation process, rules for mediation and how best they can support the mediators. I share and model this with the staff at the beginning of each year:

* Work through what conflict in the school is and what the mediators will not be expected to deal with e.g. bullying, violence stealing and breaking the school rules.
* Model and practice the basic mediation process.
* Show the staff where to find classroom resources as well as an outline of the mediation process.
* Stress the importance of helping the mediators only when they ask for it.

**Regular Meetings:**

* Meet on a weekly basis to share success and concerns.
* Use the meetings to consolidate and build on the learning the new mediators have had through their training.

I hope that you have found these tips useful as you begin the New Year. You have a very valuable and important role. Don’t forget to look after yourself as well as you look after your mediation team! Take time to relax and always celebrate the successes when they happen and accept, or ask for, help when you need it.

Kia kaha everyone and remember, don’t hesitate … mediate!