Creative Response to Conflict

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CRC Mission

Creative Response to Conflict's mission is to educate individuals and groups to transform conflict into positive and constructive experiences toward a just and peaceful world.

CRC History

Creative Response to Conflict (CRC) has educated teachers, young people, and communities to constructively address conflict and prevent and repair harm for nearly 50 years. Our trainings have helped break the cycle of violence and punitive discipline, encouraged student growth, and strengthened and transformed hundreds of schools in large, racially and economically diverse school districts in the New York Metropolitan Area.

Founded in New York City in 1972, funded by the Quaker Project on Community Conflict, and a program of the Peace and Social Action Program of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), our initial focus was providing nonviolent conflict resolution skills to children at the youngest possible age. We went on to expand our work to include people of all ages in schools, organizations, and communities.
CRC THEMES

**Cooperation** skills are essential in today’s collaborative school and workplace environments. CRC cooperation activities build group spirit, support team building, and help participants learn the skills they need to work together towards positive common goals.

**Communication** skills are fundamental to productive interactions. CRC communication activities provide practice and foster skills in listening, speaking, and observation. CRC’s participatory and interactive approach develops oral language skills while literacy connections support reading and writing.

**Affirmation** builds on cooperation and communication to help participants feel positive about themselves and others. CRC’s approach validates each individual’s contribution and highlights strengths and commonalities.

**Conflict Resolution** principles frame conflict as an expected, natural part of life and a pathway to growth, learning, and connection. CRC conflict resolution activities help participants expand their “toolbox” of strategies for responding to conflict. Skills include de-escalating conflict, looking at others’ points of view, and developing win-win/fair-fair solutions.

**Creative Problem-Solving** skills enable participants to generate creative solutions to conflict. CRC problem-solving activities develop critical thinking capabilities for fluency, flexibility, and elaboration as well as creativity and imagination.

**Bias Awareness / Anti-Bias**, including anti-racism, is key in understanding and responding to conflict. CRC activities create a safe environment in which participants explore and celebrate their cultures, examine power differentials, identify personal, cultural, and institutional forms of oppression, and develop strategies to effectively respond to discrimination.

**Mediation** is an approach in which facilitators help those in conflict communicate about a problem and develop creative solutions. CRC has helped many schools establish peer mediation programs, an approach shown to be useful in improving school climate and reducing disciplinary referrals.

**Creative Response to Bullying** incorporates a range of strategies appropriate to a wide variety of bullying situations. CRC’s holistic approach takes into account the needs of bullies, those they bully, and bystanders, as well as issues of power imbalance and bias. Both prevention and intervention are addressed.

**Restorative Practices** are intervention measures CRC uses to create and sustain supportive environments. Our staff incorporates circle keeping practices at a school-wide level to build students’ empathy and self-regulation, support teachers’ classroom management, and nurture positive school culture by cultivating a growth mindset.
Board of Directors

Robert Young, President
Sharon Nelson, Vice President
Dennis McGloster, Treasurer
David Heinrich, At Large
Priscilla Prutzman, Ex-Officio

Advisors to the Board

Richard Deats*

Dr. Fran Delahanty, Past President & Professor Emeritus, Pace University
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Leonard Kurz, Kurz Family Foundation / Forest Creatures Entertainment
Judith Meikle, Conflict Resolution Facilitator
Terry Murray, Professor, SUNY New Paltz
Dr. Barbara Nagle, Professor and Author of Conflict and Resolution
Lori Santo, Program Officer, Frieda Grove Program / Robert Woods Johnson Foundation

*In memoriam. CRC mourns the loss of Richard Deats, former Creative Response to Conflict Board President and Advisor. Deats was Editor of Fellowship Magazine at Fellowship of Reconciliation and a life-long advocate for nonviolence and justice. We are grateful for his years of devotion to CRC.
CRC Staff

Priscilla Prutzman, Co-Founder & Executive Director
Tara Fishler, Director of Learning & Development
Karen Heuer, Office Coordinator
Elizabeth Roberts, Director of Programs & Communications
2020-2021
INDIVIDUAL
CONTRIBUTORS

Steven Abel
Katherine Albert
Kathryn Aschliman
Carolyne Ashton
Marjorie Francis Baker
Myrna Bass-Hargrove
Lee Anne Bell
Adrienne Benberry
Deborah Block
David Blumenthal
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Susan Bullowa
Marcia Burkart
Beverly Ciokajlo
Ursula Daniels
Lyn Fine
Aron Fischman
Collette Fournier
Carlos Fox
Francisco Garcia-Quezada
Diane Goodman
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David Hartsough
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Marjorie Naughton
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Collette Tiftin
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Loren Weybright
Barbara Wright
Jeanne Yurk
American Arbitration Association
Cornell Cooperative Extension/PATH
JAMS Foundation/JAMS-ACR
Lindley Murray Fund/NY Yearly Meeting Religious Society of Friends
Satyagraha Fund/RSF Social Finance
United Way of Rockland
Wallace/Daniels Fund
OVERVIEW

CRC provides customized workshops to public and private schools (K-12), colleges, faith-based and non-profit organizations, community groups, and businesses. Our workshops focus on resolving conflict, restorative practices, bullying prevention and intervention, social-emotional learning, communication, problem-solving, and bias awareness (including anti-racism and LGBTQ+ awareness). Young children, teens, and adults participate in our workshops which are largely experiential. Our trained facilitators use interactive activities, cooperative games, and role-playing that help build skills in handling the many kinds of conflicts individuals face throughout their lives.

CRC continues to expand its restorative practices work in schools throughout the New York Metropolitan Area. We’ve worked extensively in New York City Schools and schools in Rockland and Orange counties.

We foster healthy relationships through the use of community-building circles, and training school staff in the use of re-entry and conflict circles to address disciplinary issues in more restorative ways.

We conduct restorative circles to address community-building and harm-repair for groups. Our restorative work includes circles to support people in prison and in re-entry.

We provide mediation for family, elder, workplace, and community disputes. We also offer workshops on preventing and addressing sexual harassment in the workplace. CRC offers workshops for families dealing with separation or divorce to support peaceful change in family dynamics. We provide a safe space for mediation, confrontation, argument, strong emotion, and discussion of uncomfortable subject matter.

Many of our workshops and trainings take place in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. We also present at conferences around the U.S. and internationally, including at peace and nonviolence conferences in India, Spain, and Peru.
Amidst the ongoing global pandemic, we continued to do all of our programming online this year. Though NYC Board of Education funding remained on hold, existing grants, donations, and federal payroll protection funds enabled us to continue training educators and students and working with people returning to their communities after incarceration. We also focused a great deal of our time on applying for many grants.

CRC in Schools

Rockland and Orange County Schools

We completed our social-emotional learning (SEL) and restorative practices grant from the NoVo Foundation by offering several more workshops for educators in the East Ramapo Central School District, Haverstraw-Stony Point Central School District, and Newburgh Enlarged City School District. We provided administrators, teachers, and support staff in the Newburgh district with several sessions focused on successfully implementing restorative practices and SEL in their classrooms. Overall, the NoVo grant enabled us to train over 800 educators. We saw an increase in participants' knowledge from pre- and post-tests and educators found the work extremely valuable. Attendance for most of our sessions filled up quickly and we were able to respond to increasing requests for workshops on SEL and restorative practices, thanks to the NoVo grant.

NoVo funds also enabled us to offer our new Peace Restored course, developed in partnership with Peace Peddlers. We ran the course twice for local teachers through the Rockland County Teachers’ Center. The first series was in August and the second series was in October. The purpose of the course is to give teachers an introduction to using restorative practices in their classrooms. They learn about the relationship between the SEL competencies and the three tiers of restorative practices as well as community-building activities they can use, both online and in person with their students. Participants were given an opportunity to practice experiential activities on themes including cooperation, communication, conflict resolution, problem-solving, affirmation and bias awareness. They developed tools to build relationships with...
students, decrease conflict, increase connection, and create a safe environment to maximize learning. This virtual, interactive course was taught via Zoom.

**New York City Schools**

We did a series of virtual meetings, circles and mediations to support the counseling staff at Bronx Academy of Software Engineering, a public high school focused on strengthening a school culture of transformative justice. CRC helped them resolve some issues and used transparent restorative processes to further their goals and their strategic planning process.

Due to COVID-related school closures, we had to suspend our restorative work at The High School for Arts and Technology (Manhattan), The Urban Assembly for Media Studies (Manhattan), Catherine and Count Basie Middle School 72 (Queens), Manhattan Business Academy (Manhattan), IS 126 Albert Shanker School for Visual & Performing Arts (Queens), and MS 217 Robert A. Van Wyck (Queens). We hope to be able to support teachers and students in these and other schools again in the fall.

**Peer Mediation & Social Media-tors!**

While NYC Board of Education funds were unavailable, we were fortunate to have a JAMS-ACR grant, enabling us to continue our Social Media-tors! program at MS 217, which has been in partnership with Bridg-It and researcher Tricia Jones of Temple University. CRC continued to train 6-8 grade students at MS 217 in peer mediation and social mediation, equipping them with skills to support their peers in solving conflicts and intervening in online bullying.

As part of CRC's leadership development model, we prepared previously trained students to train a new group of 6th graders in peer mediation and social mediation. These young leaders did an excellent job preparing, and the peer trainings were very successful. We continued to guide faculty and administrators, so students are well supported in helping their classmates constructively navigate conflict and a culture of peer mediation can successfully take hold.
The students used the Bridg-it app to give shout-outs to their peers and were trained to report negative incidents. Surprisingly, the students indicated there was a reduction in bullying. Despite the many challenges of COVID, the school closures resulted in fewer negative incidents among students. Our research on bullying during this time was one of only 7 studies world-wide. It showed a reduction in online bullying, mainly due to students being able to choose their peer groups and not face retribution in person, since schools were largely closed and only attended by 20% of students when opened.

Students who participated in these mediation programs have grown and developed a sense of confidence in their ability to promote more constructive behaviors and dispute resolution methods. Students were extremely proud and excited they were invited to present at faculty meetings on Mediation Day, as declared by their principal. They’ve indicated a sense of empowerment and we acknowledged their contributions to building a positive school culture by presenting them with certificates as school leaders during their 8th grade graduation ceremony.

Conflict Resolution Graduate Course
Once again, we offered this course, which is part of the Humanistic/Multi-cultural Education program for the State University of New York at New Paltz. Students of elementary education and social work take this course to help teach their prospective students and clients that conflict is not negative, but a natural part of life. The course helps soon-to-be practitioners teach
productive communication and affirmation skills, appreciation of diversity, empathy, and creative solutions to problems.

Objectives of the course include:

- Examining our own attitudes and values regarding conflict. (Intellectual growth);
- Studying the rationale for conflict-resolution in schools and examining a variety of approaches and skills for dealing with those conflicts. (Inquiry, intellectual growth, professionalism, and democratic citizenship);
- Exploring peer-mediation programs and developing understanding of how to implement them. (Diversity, and democratic citizenship); and
- Examining the implications of nonviolent conflict-resolution for both educational and social change.
- Some of the textbooks used in the course are CRC publications, including The Friendly Classroom for a Small Planet and The Friendly Classroom Mediation Manual. The course has been very well received at SUNY New Paltz, so CRC is exploring other area colleges to expand this program.

Community Workshops, Circles, & Mediation

Our Peace Restored course for teachers went so well, we adapted it and developed an additional training-for-trainers series as a pair of fee-for-service workshops. We ran the introductory and advanced series in the Spring and had a lively group of participants from various fields and backgrounds. We will offer it again this fall. We also ran a bias-awareness workshop through the Westchester Community College, a restorative circle for the Flushing Quaker Meeting, and a mediation for the Nyack YMCA.
has mainly been functioning as a support and bereavement group. One of the participants demonstrated initiative to apply the experience of participating in circles to becoming a circle-keeper. She has been attending our trainings and transferring her new skills to her public school students and fellow support group members. Our turn-key training and her stepping into leadership will enable us to step back and allow the circles to continue.

Circles for People in Prison & Re-Entry
With funding from the American Arbitration Association, we had year-long support for restorative circles for people returning to their communities after incarceration. While the grant originally also included programming in prisons, COVID restrictions made it impossible for us to work with people inside the Bedford Hills and Taconic women’s prisons. We reallocated those funds to extend the number of circles at two new re-entry sites.

Because we understand the role systemic racism plays in mass-incarceration—from profiling, the criminalization of poverty, and the school-to-prison pipeline—we understand those harmed often include
incarcerated people. One set of re-entry circles was done in partnership with MADE Transitional Services, for men in Rockland County. Initially, circles were held outside with social distance and masks. When the weather changed, we switched to holding circles online via Zoom. We completed this series after 10 months. The second set of re-entry circles has been in partnership with My Mother’s House (MMH) and is for those coming out of Taconic Women’s Correctional Facility. The AAA funds enabled 6 months of circles at this site and another donor has given funds to continue these circles through the summer of ‘21.

As part of this grant we also provided two 2-day trainings: introduction to circle-keeping and intermediate circle-keeping. We provided several of the MADE and MMH residents with these trainings to give them skills to help with listening and creating safe spaces for sharing stories in any situation. And, because our funding was limited, we hoped providing these skills might enable the circles to continue without us. We also included a small number of people involved in local social change projects aimed at finding alternatives to mass incarceration and policing. We wanted to help foster their understanding of restorative justice as a viable option in transforming communities.

We were asked to submit an article to the AAA’s Dispute Resolution Journal about the work we did under this grant. It will be published in 2022.

International Restorative Circle
We continued to convene our monthly online gathering, with participants around the country and world, to explore restorative practices. Most attendees have experience or are especially interested in this very specific work, and how to apply it. This circle is meant to provide an opportunity for mutual support and sharing of ideas and strategies.

For much of the year, we used the restorative format to discuss white supremacy, Black Lives Matter, and working to dismantle systemic racism. We had small and large group discussions and did role playing on circle-keeping, with a focus on successfully maintaining dialogue and respect in circles when discussing difficult and polarizing issues.
Nonviolence & Social Justice

Hudson Youth Leadership Academy (HYLA)

Since 2009 CRC has held HYLA, a five-day social justice-themed summer camp, designed to give young people leadership skills, confidence to create change, and the opportunity to become active in their local communities. The pandemic has prevented us from hosting HYLA though we hope to find additional ways to promote social justice and leadership skills among teens.

True Justice Screening & Discussion

For Martin Luther King, JR. Day, we hosted a well-attended online screening of the film "True Justice: Bryan Stevenson's Fight for Equality". The film focuses on how systemic racism built into the criminal justice system has resulted in mass incarceration, criminalization of Black people, including youth, and a disproportionate number of Black people being wrongfully convicted and executed. We followed the film with small group discussions, and reconvened for closing thoughts. We had a dozen co-sponsors from anti-racism groups in Rockland.

Conference Presentations

Despite the pandemic, many conferences took place online. We presented on our Social Mediators! program, our online training methods, and our restorative practices work for people in re-entry at several: Association of Conflict Resolution's conference, NoVo's conference on social-emotional learning in education, New York State Dispute Resolution Association's conference, and the Pennsylvania Council of Mediators annual conference.
UNIQUE ENGAGEMENTS WITH PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

1,460 ADULTS

246 STUDENTS

1,706 TOTAL
## MONTHLY NUMBERS

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<td><strong>Subtotal/ Adults</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total/ Participants</strong></td>
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FINANCIAL REPORT
JULY 1, 2020- JUNE 30, 2021

REVENUE & SUPPORT

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EXPENSES

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You may also obtain copies of our prior year’s 990, the annual filing with the IRS, from the New York State Charities Bureau at www.charitiesnys.com

For nearly 50 years, CRC has been supporting young people, educators, and communities thanks to contributions from supporters throughout the U.S. To sustain our work to transform conflict into an opportunity for growth and give more people the much-needed skills to restore harm and build community, please contribute as generously as you’re able: crc-global.org/donate

*Paycheck Protection Program low interest loan made by the U.S. Small Business Association at the onset of COVID-19. (The first of these was forgiven and this one has a high likelihood of forgiveness as well.)