Conflict Mediation Reflective Essay

Organized conflict mediation is becoming an increasingly common form of addressing different types of disagreements while meeting the needs of the opposing forces. I had heard of conflict mediation before beginning this unit. However, I did not realize the degree of detail and organization that was used. My observations and participation have helped me to develop an appreciation of this form of resolving differences as a viable way to bring about closure to many types of student conflict.

Going into this unit I was skeptical as to the effectiveness of conflict mediation. I was under the conception that individuals in disagreement would be unwilling to allow an uninvolved party to take charge and direct the argument. In addition, I felt that it would be difficult to find a mediator with an unbiased opinion who would give each party equal opportunity to defend themselves and explain their side of the story. Furthermore, the examples of peer mediation that I had witnessed briefly in the past involved mediators that were about the same age as the students involved in the argument. I felt that it would be difficult for students of the same age to cultivate credibility as a capable mediator. However, after witnessing examples, reading stories, and obtaining first-hand experience, I now realize that it can be done efficiently and effectively.

The thing that I found easiest about the mediation process was the organized, logical format. I appreciate the fact that the same basic steps can be taken in each situation to walk the opposing parties through the process. However, when practicing mediation, I found the most difficult part to be developing more open-ended questions for each party that would be non-judgmental in tone. For example, I practiced mock mediating two individuals who had gotten
into a fight on the basketball court at lunchtime. They each had their reasons for fighting; however none of them came close to truly justifying the act. Because of this, the only open-ended questions that came to mind were ones that incriminated the individual instead of helping to explain their story. In future situations I must do a more effective job of putting myself into their shoes.

After experiencing and practicing mediation firsthand, I have a new appreciation for the process and its effective potential when implemented in the right situations. It is inevitable that students will have disagreements. Some may be trivial while others may be of significant magnitude. In any case, the disagreement is important to the parties involved. If the conflict cannot be resolved on a personal level, then organized mediation may be an effective way of coming to terms with the issue and resolving conflict in a non-violent manner. In turn, the students may learn something new about themselves and each other. The conflict resolution and communication that students learn from this process are important life skills that can be applied to real situations for the rest of their lives.