Evaluating Problem Solving Partnerships in Washington, DC:
Tackling Disputes at Ballou High School

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Introduction

In 1998, the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, DC (MPDC) received a grant award from the Office of Community Oriented Police Services (COPS Office) to conduct a problem-solving project in Frank W. Ballou Senior High School. The grant focused initially on reducing bullying in the school, but eventually changed to reducing disputes among students.

MPDC selected 21st Century Solutions, Inc. as its evaluator. During the contract period, staff of 21st Century Solutions, Inc. made site visits, conducted in-person interviews, analyzed data from the school and police, and observed a variety of activities. This document describes the implementation of the problem-solving model and discusses possible impacts of the project on the school and police.

This report is divided into four major sections: 1) Background, 2) The Partnership, the School, and the Police, 3) Implementing Problem-Oriented Policing, and 4) Impact of the Project.

Section 1. Background

In 1998 the COPS Office initiated a major grant program to deal with crime and disorder problems in schools. The idea behind the program was to assist police and schools in implementing Problem-Oriented Policing, a strategy first developed by Herman Goldstein in 1979 (Goldstein, 1979 and Goldstein, 1990). While police agencies had successfully used the problem-solving model for crime and disorder problems on city streets, in parks and recreational areas, and in public housing, rarely did they work with schools to deal with day-to-day problems. The School-Based Partnership program (SBP) was an attempt to encourage law enforcement to work with school administrators, students, faculty and parents using this model. Over 150 jurisdictions received funding in 1998 at a cost of nearly $20 million. As part of the grant, the COPS Office required that law enforcement provide funds to evaluators to document and describe the implementation of the program.

The SARA Model

The most well known method for implementing Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) is the SARA model, which stands for <u>S</u>canning, <u>A</u>nalysis, <u>R</u>esponse, and <u>A</u>ssessment. John Eck and William Spelman in 1987 first developed the SARA model in their study of the Newport News (VA) Police Department (see Eck and Spelman, 1987 and Eck, et al. 1987). Participants, including police, school officials, researchers, and community members engage in this process to solve a specific problem.

Scanning involves identifying a specific problem at a specific location. There are a variety of methods for identifying the problems to be solved. Police can talk with citizens or other officers, check calls-for-service records, or request information about problems from other agencies. The idea is to narrow the scope of the problem so that it is manageable and reasonable.

Analysis means collecting and analyzing data about the problem selected during the scanning stage. During this stage, stakeholders must ask a series of specific questions about the victim, suspect, and location of the problem or crime. What are the characteristics of the victim and suspect? Where does the problem occur? Stakeholders and partners must keep an open mind about the various kinds of data that might be useful in answering these questions. For example, they may conduct citizen or business surveys, interview victims, officers, or others familiar with the problem or conduct surveillance. They might also gather "non-traditional" measures from non-police agencies. Armed with useful data and insightful analysis, stakeholders are often able to uncover information that is useful for developing creative response strategies.

In the *Response* stage, officers and other problem-solvers use the information collected during the analysis stage in an attempt to solve (or reduce the scope of) the problem. In some instances, the response can constitute a single action (such as an arrest or an eviction) by a single agency. In other cases, the response may be a complicated, multifaceted strategy that relies on the cooperation of police, teachers, administrators, students, local officials, and citizens. At this stage stakeholders formulate short-term and long-term goals.

In the *Assessment* stage, the stakeholders systematically examine the efficacy of their response strategy. In some cases, the assessment may be very simple. For instance, if the source of the problem is a single offender, and the offender has moved a far distance away or is serving a long prison term, then the problem may have been effectively solved. In most POP cases, the assessment should be more involved and more systematic. The basic question to be answered during this stage is whether the response was effective. Good assessments move beyond this simplistic approach, examining the duration of effectiveness. For instance, if police attempt to alleviate a problem with speeding motorists by issuing citations over a short period, they should follow this up by determining how long it takes before the effects of the increased enforcement begin to diminish. Another important issue during assessment is displacement. A response cannot be judged effective for reducing crime in one area if it increases crime in another area. This stage of the SARA process is systematically ignored by many agencies professing to practice POP. Taking this stage seriously is one of the major challenges to implementing POP.

The SARA model is a dynamic process involving a series of stages. Many of these stages fall outside the routine processes of police work and school functions. They involve data collection, systematic analysis, the design of creative solutions that may or may not involve the invocation of a formal criminal justice response (such as arrest), and the involvement of other agencies and organizations.

Research Questions and Methods
For this evaluation, we asked a number of questions related to implementation and the impact of the SARA model within MPDC and in Ballou High School. At each step of the SARA process we asked specific questions. For example, during the scanning phase we asked: What was done? By whom? Who were the stakeholders and key players involved in the process?

For the analysis phase we asked: What was the process for doing analysis? Who was involved? What types of data were used? What were the sources of the information? Did the partners look at the offenders, victims, and locations? How long was this phase (months, days)?

During the response phase we wanted to know what happened and who was involved. How was the response implemented? What resources did they draw upon to conduct the response phase? How long was this phase (months, days)? What were the challenges and obstacles encountered by those who participated?

In looking at the assessment phase we again stressed questions about who, what and how did things take shape? What types of data were used in this phase?

Evaluating the Impact of the Project
To assess the impact of the program we asked: What was the impact of the school-based partnership project on the police, school, and participants? What were the effects on calls for service, complaints, in-school disciplinary actions, and other indicators? Did perceptions of the problem change? Why? How? Did other changes occur over time? To answer these questions we conducted interviews with key stakeholders, analyzed survey results collected by the school and police, observed response phase activities, and reviewed police documents and newspaper articles over the two-year period.

Section 2. The Partnership, the School, and the Police
The Partnership

The project team consisted of members of the Washington, DC Metropolitan Police Department (MPDC), students and faculty at Frank W. Ballou Senior High School (Ballou HS), community representatives, students at the University of the District of Columbia, and the local evaluators.

The grant was written by Ms. Sharon Bean of Ballou and Sgt. Pat Williams of MPD (now a Lieutenant). Initially, Ms. Anne Grant (Policy Analyst) and two School Resource Officers (Officer Leonard Campbell and Officer Timothy Rich) represented MPD while a student (the President of the Student Government Association), Ms. Sharona Robinson (program aid) and Ms. Bean represented Ballou. As time passed, Ms. Grant was replaced by Ms. Yolanda Pauling and Officer Rich was replaced by Officer Kathy Jackson who was replaced by Officer Pam Mason. The student leader position changed as well. To assist Ms. Grant with data collection and analysis two students from the University of the District of Columbia received contracts. 21st Century Solutions, Inc. was selected as the local evaluator through a competitive process. In addition, a local resident, a learning facilitator from AmeriCorps, a youth organizer, and security officers at Ballou attended some of the initial meetings of the team. Overall, however, the core members of the group were Ms. Grant and Ms. Pauling, Ms. Bean, Ms. Robinson, Officer Campbell, Officer Mason, and the evaluators.

When the project began in earnest during the second semester of the 1999-2000 school year, the stakeholders met monthly to discuss issues and determine the specific problem they should address. Ms. Grant assumed a leadership role during the scanning and analysis phases and kept the group on specific tasks. She maintained notes of each meeting and helped the group construct the student surveys and the faculty survey. Ms. Bean and Ms. Robinson brought student leaders into the meetings, facilitated discussions, and served as the liaisons for students and representatives from MPDC. During the response phase, Ms. Pauling assumed a leadership role and put together a strategic plan for the group to follow. She made sure that the group implemented the plan by arranging for workshop speakers to attend assemblies, setting up the logistics for the student retreats, and by staying on top of the budget.

The School

Frank W. Ballou Senior High School is located in Ward 8 of the District of Columbia in the Southeast section of the city. The only high school in the area, about 1,100 students in grades nine through 12 attend Ballou. They are taught by 80 teachers. When the project first began in 1999, two principals, Dr. Art Bridges and Dr. Wilma Durham, shared responsibility for the school. In 2001 Dr. Bridges became the lone principal.

Ballou Senior High School has received notoriety from the media, primarily through the *Washington Post* and a book entitled, *A Hope in the Unseen* by Ron Suskind (1995). In June 2000, the *Post* ran a story about the violent deaths of eight students from Ballou

(Williams, 2000). From September 1999 to June 2000, all eight male students died from gunshots or stabbing. None were killed on school grounds, but the deaths affected the entire Ballou community. Memorial services were held throughout the year at the school and students, faculty, and parents made arrangements, attended the services, and mourned.

A Hope in the Unseen documents the struggles of a young man, Cedric Jennings, as he makes his way through Ballou and eventually to Brown University. Suskind won the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing in 1995 for his stories on Jennings, a talented black teenager struggling to succeed in Ballou. Suskind expanded those features into a full-length nonfiction narrative, following Jennings beyond his high-school graduation to Brown University. Published in 1998, the book became a best seller because of the author's fluid writing style and the compelling nature of the story. The author followed Jennings for about three years, virtually living with the young man and his mother and in the dormitories at Brown. The author discusses the negative attitude about learning at Ballou – how students who excelled were made to feel like pariahs by their peers and whose parents were unable to support or care about education. He also writes about the difficulties of the transition from an all-black inner-city high school to a predominantly white, upper-middle class university.

While the attitudes described in Suskind's book were somewhat apparent during our visits to Ballou, our observations show that some things are changing. Most notably, Dr. Art Bridges, the principal at Ballou, has made some significant environmental and attitudinal changes that have affected the students and faculty. The school-based project and its stakeholders also played a part in turning the school around.

When we first visited the school just prior to the 2000-01 school year, Ballou was noticeably dirty and unkempt--the floors were scuffed and dirty and the walls were unpainted. Less than a month later, new floors were installed and the school was freshly painted. As time passed, the school stayed clean and neat, with little or no trash on the floors, graffiti-less walls, and renovations occurring in the building.

In our interview, Dr. Bridges stated that the school is clean by design. He believes that in order to change the behavior of students, school officials had to change the environment and climate. He stated that he allows and encourages outside groups to use the school building by convening meetings and events during the evenings and on weekends. The outsiders pay for maintenance and disposal fees. On weekends, school staff uses the money to clean up the school.

Dr. Bridges is also concerned about graffiti. He believes that graffiti artists must be dissuaded from doing their damage. They use "white keel" to take the coloring out of graffiti and then paint over the graffiti. The paint takes time to dry so they can only do it on the weekends. For the most part, however, the policy is to cover graffiti within a week, thereby taking the fun out of marking the walls. Because graffiti artists assume that their work will be there for posterity, when it is immediately removed, they lose interest in using the area as a place to mark.

Dr. Bridges also puts an emphasis on security and respect. During the time between class periods, he marches into the middle of the hallways, directs traffic, says hello to students, and generally keeps order. Teachers, security officers, school resource officers, and other administrators also stand in the halls to maintain a 'presence.' When students are 'out of line,' Dr. Bridges is quick to let them know.

Dr. Bridges also enforces rules and regulations about behavior and security. He will not tolerate boys wearing hats (usually baseball caps) in school. Nor does he permit cursing or the use of profanity in the hallways. Security has also increased. Surveillance cameras, private security officers, identification cards, a metal detector, and a visitor sign-in sheet at the entryway are visible components of his security efforts.

The Police Department
The Metropolitan Police Department in Washington, DC (MPDC) serves a community of 519,000 with more than 4,200 members—approximately 3,600 sworn police officers and more than 600 civilian employees.

During the 1980s and 1990s the department suffered from a number of problems, including scandals, increased crime, and an alarming homicide rate. In April 1998, Charles Ramsey was hired as police chief from Chicago to reform a troubled D.C. force.

With Ramsey's hiring, MPDC turned to community policing in earnest. Using "Partnerships for Problem Solving" and more recently, "Policing for Prevention" as its moniker, the department made strides in technology, developed community partnerships, enhanced problem solving, and made organizational changes (http://mpdc.dc.gov) . Under Chief Ramsey, the city is now divided into 83 police service areas (PSAs), seven police districts, and three regional operations commands (ROCs). The PSA is the smallest geographical subdivision of the city; its size and shape usually follow neighborhood and natural boundaries.

The Policing for Prevention strategy consists of three basic approaches: Focused Law Enforcement, Neighborhood Partnerships, and Systemic Prevention. Focused Law Enforcement targets high-risk offenders and crime hot spots through the strategic use of police resources. Partnerships have been created with federal law enforcement, regulatory agencies, and criminal justice offices. The idea here is for police to reduce crime while keeping residents informed about planned enforcement efforts.

Neighborhood Partnerships bring together police, residents, city agencies, and other community stakeholders. This collaboration tackles crime areas and disorderly conditions that attract crime and degrade quality of life in the community. Systemic Prevention addresses underlying causes, or "risk factors," that are at the root of chronic, long-term problems in a community. Risk factors include drug abuse, lack of quality education and youth programs, family violence, and high unemployment.

To implement Policing for Prevention MPDC created the Police Service Area (PSA) team, made up of the PSA lieutenant, and his or her sergeants and 14-16 officers. The PSA lieutenant is the PSA manager. He or she is accountable for the quality of policing in the PSA 24-hours-a-day. The PSA lieutenant relies on the PSA sergeants to supervise the officers they are working with during their tours of duty. One of the most important goals of the PSA team is maintaining PSA integrity. This means responding to calls for service and getting to know the people and the problems in their PSA. The PSA team strives for visibility and accessibility to the people who live and work in their PSA.

During the 1990s crime declined citywide and in District 7, the police district that includes Ballou. Exhibits 1 and 2 show the decreases in crime from 1993 to 2000 for the city and District 7. Citywide, crime went down by 39% in the eight-year period, with homicides decreasing by almost 47%. Similarly, in District 7, crime declined by 55% with homicides dropping by over 65%. The downward spiral occurred five years before the inception of the Policing for Prevention model and thus, we cannot attribute the crime drop to success of the model. Nonetheless, Policing for Prevention appears to have stabilized the crime problem.

Section 3. Problem Solving at Ballou

The project began in the spring of 2000 after a slow start. The COPS Office awarded the grant to MPDC in September 1998, but several events occurred that precluded a fast start up. First, one of the original authors of the grant, Sgt. Pat Williams was promoted to Lieutenant and no longer had time to work on the project. Second, the unit that was supposed to implement and coordinate the project, Operation Save, was dissolved within the police department. Third, the COPS Office received a "draft proposal" with an incorrect budget that required modifications prior to final acceptance by the department.

To remedy these problems, the project was turned over to MPDC's Office of Organizational Development, specifically Ms. Anne Grant who worked within the Research and Resource Development Unit. Ms. Grant had experience with problem-oriented policing having edited a book on the topic through the Police Executive Research Forum, her former employer (see Shelley and Grant, 1998). Ms. Grant proceeded to restructure the grant and "reload" the budget for the project. This meant getting approval for a revised proposal and budget through the COPS Office and the DC government. After lengthy delays, a final version was approved by March 2000.

The setback in obtaining formal approval also meant that travel, equipment, and contracts were delayed. Furthermore, Ms. Grant noted that 18 months had passed since the original grant award date and that the environment and population of the school had changed. She correctly surmised that a new administration, faculty, and student body had rotated through the school and changed the original problem described in the proposal.

Exhibit 1. City-wide Crime Statistics, 1993-2000

Crime	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Homicide	454	399	360	397	301	260	241	242
Sexual Assault	324	249	292	260	218	190	248	251
Robbery	7,107	6,311	6,864	6,444	4,499	3,606	3,344	3,553
Aggravated Assault	9,003	8,218	7,225	6,310	5,688	4,932	4,616	4,582
Burglary	11,532	10,037	10,184	9,828	6,963	6,361	5,067	4,745
Larceny/Theft	31,466	29,673	32,281	31,343	26,748	24,321	21,673	21,637
Stolen Auto	8,060	8,257	10,192	9,975	7,569	6,501	6,652	6,600
Arson	200	206	209	162	150	119	105	108
Total	**68,146**	**63,350**	**67,607**	**64,719**	**52,136**	**46,290**	**41,946**	**41,718**
% Change, Previous Year	**N/A**	**-7.0**	**6.7**	**-4.3**	**-19.2**	**-11.2**	**-9.4**	**-0.5**

Exhibit 2. District 7, Crime Statistics, 1993-2000

Crime	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Homicide	133	97	79	112	67	54	52	46
Sexual Assault	93	63	68	72	46	53	41	38
Robbery	1,075	1,018	891	976	587	396	375	413
Aggravated Assault	2,396	2,082	1,780	1,672	1,306	1,082	987	953
Burglary	1,475	1,309	1,326	1,279	805	727	694	511
Larceny/Theft	2,176	2,223	1,940	2,191	1,735	1,339	1,164	1,160
Stolen Auto	1,256	1,306	1,630	1,698	850	750	742	731
Arson	38	64	50	25	21	22	14	19
Total	**8,642**	**8,162**	**7,764**	**8,025**	**5,417**	**4,423**	**4,069**	**3,871**
% Change, Previous Year	**N/A**	**-5.6**	**-4.9**	**3.4**	**-35.2**	**-18.3**	**-8.0**	**-4.9**

According to the MPDC Website, these statistics reflect preliminary crime reports made by individual police districts to the Department's Central Crime Analysis Unit. These numbers DO NOT reflect official index crime totals as reported to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting program. The preliminary statistics presented here are subject to change for a variety of reasons, including late reporting, reclassification of some offenses, and discovery that some offenses were unfounded. From http://mpdc.dc.gov

Because of these changes, Ms. Grant and Ms. Bean decided to administer a short student survey to learn more about the student population, their relationships with their parents and faculty members, and what problems they had faced during the school year. The survey was distributed in January 2000 and analyzed in the spring. A faculty survey was constructed and administered during the spring and coincided with the presentation of the findings of the student survey.

Two additional students surveys were administered in 2001 to provide information about disputes and solutions to that problem. Exhibit 3 shows the surveys, dates, and sample sizes.

Exhibit 3. Surveys

Type of Survey	Date of survey	Sample size	Total in School
Student Survey #1	Jan. 2000 (Scanning)	N=509	About 1,100
Faculty Survey	June 2000 (Analysis)	N=53	About 70
Student Survey #2	Feb. 2001 (Analysis)	N=300	About 1,100
Student Survey #3	Nov. 2001 (Analysis)	N=290	About 1,100

Results of Student Survey #1

The stakeholder group administered the first of three surveys in the winter of 2000. Almost half of the student body participated (n= 509 of 1,071 or 48%). Of these, 46.2% were males, and 52.5% were female. All the grades were almost equally represented, with the largest percentage of students (28%) from the 9th grade, and the smallest percentage (21%) from the 12th grade.

Student Survey #1 focused on why students were not attending school regularly, as well as specific questions about problems the students were having with other students, teachers or administrators or security staff.

School attendance

♦ Almost three-quarters of the students who responded to the questionnaire (366, or 71.9%) stated that they attend school five days a week. Twenty-four percent (122) of the respondents reported that they attend school three or four days a week.

♦ Approximately two-thirds of students (342) stated that they have had to leave school early two times or less since the school year started.

♦ The top three reasons for leaving school early or missing school altogether included feeling sick (53.2%), having a doctor/dentist appointment (44.6%), and attending to family business (27.7%). Almost 12 percent of students had to miss classes because of court business or a meeting with a probation officer. Interestingly, 113 of the students (22.2%) said that they left school early or were absent simply because they felt like missing school.

Problems in School

♦ Only 55 students (10.8%) said they did <u>not</u> have problems with other students; 90 students (17.7%) reported that they have <u>no</u> problems with teachers/school administrators; and 134 (26.3%) reported that they have <u>no</u> problems with the school resource officers/security personnel.

To the stakeholders, the most important questions dealt with issues about specific problems in the school.

♦ The top six types of responses, in order of popularity, were as follows for the three "problem" categories*:*

Exhibit 4. Types of Problems with Other Students

Problems with Other Students	Percent (n)
Verbal harassment	60.3 % (307)
Physical assault	50,7% (258)
Vandalism of school property/graffiti	47.2% (240)
Pressure to skip school	43.0% (219)
Threats	40.3% (205)
Stealing students' property	37.5% (191)

Exhibit 5. Types of Problems with Teachers or School Administrators

Problems with Teachers/School Admin	Percent (n)
Favoritism	54.2 (276)
Verbal harassment	32.4 (165)
No problems	17.7 (90)
Threats	16.3 (83)
Sexual harassment	13.6 (69)
Physical assault	11.2 (57)

Exhibit 6. Types of Problems with School Police/Security

Problems with Teachers/School Admin	Percent (n)
Favoritism	33.8 (172)
Verbal harassment	31.0 (158)
No problems	26.3 (134)
Threats	19.4 (99)
Physical assault	17.3 (88)
Sexual harassment	16.5 (84)

The stakeholders were also interested in the views of the students regarding School Resource Officers, teachers, principals and parents. Unfortunately, about one-quarter of the students stopped answering these survey questions. The percentages below are based on the number of valid (non-missing) responses (n= 376).

Contact with School Resource Officers:

♦ More than half of the students reported that they had less than occasional contact with Officers Rich and Campbell each week. However, more than 90 percent (339) feel that it is at least somewhat useful to have them working at Ballou, and 82.2 percent (309) said that they would feel at least somewhat comfortable approaching one or both of the officers if they had a problem.

Contact with teachers, principals, and support from parents:

♦ Almost 70 percent of the students (260) reported that they have at least occasional one-on-one contact with their teachers apart from regular class time. Similarly, more than three-quarters of students (286) said that they would feel at least somewhat comfortable approaching one or more of their teachers if they had a problem.

♦ Almost half of the students (177) reported that they have less than occasional one-on-one interaction with one or both of the principals. However, almost 75 percent (278) said that they would feel at least somewhat comfortable approaching one or more of their principals if they had a problem.

♦ Seven percent of students (26) rated the supportiveness of their parents in their academic performance and participation in school activities as 1 or 2 on a scale of 1–5; 78 (21.0%) as 3, or somewhat supportive; and 72 percent (268) as a 4 or 5.

Originally, in 1998, MPDC stakeholders selected bullying/threat/intimidation of students going to and from school as the primary problem. But these data and discussions with teachers, students, and co-principals led the stakeholders to make a change in the problem type.

In June 2000, following a brainstorming session, the group decided to focus on *disputes (between students and members of other affiliations that pose a specific threat to student safety).* In making the change to this problem type, the group felt that the larger problem in the school involved disputes that began in the neighborhood and extended into the school. Several unorganized neighborhood groups (or "crews") were creating problems in unsupervised areas of the school, notably the lunchroom and school hallways. Students began "posturing" or disrespecting each other, calling each other names, and at times, escalating into physical fights. Thus, the stakeholder team decided to analyze the cause of the disputes more closely.

Analysis
Under Ms. Grant's direction, the stakeholders held a number of monthly discussion sessions, conducted two more surveys, and collected additional data.

Monthly Meetings
From the monthly meetings and interviews with Reverend Anthony Motley[1] the project team learned about the behavior of students at Ballou and how disputes escalate into fights. Overall, they found that students were dealing with adult responsibilities, dysfunctional home environments, and difficult social relationships. Disputes occurred between kids from neighboring residential areas. Often there were no reasons for specific fights, they simply happened. One of the participants in the meeting noted that students

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[1] Reverend Motley is a "street evangelist" who practices redemption ministry. The Washington Post (August 26, 2001) described him as a "former gun-toting, cocaine-sniffing, trash-talking drug dealer himself. So he knows what may lurk beneath the streetwise swagger: a burning desire to be saved."

couldn't handle all the problems they faced and did not have the tools to do so -- "they do not know how to think before they act." They were also looking for consistent support from adults, but that was not always available.

The stakeholders also learned that about 24 crews or gangs exist within the Ballou area (of about 232 total crews in DC). While these groups are "loosely-knit" (not formally organized) they have good networking skills and can call each other to come whenever there is a problem with another group. So, when a dispute in the neighborhood starts, a lone participant might call for help and his crew shows up rather quickly and they engage in a fight. If fights are unresolved during the weekend, they will carryover into school on the following Monday morning.

Students who attended some of the monthly meetings indicated that fighting took place over "stupid stuff." They said that petty jealousies between girls often led to loud arguments and fights. One 9th grader noted that there were a "lot of boyfriend/girlfriend fights" as well. When asked whether the problem was worse now than before, one 10th grade boy said that "it's cooling off;" that the problems were dramatic last year, with all of the deaths that occurred.

When asked if they had been in the middle of fights, all of the students said yes (about 8 students). Girls talked about the fights they were involved in with their girlfriends in the past year. They indicated that peer mediation helped them work out the problems. They "listened to each other" and were willing to work things out and were "successful." The students also said that while peer mediation could work for some students, there were "some kids who are not mature enough to accept or deal with it (peer mediation)."

Analysis of School Data
The Division of Security for the District of Columbia Public Schools provided the stakeholders with important information about incidents that occurred at Ballou from September 1997 to June 2000. While the data were limited, they provided a picture of events reported to security.

Overall, the number of incidents declined from 1997 to 1999. In the 1997-98 school year, 139 incidents were reported. In 1998-99 the number dropped to 100 and again dropped in 1999-2000 to 67. Of the 306 incidents, 6 percent (18) involved non-sexual assault, 5.2 percent (16) involved fights and 22.2 percent (68) involved a weapon.

Half of the total incidents occurred on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. One-third of the incidents for the 1999-2000 school year occurred in the morning hours or right after lunch.

Additional Surveys
During the analysis phase, two student surveys were conducted -- one in the Spring semester, 2001 (Survey #2) and the second during Fall semester, 2001 (Survey #3). Because these two samples were conducted at different times and with different population groups, we discuss each separately.

Results from Survey #2: Identifying Disputes as a Problem

Survey #2 was conducted in January 2001, immediately after Winter break and focused specifically on disputes. Nearly 300 students responded to this survey.

Student Survey #2 asked: Are disputes still a serious problem at Ballou? Sixty-seven percent of respondents said yes. A series of questions was asked about the last dispute that students witnessed or were involved in at Ballou (inside the school or on school grounds) on a day when school was in session. Specific questions included:

- Who was directly involved in this dispute?
- When did this dispute occur?
- Where did this dispute occur?
- Why do you think the dispute occurred here?
- What started the dispute?
- Was there a weapon involved in this dispute?
- Was this dispute the result of a disagreement that began away from school?
- What did school administrators/faculty/ officers do to resolve this dispute?

Disputes involving female and male students were reported most often. In Survey #2, 38.9 percent reported the last dispute involved female and male students. The number of respondents reporting disputes between male students was 35.4 percent and 17.2 percent said that disputes occurred between female students.

Fifty-four percent reported disputes during school while 22 percent said that disputes occurred on the way to school and 11.5 percent said they occurred right after school.

Locations for the disputes included the street (34.7%), the hallway/stairwell (32.5%), and the lunchroom (23.2%).

Most students (42.5%) did not know why the disputes were occurring, but 20 percent reported that disputes were occurring in the areas because the areas were very crowded and no one notices bad behavior and that there was not a lot of supervision in the area.

Reasons for disputes
Anger over another student's disrespectful attitude/ behavior was the leading reason for starting a dispute (29 percent selected this choice). Other top choices on the survey included:

- Jealousy over another student's boyfriend/girlfriend (25.5 percent)
- Misunderstanding (18.5 percent)

About 13 percent of respondents stated that a weapon was involved, with 30 percent reporting that they did not know whether a weapon was involved.

Twenty-seven percent reported that the dispute was the result of a disagreement that began away from the school.

Suggestions for Stopping Disputes
Youth court, peer mediation/ conflict resolution seminars for students run by trained adults and peer mediation/conflict resolution seminars for students run by other students topped the list for options that student respondents felt would help. Seventy-seven students felt that peer mediation seminars for students run by trained adults would help. On this question students were allowed to select more than one answer. When looking at only a single answer, the peer mediation seminars by trained adults was by far the top choice of students.

Results from Student Survey #3
Survey #3, conducted in the Fall of 2001, asked follow-up questions about disputes, attempted to measure student perceptions about disputes and their solutions to the problem. About 290 students responded to the third survey.

Respondents were asked "how serious do you think the disputes are … at Ballou?" Twenty-five percent reported that disputes were a very serious problem while 48 percent reported they were somewhat serious, for a total of 73 percent stating disputes were a problem.

In Student Survey #3, students were asked a series of specific questions about the types of workshops, assemblies or seminar topics they would like to have. Forty-six percent expressed an interest in seminars on male-female relationships, 39 percent in peer mediation, and 33 percent in teen sexuality. When asked what types of activities would you like the school to sponsor during lunch period only 47 percent responded. Of those, 21 students expressed interest in sports and outdoor activities, 13 in basketball, 12 in classes and computers and 10 in counseling/peer mediation.

Faculty Survey
A total of 53 faculty members responded to the survey; 47 (88.7%) of these were teachers. About 70 teachers are a part of Ballou; we estimate that 67 percent of teachers responded. One-third of the teachers who responded to the survey were new to the school, with an additional 21 percent indicating that they had worked at the school for just over one year. These results confirmed that changes had occurred in the faculty since 1998. About 22 percent had worked at the school for three to ten years and nearly 25 percent had been at Ballou over 10 years.

Teachers identified three major problems in the school: 1) vandalism/graffiti; 2) disorderly conduct in the classroom, hallways, and lunchroom; and 3) bullying/threats/ intimidation.

Summary
The analysis phase lasted more than 15 months – from September 2000 to November 2001. The delays in completing this phase can be attributed to a number of factors. First, there was some confusion about the purpose of the grant and how the project should proceed. Originally, school officials believed that grant funds could be used for 'response' items, including food for events, incentives for students, teachers, and officers, and other needs. Some faculty members decided not to participate because there were no funds allocated to actual programs. Delays also occurred because new students had to be recruited to work on the project. The end of the school year in June 2001 and the graduation of some student leaders meant that the stakeholders had to acquaint new student leaders to the project in September 2001. Additional problems arose with the delays in obtaining data from school security.

Response

Based on the information collected during the Analysis phase, the stakeholders were ready to respond to the problem. The Response phase began in November 2001, with actual implementation occurring in February/March 2002. Ms. Yolanda Pauling was the catalyst for this phase, as she developed a strategic plan, established goals and objectives, and put together a timeline for implementation. With the backing of Ms. Bean and Ms. Robinson, the continued support of Dr. Bridges, and the participation of student leaders, the plan took effect.

Ms. Pauling, Ms. Bean, and Ms. Robinson linked the problem of disputes that began in the neighborhoods to events that occurred within the school. In fact, the faculty survey also noted that disputes continued on school grounds, causing physical fights. As a response to the problem, one faculty member decided to implement basketball games during the lunch period to deter fights at that time. As a result, the basketball games alleviated a majority of the disputes among boys and created a more peaceful environment. Though the disputes between male students subsided, the rise of female disputes and physical fights increased. From the observation of faculty members and security personnel, the majority of these disputes between females occurred during lunch or in school hallways.

To respond to these specific problems, Ms. Pauling, Ms. Bean, Ms. Robinson, and student leaders developed a list of activities that would address short-term issues and long-term solutions. Short-term activities included lunch hour programs, guest speakers and workshops, meetings with student leaders, and assemblies that would address student issues and concerns. Long-term activities included implementation of peer mediation, a "learning program" that enhanced on-going attempts to upgrade student test scores, and student retreats where strategic planning could occur.

Peer mediation
The stakeholders decided to enhance the peer mediation program that existed at Ballou by marketing the program, training new students, and getting more parents and faculty involved.

The purpose of peer mediation at Ballou is to assist students "in the resolution of conflicts through open communication and creative problem solving." Mediation is strictly voluntary and relies on a confidential process that operates under the theme of respect. Student peer mediators (trained by the program coordinator and knowledgeable faculty) guide the disputants through a session, gather information about the conflict, determine how each person feels, and works with the parties to come up with a mutual way to solve the problem. If the disputants are able to create an agreement, then peer mediators record the agreement on a form that is kept confidential. The agreement is signed by the disputants and both parties must abide by it.

The program coordinator receives referrals about potential and actual conflicts from students, teachers, and staff. The coordinator initiates a meeting with the disputants and determines if peer mediation is helpful and whether the parties would engage in mediation. A session is arranged for students to sit with mediators in private. Mediation sessions vary in length depending on the conflict.

Overall, the stakeholders felt that mediation would give students an opportunity to learn life skills, including communication, listening, and problem solving. By managing conflict in this way, it was believed that conflicts could be handled constructively rather than through physical fights.

To get this message across to students, however, was another matter. To make peer mediation more realistic, Ms. Pauling, Ms. Bean and student leaders put together a "Peer Mediation Kick-Off" followed by school retreats and other information sharing that reinforced the idea.

In March 2002, a school assembly highlighted the Peer Mediation Kick Off. The assembly consisted of three representatives from Rev. Anthony Motley's church and Ballou's Peer Mediation students. A peer mediation kit with stopwatches, lanyards, highlighter pens, and other items were distributed.

The guest speakers from Rev. Motley's church were ex-juvenile criminals who found religion as their salvation. Their topic of discussion was, "Stop the Violence and Live." The speeches were informative and powerfully presented -- the message to the students was to keep peace within the schools/communities and refrain from crime.

The assembly also featured the Peer Mediation Team who presented a skit about "Q-Tip and CoCo" -- a boyfriend and girlfriend at Ballou. Basically the story involved CoCo (female) who was suspected of "cheating" by Q-Tip. Q-Tip decided to confront the boy, which led to a fight, and eventually resulted in a shooting. The School Resource Officer participated in the skit as well -- she came out on stage and handcuffed the shooter.

The second part of the skit involved Ms. Bean, who as the narrator, explained the disadvantages of physical conflict to solve the problem. She explained how this same situation could have been resolved if they had gone to mediation. At that point, Ms.

Bean said, "we are going to roll back the tape and show how this same situation could have been handled in Peer Mediation." She called out to the kids in the skit, "roll back the tape please," and all of the students on stage started to move in slow motion and walked backwards as though they were on video. The audience roared as the actors ran and walked backwards. Even the principal laughed, he was obviously pleased with the presentation. Finally, they showed the correct way of handling conflicts and most importantly how lives can be saved.

The same skit was filmed as an instructional videotape by MPDC staff in May/June of 2002.

Peer Mediation and Super Leaders
In addition to the skit, peer mediation was emphasized through the "Super Leaders Program." Super Leaders is a school-based corporate program supported through Brig Owens, a former Washington Redskins football player. Through private donations from corporations in the DC area, the program exists in a number of high schools in Washington, DC. At each school there is a coach and a "teacher/non-coach" leader. At Ballou, Ms. Vickie Schulz (known as Miss Vickie) and Coach Young are the adult supervisors for 182 students, the most in any school. Student captains are the "Super Leaders." They are selected by Miss Vickie and carefully taught to be mentors and leaders for others. Each captain works with a co-captain and they are responsible for monitoring nine to 13 students under them. The captains monitor the students' behavior, hygiene, grades, and lifestyle. Peer mediation was linked to this program by the student leaders.

Two students, Charles and Kenneth, were Super Leaders and were active in student government and with the peer mediation group. These two young men exemplified the Super Leader concept. Miss Vickie said that she became their foster parent along with four other boys about five years ago. She stated that the boys were rough and did not have parents who cared about them, or their parents were in "the system." Some of the boys had 9mm Glock handguns and two had threatened to kill her. However, she stuck with them and required that they behave in specific ways. She explained that she thought the boys stayed because they wanted love and a family. She has guided all six of them through their high school years and anticipated that they would all graduate from high school and move on to college or jobs. In our interviews, we found that Kenneth and Charles were appreciative of Miss Vickie's love and attention. Kenneth stated that he was "killing himself one day at a time" through drugs. He did not have a family and was basically living on the streets. He saw others doing well in the program and was approached about it as a way out. He wanted the love when he was lonely and down. He now "messes up" occasionally but the "family" holds him accountable and helps him through it. Charles stated that he was a very shy person who could not talk in front of a group. Super Leaders helped him to have friends and feel love when he was lonely. In 2001-2002 he severed as the student body president and is now attending college on a full scholarship.

By linking peer mediation to the Super Leaders, the program received credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of at least 20 percent of the student body at Ballou.

Peer Mediation and Student Retreats
To further enhance the use of peer mediation, two student retreats occurred in the spring and fall of 2002 at the 4-H Conference Center in Chevy Chase, MD. At the first retreat, 15 students were invited to participate. Ms. Bean indicated that she wanted a "cross-section of students" which meant that student government leaders as well as 'problem' students attended. Ms. Pauling, Ms. Bean, and the two School Resource Officers served as the facilitators for the first retreat. At the second retreat, 20 student leaders were invited to attend as the focus included peer mediation and leadership concepts.

At both of the retreats students were provided training in peer mediation by Coach Crumb. He walked them through the basics of mediation, discussing the steps required, the types of conflict that would occur, and the way in which peaceful agreements could be reached.

The retreats also served other purposes – it allowed the students to see a completely different part of the DC area, gave them an opportunity to "sleep over" at a non-traditional place, and to partake of the facilities at the 4-H Center. This included buffet meals, arcade and video games, and space to work.

Additional Consequences of the Retreat
At the second retreat, the student leaders were encouraged to learn about peer mediation, but also took the opportunity to learn leadership and team building skills, and to develop strategies to solve school concerns.

During the 24-hour period of the second retreat, the students spent time developing committee reports and an agenda for the 2002-03 school year. They came up with a document for review by Dr. Bridges and the faculty that described five major concerns:

1. Quality of Education at Ballou
2. SAT-9 Test Preparation
3. School Attendance
4. School Climate/School Spirit
5. Community Support

> **Quality of Education at Ballou.** Students expressed their dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching they receive. "Many of the teachers are not teaching the students in their class. They give the students a packet of work, and then they expect them to complete it on their own." Students also said that teachers did not explain assignments, get angry, make "smart remarks," and intimidate students. To remedy the situation, the student leaders made ten recommendations indicating that they wanted a better learning environment and process, more respect, patience, explanations of assignments, and help.

SAT-9 Test Preparation. Ballou has one of the lowest performance levels when it comes to the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition. The students felt that they needed to work together with teachers to improve these test scores. Their recommendations featured more interactive learning, creation of games to remember and recall vocabulary and math concepts, after-school tutoring, better relationships with teachers, more competition among classrooms, and rewards for doing well.

School Attendance. Student leaders recognized that some students were consistently tardy and/or did not attend school regularly. They recommended that those students with poor attendance should be expelled; that the in-school suspension program be reinstated; that students needed to be rewarded for achieving perfect attendance, and that the principal and attendance officers meet with students and parents about excessive absences.

School Climate/School Sprit. The student leaders felt that a majority of students did not have school spirit or school pride. They recommended the reinstatement of Blue and Gold day where students, teachers, and staff wear school colors. Spirit Week, dress-up days, special behavior, and raffles would promote more school pride.

Community Support. Student leaders noted that the school was not actively involved in the community and that parents were not active at Ballou. To remedy this concern, they suggested that local businesses form partnerships with the school; that a newsletter be written for the community; that selected students serve as "Ambassadors of Encouragement" for feeder schools; and that community involvement occur through a parade and other activities.

These concerns were presented to Dr. Bridges within a week after the retreat. Student leaders also pledged to institute the recommendations that concerned them during the upcoming school year. Given that these ideas came from the leaders themselves, it is likely that some, if not most of the recommendations would be implemented.

Workshops, Assemblies, Career Development
In addition to the peer mediation program, the stakeholders invited guest speakers to workshops and assemblies. These included talks on:
- Team Building,
- Male & Female Relationships (which included Sexual Orientation and Domestic Violence), and
- The Metropolitan Police Department Cadet Program Recruiting workshop
- Career Development

Because disputes were occurring during lunch hour and after school, the stakeholders also decided to purchase various computer software packages so that students could work on different skills and occupy their time. Microsoft Office Tutorial Programs, Typing, and Resume Maker were among the programs purchased.

Summary

The Response phase began in November 2001 and continued through the 2002-2003 school year. The second retreat was held on September 26-27, 2002 but the ramifications of that retreat will be felt throughout the year. That is, through the strategic planning efforts of the student leaders, some recommendations may be implemented by the administration and by the student leaders themselves over the course of the year.

Section 4. Impact of the School-Based Program

Unfortunately, we could not measure the effects of the school-based project on disputes. Data were not available to determine whether disputes declined or not. However, we could determine the way in which students responded to the retreats and workshops and how stakeholders felt about the problem-solving process.

After each of the retreats and workshops, evaluation surveys were distributed to attendees and participants by the stakeholders. Overall, the surveys found that[2]:

- A majority of the students rated the workshops and retreats as excellent; and rated the guest speakers as very good.

- Students thought that the workshops and retreats were very useful and very helpful and would like for them to continue.

- The retreats allowed student leaders to do team building and bonding with their peers, especially at mealtime and in their rooms; they learned peer mediation techniques and most importantly it gave them something to do with their idle time.

- Student leaders wanted more time at the retreats; they complained that they were very short (only 2 days) and they needed more time to do in depth analysis on issues and concern of the student body.

- The workshops should have been instituted and put in place at the beginning of the school year rather than mid-year, this way the students can be aware of scheduled workshop dates and topics. Advertisement of workshops and retreats should be more visible and advertised. Due to money constraints, the food offered during the lunchtime workshops consisted of pizza, juice and cookies; they would prefer a wider/variety of a food.

- All students who answered the survey would recommend the workshops and retreats to their peers and be very likely to attend both again.

- The students would like to see more workshops and retreats in their school and would like them to continue yearly.

- The type of workshops they would like to see during lunch period or after school are: Peer Mediation, Grief, Loss and Healing, HIV Prevention, Domestic Violence, Youth Court, Teen Sexuality issues, Teen Pregnancy, Leadership Skills, Anger Management, Self Esteem, and Career Development. Basic Hygiene was not in demand by the students.

- The comments given for future workshops consisted of the following: implement programs that will allow the students to work together on team projects, discuss

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[2] These results were provided in summary form by Ms. Yolanda Pauling of the Metropolitan Police Department, October 2002.

issues and concerns of the student body, which will allow them to do analysis and recommendations.

Effects on Stakeholders
The school-based project to deal with the problem of disputes appears to have had a positive impact on a number of students and stakeholders, some impact on the police, and a limited impact on teachers, staff and parents.

Our exit interviews with some students and stakeholders confirmed the findings from the evaluation surveys described above. We found that students were particularly pleased with the retreats and the activities during the retreats. The overall experience of leaving Ballou to do business appealed to the students. In addition, they enjoyed the amenities of the 4-H Conference Center and were able to accomplish their goals.
Views of the project

The problem solving process was difficult to implement according to the stakeholders involved. At the outset, teachers and staff were not pleased with the prospect of collecting more information, doing surveys, or conducting research. They were not willing to participate in a project that did not "do anything." As a result, the project suffered from the lack of involvement of a number of teachers and staff.

One stakeholder said that the grant was extremely beneficial in a number of ways. First, she said that it helped to determine the major issues and problems that existed at Ballou. The survey information was particularly valuable. Second, students started to work toward the improvement of the school. Third, the students began to think of themselves as 'stakeholders' and became committed to the effort. This was evident in the last retreat, where students came up with "their concerns about their high school" and developed solutions to those concerns as well. This was a major step forward for the student leaders and showed that they were willing to seek change and to make change.

The same stakeholder mentioned that she was disappointed that funds were not allowed for the response phase – that she believed that the project was designed to do things, not to just talk about them. Incentives for completing parts of the project were disallowed; food could not be purchased for the students; and services that might have assisted them were not permitted. Despite these problems, she saw the value in the process and worked through her disappointment.

A second stakeholder indicated that the analysis phase was very difficult and time-consuming. Data were difficult to acquire from the school and contractors did not fulfill their commitments to collecting data and assisting her in facilitating meetings and serving as a liaison with the school. She also mentioned that the agendas of the school administration and the police were very different and led to some conflicts. Lastly, she mentioned that the school-year calendar hindered the smooth operation of the project.

Concluding Remarks
The problem-solving partnership of the MPDC and Ballou High School achieved its goals of identifying and working on a specific problem type – disputes at the school that were caused by neighborhood problems. A core group of stakeholders worked on the project with some consistency during the three years of the project. There were lulls in the project, and at times the project came to a virtual halt, but through their own initiative, they continued to implement the various stages of the SARA model. The stakeholders succeeded in identifying a real problem using a number of surveys and focus groups with students. The stakeholders followed the problem solving stages relatively well and only on occasion deviated from their mission. During the response phase, stakeholders not only fulfilled their obligations in enhancing the peer mediation program, setting up workshops and retreats, but did so with enthusiasm and excitement. By working with already existing programs like Super Leaders and student government activities, the stakeholders could accomplish their objectives.

The lessons here are threefold. First, a number of core people (three or four) need to continually work together to complete their tasks and goals. Through the efforts of Ms. Anne Grant during the scanning and analysis phases and the work of Ms. Yolanda Pauling, Ms. Sharon Bean, and Ms. Sharona Robinson during the response and assessment phases, the project was completed. Second, students need to accept and "buy into" the process. Student leaders accepted the idea of working with other students and faculty on resolving disputes because they were involved in the problem solving process and mediation training. Third, teachers need to be involved in the earliest stages of a project like this. For example, it would have been helpful if a teacher from Ballou (not just a staff member or administrator) assisted in the initial write-up of the grant proposal and then followed up with implementation. Without teachers involved in the total process, information was not available about their views and input regarding programs was lost.

Long-term effects
Specific aspects of the school-based partnership grant appear to be in place for some time. Because of the popularity and success of the retreats, it is likely that student leaders will conduct these annually. With Ms. Bean and Ms. Robinson continuing in their roles as parent and teacher liaison/ and program assistant, respectively, elements of the problem solving process will be used. Second, the peer mediation program will continue in the school. Student leaders and teachers saw the value of this program and will train other students in the process. Third, the problem solving process is ingrained in the minds of at least a handful of people at Ballou and with MPDC. Whether and how they use the process in the future remains to be seen.

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