



DOMESTIC HARMONIZER PROGRAM

2024 Annual Report

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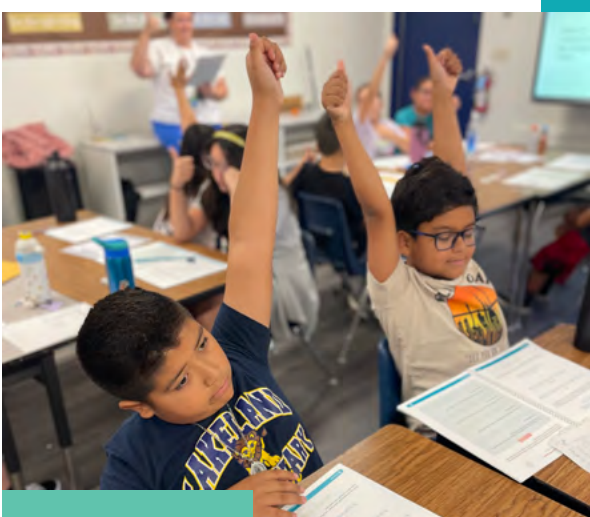
Introduction

The Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative (WPDI) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) non-governmental organization founded by Forest Whitaker in 2012 for promoting peace and reconciliation in disadvantaged and fragile communities worldwide, including Africa, Latin America, France, and the United States. With a mission to transform destructive conflicts into opportunities for growth and prosperity, WPDI's Domestic Harmonizer Program (DHP) continues to inspire meaningful change in the United States by equipping schools and their communities with skills that build understanding, cooperation, and lifelong resilience.

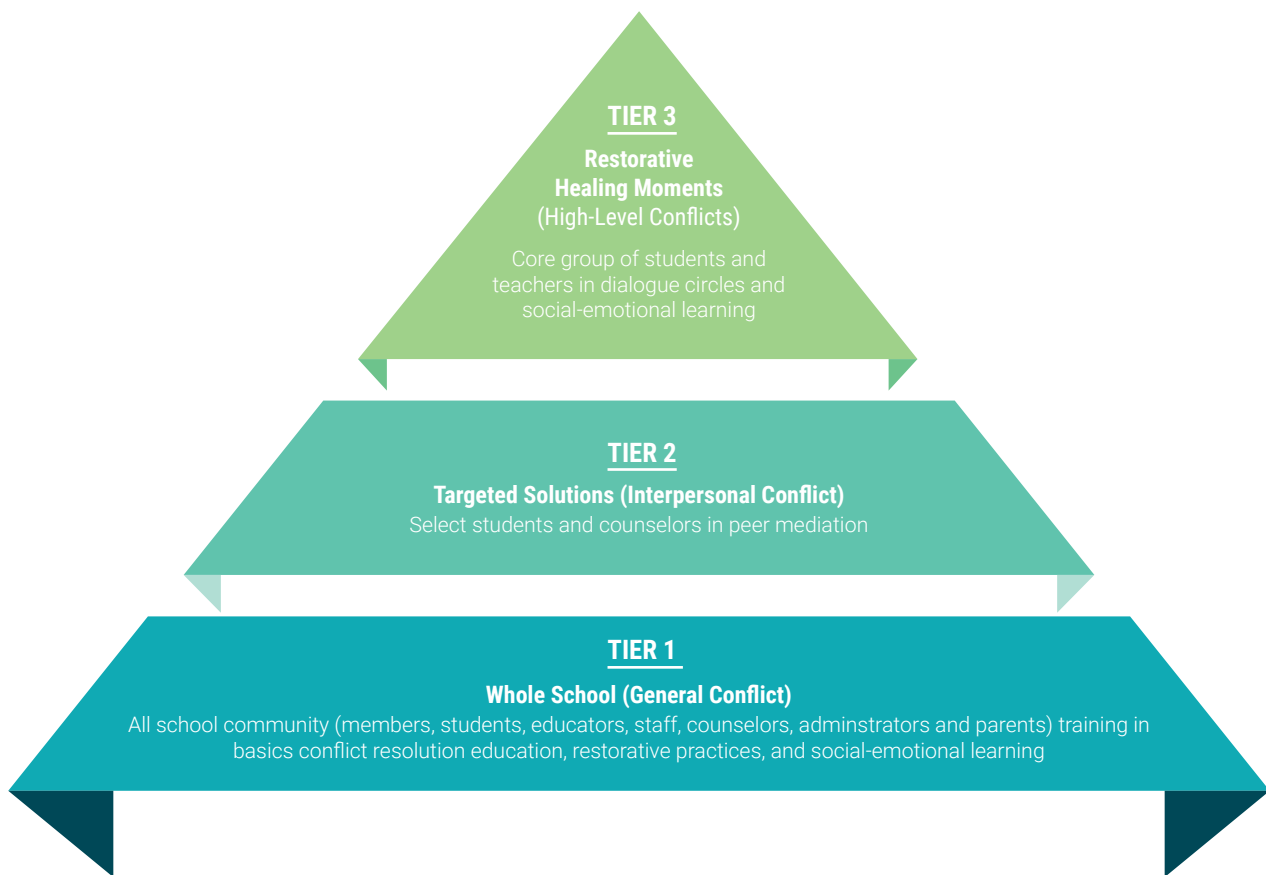
The program engages all members of the school community, including students, teachers, counselors, administrators, and parents, by integrating conflict

resolution approaches into school culture. The program provides essential tools such as Conflict Resolution Education (CRE), Social Emotional Learning (SEL), and dialogue-based communication techniques. Classroom coursework and school-wide initiatives include mediation training, interactive professional development workshops for educators, student-led lessons, and community-focused peacebuilding events.

To enhance accessibility and engagement, the DHP houses all of its educational resources in the Domestic Harmonizer Virtual Center, an open-source platform where schools can access curriculum materials, training modules, and the interactive peace education game, [Hear Me Out](#).



Below is an overview of the program's framework:



In 2024, WPDI expanded its reach to new schools and institutions, impacting over one dozen school districts. With three new schools added to our roster, **our activities have covered 5,209 individuals**, to be compared with the 3,438 beneficiaries of 2023. An exciting milestone was DHP's partnership with *Games for Change* (G4C), a nonprofit leveraging games and interactive media for social good. As a theme partner for G4C's Student Challenge, DHP provided professional development and resources to educators nationwide, empowering students to create peace-themed games.



Key Achievements



13

schools and
education
institutions hosting
WPDI programs



646

students trained
as peer mediators



679

parents,
administrative staff,
and teachers trained



2,880

people reached
through advocacy
campaigns in
schools



117

students trained in
Social-Emotional
Learning



887

participants in
virtual center
campaigns

5,209 total participants in school-
based peacebuilding



Stakeholder Feedback

"We are thankful for the partnership developed between the Little Lake City School District and the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative. Originally, the peace education program began at two of our schools and has now expanded to six of our nine schools. The skills that our trained student peer mediators have learned have helped deescalate conflict and tension between students in a respectful and understanding manner. Additionally, our peer mediators have gained self-confidence and a greater sense of self-efficacy to affect change at their school and with their fellow students. The DHP aligns perfectly with our district's mission of preparing students to reach their full potential so they can positively contribute to their communities."

Jonathan Vasquez,
Superintendent at Little Lake City School District



Independent Evaluation of the Program

Since the launch of the DHP in 2016, the program has undergone independent evaluations each year to assess its impact. Over the past five years, Dr. Briana Hinga, Associate Professor of Clinical Education at the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California, has conducted these evaluations. Her research examines how DHP interventions help partner schools adopt restorative practices. Specifically, she assesses the impact of our peer mediation and Inner Spark trainings on students, the feedback from educators following professional development workshops, and insights shared by parents who attend our family sessions. By gathering survey responses from workshop participants and conducting focus groups with select educators and students, Dr. Hinga provides valuable recommendations for refining program practices.

This past year, Dr. Hinga's report highlighted positive feedback from program participants, with notably high satisfaction among students, staff, and parents, who praised the transformative impact of DHP activities on emotional well-being, communication, and conflict resolution. The evaluation underscored the effectiveness of the peer mediation program in integrating social-emotional learning and mindfulness practices, fostering relationship-building, conflict resolution, and personal growth—aligning with contemporary educational research and best practices.

The report also examined the program's Inner Spark component, which was found to provide a "brave space" for students to explore their emotions and foster growth through honest dialogue and skill-building. These efforts align with research advocating for trauma-informed practices and relationship-centered approaches that promote resilience, trust, and community cohesion. Findings indicate both immediate and long-term benefits for Inner Spark participants, including improved emotional regulation, healthier interpersonal dynamics, and stronger family and community ties. The report further highlights the impact of DHP's professional development workshops, which covered a range of topics such as improving school climate, conflict coaching, the benefits of peer mediation, and more.

Overall, this independent assessment showcases stakeholders' experiences with the DHP and how the program's interventions help students navigate conflicts, enhance educators' skills, and engage families in fostering harmonious school environments. Additionally, the findings offer valuable insights for refining program practices, ensuring their alignment with evidence-based strategies, and informing broader efforts to create inclusive and restorative education systems.



Selected Extracts from Dr. Hinga's Report

"Through interviews and surveys, I am consistently inspired by how [the program] equips individuals with practical skills for addressing conflict constructively, both in their own lives and in their interactions with others. These skills are already empowering students, educators, and families to navigate challenges with greater understanding and compassion. Students, school staff, and parents consistently share pride and gratitude for what they have learned through the DHP. Students leave the DHP with skills and practice to foster generative conversations through conflict. They share stories about the skills they've gained—skills that have empowered them to navigate conflict with confidence, to communicate more openly with their peers, and to make better decisions in moments of stress. Many have expressed how the program has helped them grow personally, and they are excited about how they can carry these lessons forward in their lives."

Dr. Hinga

”

"Students noted the benefits of Inner Spark spanning far wider than they expected, upon starting the program. Many students expressed hesitation to engage in activities, like community building and sharing their feelings at the beginning of the program, because of their previous experiences learning to hide their feelings. They slowly learned to trust the supportive community of Inner Spark. They saw how a community space to build relationships and share feelings without judgment is really helpful. Through this experience, they also learned how to show up for others in supportive ways."

Dr. Hinga

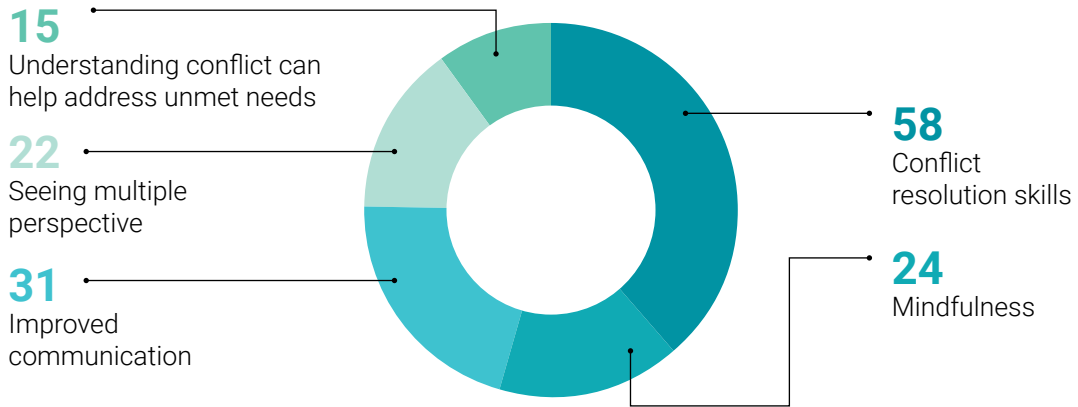
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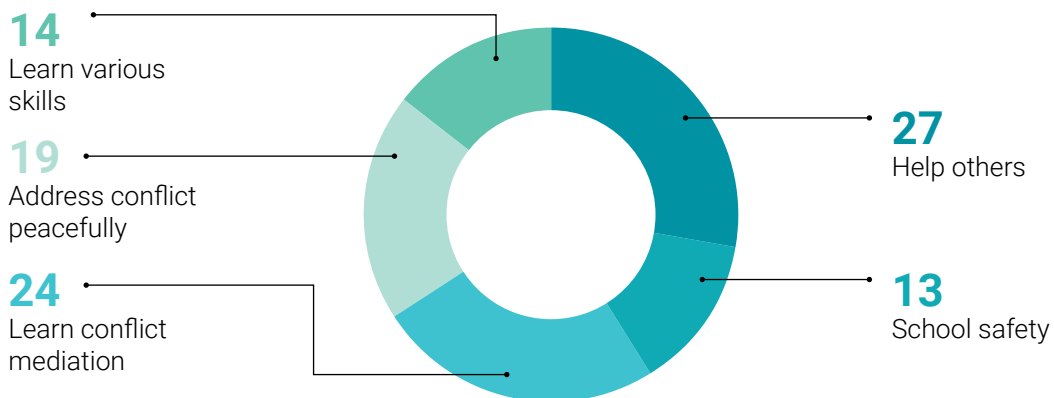
Survey Results

Below are some of the key findings of the survey conducted as part of this year's evaluation (based on the number of responses):

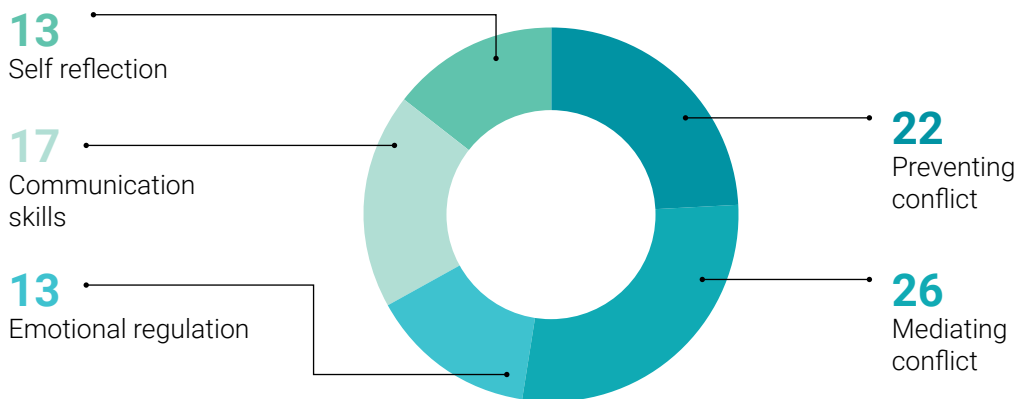
Key Take-Aways for Peer Mediators



Students' Learning Objectives



Applications of Peer Mediation into Life



WPDI Leadership Visits the Program



In 2024, Founder and CEO, Forest Whitaker, and Executive Director, Caroline Descombris, led an in-depth visit of the program. WPDI holds a special connection with Los Angeles, where the organization was founded. Together, the team reflected on the year's accomplishments, discussed curriculum advancements, and outlined goals for 2025.

A highlight of Mr. Whitaker's visit was visiting Jersey Elementary School in Santa Fe Springs, California, a school in the Little Lake City School District (LLCSD), where he engaged directly with student-peer mediators trained through the program. Students shared personal stories of how the program has positively transformed their lives—many spoke about becoming better listeners, resolving conflicts more peacefully, and developing greater empathy for their peers. Students also showcased their mediation

skills through role-playing exercises, demonstrating how they applied conflict resolution techniques to real-life school scenarios.

Additionally, Mr. Whitaker met with Jersey Elementary's dedicated liaison, Ms. Gabriella Delgado, and LLCSD Superintendent, Mr. Jonathan Vasquez, who expressed his deep gratitude for the program's presence in Jersey and four other district schools. The visit not only celebrated the DHP's achievements but also reinforced WPDI's mission to empower students and educators to create lasting change in their schools and communities.

The visit also included other local elementary and high schools where the DHP has been deployed. School management, counselors, and teachers shared overwhelmingly positive feedback, underscoring the program's effectiveness.







Conflict Resolution Education

Conflict is a natural part of human interaction, but without the right tools, it can disrupt learning environments and hinder academic and personal growth. With activities such as training, advocacy campaigns, and mentorship, the CRE component of the DHP empowers students to learn and apply

the concrete tools to mediate conflicts in way that creates solutions for disputants. Through innovative resources such as the [Domestic Harmonizer Virtual Center](#) and the [Hear Me Out game](#), WPDH provides accessible, interactive, and impactful tools to support schools in cultivating a culture of peace.



Peer Mediation in Schools

9

**schools hosting
WPDI's peer mediation
program**

415

**elementary school
students trained in
peer mediation**

173

**middle school
students trained in
peer mediation**

58

**high school
students trained in
peer mediation**

Since its inception in 2016, WPDI USA has partnered with schools to transform conflicts into opportunities for growth and understanding, prioritizing open dialogue, empathy, and collaborative problem-solving. WPDI implements activities in schools using a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model, engaging students, teachers, and parents at all levels to create a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment.

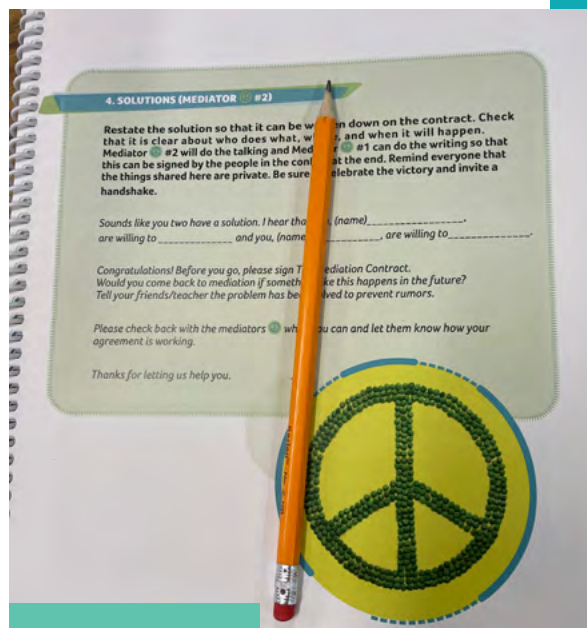
Core components of the program include Peer Mediation training, in-class lessons, parenting seminars, conflict coaching, advocacy events, and professional development workshops. As every school faces unique challenges, WPDI tailors its approach to set goals and create a customized roadmap for the academic year.

Conflict Resolution Education in Elementary Schools

Elementary School is a period of rapid growth and discovery is full of opportunities for children to learn, but it also brings its fair share of confusion and friction as they work to refine their emotional regulation and

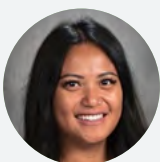
social skills. In 2024, WPDI worked with 415 4th and 5th-grade students from five elementary schools within the Little Lake City School District (LLCSD).





"Peer mediations are in full swing at Cresson Elementary School. Since their training in August, our peer mediators have successfully completed 15 mediations. Students turn to mediators for help because they trust their peers to listen and support them during conflicts. We are grateful to the Domestic Harmonizer Program for helping develop our students into strong leaders."

Ms. Martha Robles,
School Counselor at Cresson Elementary School



"The Domestic Harmonizer Program (DHP) has been such a tremendous presence on our campus. We currently have 18 students acting as peer mediators. The peer mediators have learned not only the knowledge, but now have the attitude and skills to help solve problems in a peaceful way. Other students on campus actively seek them out when in conflict and are slowly learning the skills themselves. As a school leader, I have seen a drastic shift in the temperature of our school and playground to a more calm and inclusive environment for all students. The Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative staff are incredible, accessible, and have been such a pleasure to have on campus working with our students. We are so grateful!"

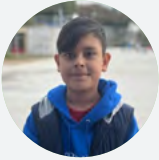
Ms. Isabelle Ezra,
School Counselor at Studebaker Elementary School



"I like the Peer Mediation program it helps you be a better listener, teaches you how to handle conflict, and how to communicate with others. Something I have learned in this program is to listen to others while they are speaking and not try to change the subject. I also learned not to let the disputes get too heated so we can solve the conflict peacefully."

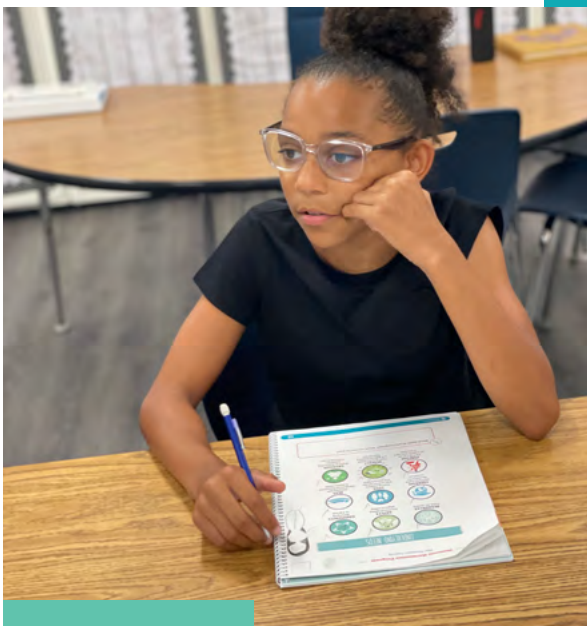
Mila,
4th Grader Peer Mediator, Studebaker Elementary School





"I learned that not all conflicts need to be solved by yourself or only with your solution. I've learned that you can listen and calm everything down. This lets the two disputants find their own solution and not have to settle for one that may seem fitting, but not fully solve the conflict. Overall, the Peer Mediation program has helped me become a better listener and solve conflicts peacefully."

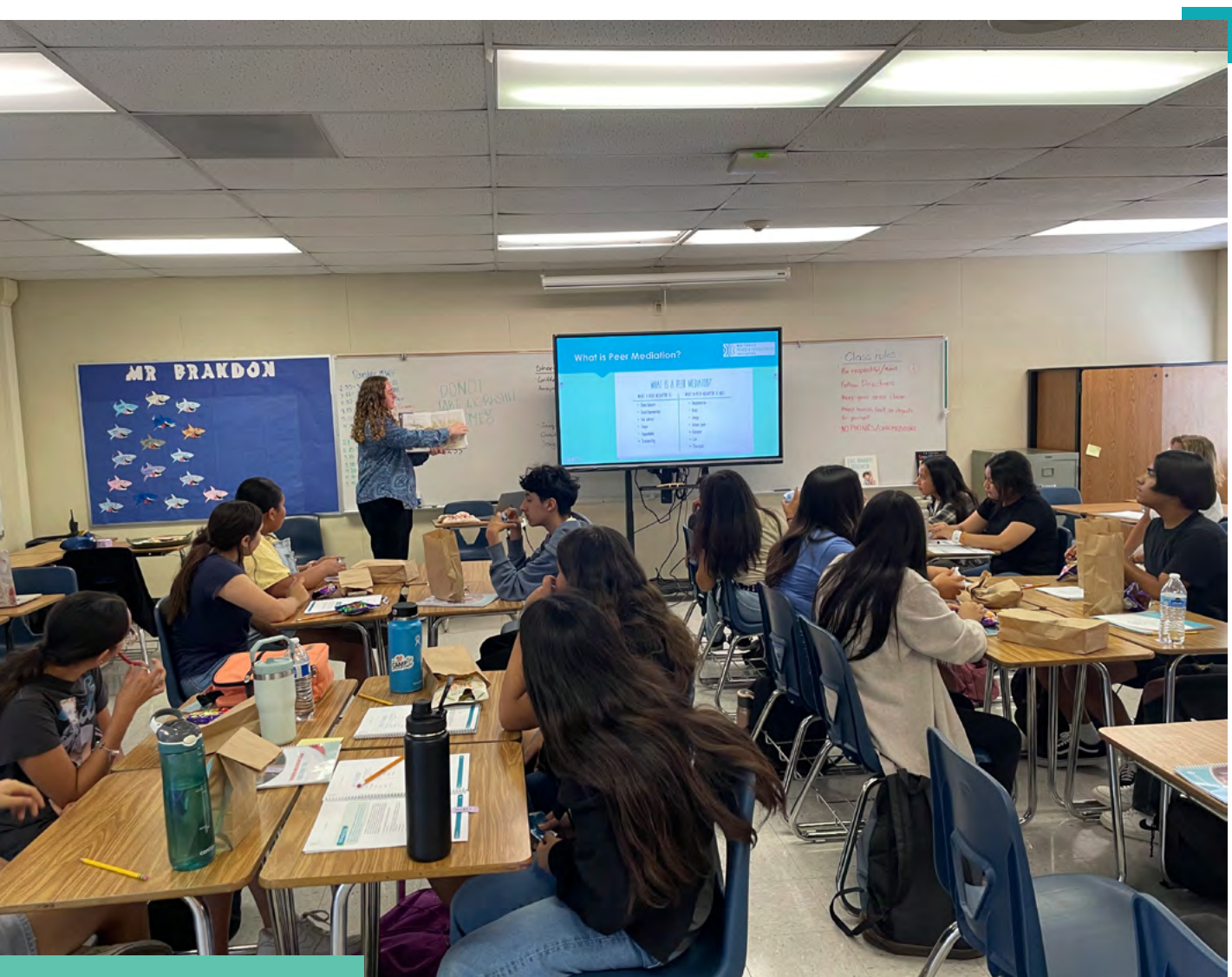
Cesar,
5th Grade Peer Mediator, Studebaker Elementary School



Conflict Resolution Education in Middle Schools

Middle school students bring unique opportunities and challenges to the program. Compared to elementary students, they possess greater maturity, life experience, and a deeper understanding of interpersonal conflicts, often centered on relationships and social dynamics. However, this developmental stage is also marked by heightened social, cognitive, and emotional changes. This can lead to conflicts rooted in friendship dynamics, social hierarchies, and self-consciousness, making WPDI programs essential for fostering understanding and resolution during this pivotal time.

Indeed, academic integration of CRE concepts enriched student learning. In 2024, WPDI continued to foster impactful partnerships with two middle schools: Lake Center Middle School in LLCSD and DNA Prep Academy in Chatsworth, California. The WPDI team worked with 173 students, as its peer Mediation program continues to thrive, with hybrid training sessions that blend in-person classroom guidance and virtual facilitation.



DNA Prep Academy and WPDJ Partner to Inspire Peace, Justice, and Success

Innovative Education at DNA Prep Academy

DNA Prep Academy stands out as an innovative educational institution, combining academics with specialized training for young athletes in various sports. Located in Chatsworth, California, the school supports students from grades 3 through 12.

WPDJ Partnership

WPDJ began partnering with DNA Prep Academy immediately after the pandemic, working to align its programming with the school's mission to prepare students for success both in college and professional careers. At the request of the school's Founder, WPDJ introduced professional development for educators in CRE, SEL, peer mediation training for students and impactful advocacy campaigns...etc. advocacy events like the International Day of Peace and World Day of Social Justice.

2024 Highlight of the Program

Dena Foggie, teacher at the school, requested

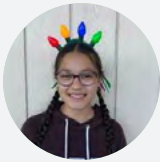
a unit on understanding bullying and underlying power dynamics.

WPDJ designed a language arts curriculum that used *On My Honor* by Marion Dane Bauer as a lens to analyze conflicts and unmet needs, encouraging students to connect the story's themes to their own experiences. They wrote about types of conflict that could be faced in this process—(intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intergroup).

Feedback from the Teacher

Dena Foggie described her gratitude to DHP for resources such as lesson plans and videos for her English Language Arts classes. One key assignment students completed was to step into the role of an author and write another final chapter describing healing and a restorative journey of the main character. Ms. Foggie values this partnership and is making plans to seek out further collaboration and support in the future.





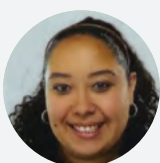
"These are some of the most important tips that I've learned to keep in mind when doing Peer Mediation: mediators have to be dependable and a good team member. You have to be ready to work together to help disputants. We have to be trustworthy, or people won't come to us for help. We must keep all the details that are shared private and confidential, unless it gets into something dangerous (then we have to tell our counselors). Never take anyone's side, you have to be impartial so everyone gets to tell their side of the conflict story. You can't give ideas to disputants about how to solve the conflict, they have to come up with their own solutions so that the solutions are something they will actually do. Listening carefully is very important to make sure we figure out what the unmet needs are. Solutions have to solve the unmet needs. Body language dominates communication so mediators have to be careful to show calm, kind listening. Using eye contact is really important."

Natalia,
Student at Lake Center Middle School



"I chose to become a peer mediator because I saw how many interpersonal conflicts were affecting students around me. I realized that I could make a positive impact by helping others resolve their issues, and I wanted to contribute to a more supportive school environment. I learned that being a mediator means guiding people to solve their own conflicts, rather than taking sides. My role is to listen carefully, stay neutral, and help them explore solutions they might not have considered. Before, I used to think it wasn't my responsibility and assumed that people would eventually work things out on their own. I didn't realize the challenges some students face, especially when there's a power imbalance that makes it hard for one person to speak up or feel heard. Now, I understand that as peer mediators, we provide a valuable resource for those who might feel powerless or unsure about how to resolve their issues. Being a peer mediator means more than just helping with conflicts—it means being someone others can trust to support them in finding their voice. We're not just mediators; we're allies who genuinely care about helping our peers build healthier relationships."

Louis,
Student at Lake Center Middle School



"The Domestic Harmonizer Program has been a transformative addition to DNA Prep Academy. As the counselor and lead teacher for the program, I appreciate what it brings to our school. Now in my second year, I've witnessed WPDI's profound impact on both students and staff. The program has revolutionized how we address discipline, empowering students through Peer Mediation. DHP has equipped our teachers and students with vital tools for conflict resolution, fostering a more inclusive and harmonious learning environment. A highlight of our experience has been participating in World Peace Day, where DHP supported us in hosting an art gallery and organizing activities to help feed over 300 homeless individuals. The program continues to shape our school community, promoting compassion, responsibility, and essential lifelong skills for students and staff alike."

Ramia Lewis,
Professor and School Counselor at DNA Prep Academy





Conflict Resolution Education in High Schools

High school presents unique challenges as students navigate increasingly complex personal, social, and academic pressures. Social dynamics often revolve around competition for status, peer pressure, or misunderstandings fueled by differing perspectives or jealousy, which can complicate emotional regulation and heighten the intensity of interpersonal conflicts. Students also face the stresses of academic expectations, college admissions, and personal insecurities, often exacerbated by the influence of social media. Some may also deal with more serious struggles, such as financial hardship, trauma, or the desire to escape difficult home environments.

Through our collaborations, we aim to equip these students with tools to manage conflicts constructively and support their journey toward practicing mindfulness, peaceful conflict resolution, and positive community engagement. In 2024, WPDI continued its partnerships with two high schools: Cypress High School in the Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) and Augustus Hawkins High School in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). These partnerships exemplify the power of a full-service, whole-school approach to fostering growth and positive change. The WPDI team empowered 58 high school students through peer mediation training and CRE.

Cypress High School and WPDI: Empowering Students as Leaders in Peer Mediation and Conflict Resolution

The Partnership between WPDI and Cypress High School

Cypress High School, located in Cypress, California, serves a student body of 2,705 in the heart of Orange County. Renowned for its high academic achievements and impressive testing scores, the school also faces the challenges that often accompany such excellence, including significant stress among its students. While the campus experiences low levels of violence, students still navigate the interpersonal conflicts and pressures typical of the high school experience.

The partnership between Cypress High School and WPDI officially began in 2023, marking the start of a collaboration focused on promoting peer mediation as a powerful tool for conflict resolution. Since then, we have worked closely with two dedicated cohorts of students, each bringing their unique perspectives and enthusiasm to the program.

Empowering Students through Training

This past year, a core group of 36 students—some of whom were returning from the first cohort trained in the 2023-2024 academic year—showed notable commitment to the peer mediation process. Their passion and drive to not only learn but also promote the program within their school community were truly inspiring. Recognizing the importance of this work, WPDI provided these students with two days of intensive, hands-on training, equipping them with the skills, strategies, and confidence needed to become effective peer mediators. By the end of the year, these trained mediators were ready to step into their roles and support their peers in resolving conflicts, building a stronger, more harmonious school environment. As a result of these activities, students felt more confident and equipped to deal with interpersonal issues between classmates and discuss with school staff some of the concerns they were facing in their school.







"Bringing the Domestic Harmonizer Program to Cypress High School has been an eye opening experience for both students and myself. There is a significant issue with mental health on our campus and students unable to express themselves in positive ways. Peer Mediation has given students the tools to deal with conflict in their own lives as well as bring it to the larger student body. Inner Spark has been key in transforming students' skills so they have the ability to cope, be resilient and again be models to those around them who are in need of these skills. Students have learned critical thinking around their relationships, valuable communication skills and effective problem solving skills through both programs. Students are emerging as mentors and compassionate leaders on our campus, and that has been made possible by the WPDl program."

Ms. Shelley Hawkins,
Health Science Teacher at Cypress High School



"This is my second year of doing Peer Mediation and I am more than happy to have continued my experience. Mediation has helped me in more ways than I imagined. It has helped me listen to different people's perspectives and learn how to come to solutions with conflicts in my friends and family. Mediation will also be useful to my career in law and any field that I pursue because it is important to learn how to cooperate with people throughout our lives and work fields. I am grateful to have this opportunity to learn more about mediation and I look forward to getting the opportunity to work with my peers to help them resolve any conflicts they might have to make our school a more peaceful environment."

Katarina,
student at Cypress High School



Conflict Resolution Education for Teachers

484 teachers and school administration staff trained in Conflict Resolution Education

In 2024, WPDl engaged educators across partner schools with a dynamic lineup of informational sessions and customized training, including train-the-trainer workshops, interactive virtual seminars, and hands-on in-person facilitation. These sessions reached 484 educators. Additionally, they learned how to integrate the DHP curriculum with Common Core standards, academic goals designed to

prepare students for success in college, careers, and life, across subjects such as Math, Science, English Language, Arts, Social Studies, and Physical Education. Opportunities were also provided for educators to co-create content tailored to their school’s unique needs, ensuring the program’s principles aligned with their specific teaching environments.

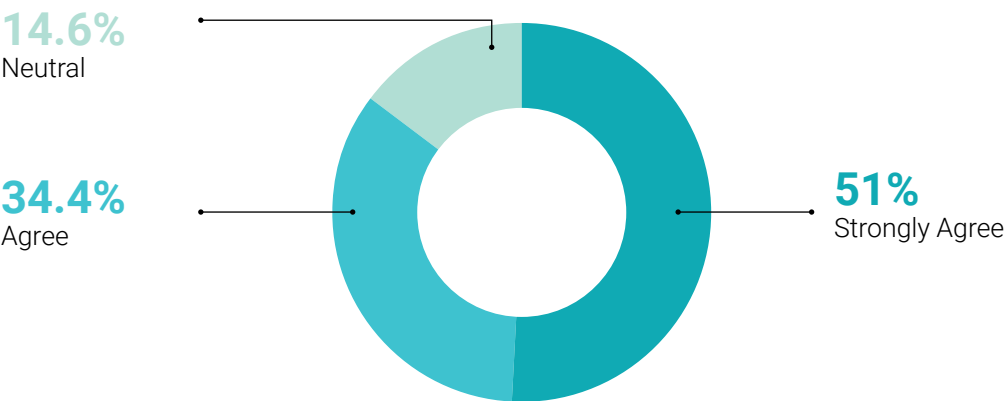
WPDl and Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) Partner to Train Educators on Peer Mediation

This impactful initiative reached 321 school counselors from across Los Angeles County and equipped counselors with the resources and practical skills necessary to understand and implement peer mediation programs that address the unique needs of their schools. The

impact of these trainings extends far beyond the participants, acting as a catalyst for the DHP’s growth and scalability, fostering safer and more inclusive school environments while promoting peaceful conflict resolution practices across a wide network of schools.

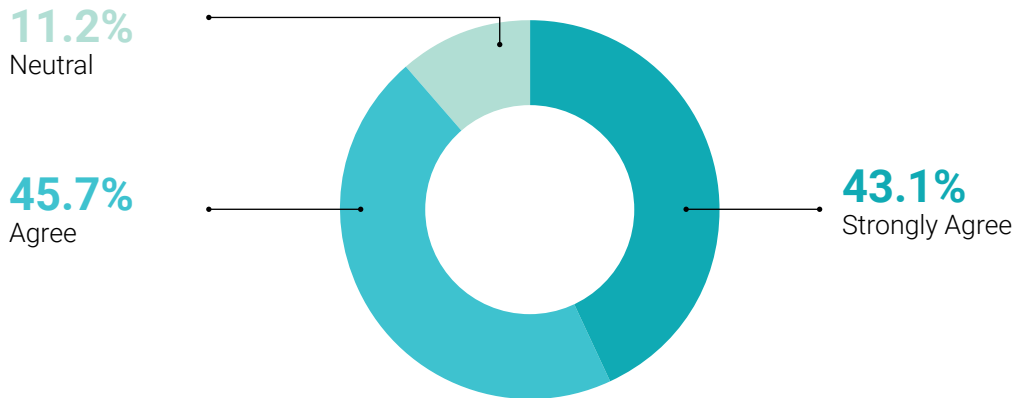
Educator perceptions of the training’s impact

“This training increased my understanding of Transformative Social-Emotional Learning (T-SEL)” (96 responses)

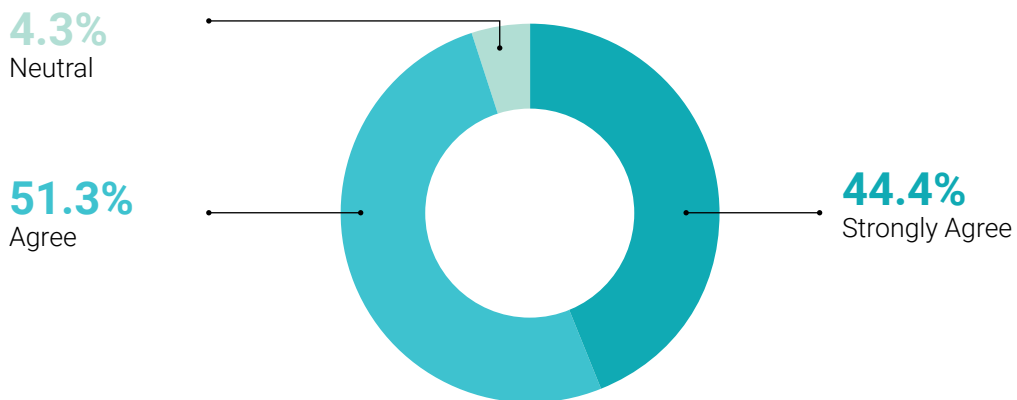




"This training will improve my interactions with students"
(116 responses)



"I am leaving with specific tools and strategies I can use in my practice"
(117 responses)



"WPDl's Domestic Harmonizer Program's Peer Mediation training was transformative for me. After this training, I can't help but think I've been holding mediations incorrectly. This training was comprehensive and effective. The trainers fostered a nurturing and empowering learning environment, which is imperative in this work. I can't wait to take all I've learned through this training and bring it to my site! This training is beneficial for all humans, not just educators."

Mr. Chris Ordoñez,
School Counselor from Culver City



"During this training, I learned how important it is to listen well and understand others' feelings during conflicts. I also picked up some useful tips for expressing myself clearly without blaming others. Plus, I discovered the idea of restorative justice, which focuses on fixing things and bringing people together after conflicts. Now, I see conflicts as chances to learn and make things better, not just problems to solve. Overall, I feel more ready to handle conflicts and make relationships stronger."

An educator



Parenting Series

195 parents and guardians trained

The DHP offers a three-part virtual parenting series, *Parenting to Meet our Children's Needs*, to parents at our partner schools. This series guides parents in self-leadership, effective communication, and strategies to develop a nurturing family environment. Mr. Stedman Graham underscores the importance of identity leadership and self-growth, while Mrs. Karen DeVoogd provides tools for bridging communication gaps between parents and children. Mr. Anand

Chulani's session focuses on family healing by embracing uniqueness and adaptability.

These workshops equip parents with conflict resolution strategies, modeling constructive problem-solving for their children and reinforcing a supportive home environment. Ultimately, the program empowers families with tools for personal and relational development, strengthening their ability to navigate life's challenges together.

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. The main window displays a presentation slide titled "Conflict Stages" with the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative logo. The slide features a diagram of five stages of conflict, represented by a large blue arrow pointing upwards and to the right. The stages are: Stage 1: Disagreements, Stage 2: Confrontations or Incidents, Stage 3: Breakdown of the Relationship, Stage 4: Breakdown of Trust, and Stage 5: Crisis. A text box on the right of the arrow states: "Many conflicts often start out as a small disagreement but then escalate to bigger, and perhaps violent, situations. In order to resolve issues fairly and keep relationships from breaking down, it's important to apply conflict prevention and resolution strategies and tools." The Zoom interface includes a top bar with "Recording..." and "View" buttons, a right sidebar with a list of participants (Lakeah Dickerson, Monya Kian, Karen DeVoogd, Toni Acfalle, christian novelo), and a bottom toolbar with icons for Security, Participants, Chat, Share Screen, Reactions, Apps, Whiteboards, and More, along with a "Leave" button.

Advocacy Campaigns in Schools

14

**advocacy campaigns
in schools**

2,880

**participants reached through
campaigns in schools**

As part of its mission to foster a culture of peace, WPDI enhances its school-based initiatives with advocacy campaigns across schools. These campaigns spread key messages that promote positive values and attitudes aligned with peacebuilding. Additionally, they help increase the visibility of our programs, strengthening our presence and influence at the community level.

This past year, WPDI sponsored two events across our partner schools: the World Day of Social Justice in February and the International Day of Peace in September. Together, these events brought transformative experiences to thousands of participants, amplifying the core values of peace, empathy, and justice.

World Day of Social Justice

For the World Day of Social Justice, WPDI engaged students across five schools in activities that spotlighted equality and fairness. Students explored themes of peace and justice through creative expressions, discussions, arts and crafts, and action-oriented projects, fostering awareness about their role in building equitable communities.

Celebrating Social Justice and Leadership through Messages of Hope at DNA Prep

This past year has been especially memorable, as students actively engaged with CRE concepts through curriculum content and school-wide activities. For International Day of Peace, 64 students and 5 educators at the school participated in events sponsored by WPDI. DNA students created heartfelt messages of hope, wrote them on 250 lunch bags, and distributed them alongside meals to homeless individuals

in downtown Los Angeles. They also spread positivity with handwritten notes and stunning peace-themed artwork displayed around campus. For the World Day of Social Justice, students researched influential women in history as change agents for peace and justice, showcasing their findings during a school assembly that honored WPDI as an example of leadership in promoting justice.





International Day of Peace

To commemorate the International Day of Peace, WPDI sponsored activities at nine partner-schools across Southern California, creating meaningful experiences that extended beyond a single day. The theme, Cultivating a Culture of Peace, provided a powerful foundation for students and teachers to participate in engaging and creative activities. Many schools incorporated art to express the essence of peace in unique and thoughtful ways.

At Cresson Elementary School, students and staff dressed in clothing adorned with peace symbols, doves, and shades of blue to represent tranquility. Peer mediators, 4th and 5th graders trained in trained by WPDI in peer mediation, read books about kindness and acceptance to younger students, sharing titles like *It's Okay To Be Different*, *We're All Wonders*, and *What Does Peace Feel Like?* To spread positive messages beyond the school walls, students also decorated 220 coffee cup sleeves with peaceful affirmations, which were then distributed to customers at a local coffee shop.

At Jersey Elementary School, students explored the idea that peace begins with individual actions. After watching a short video on the topic, they created artistic representations of a peaceful world on magnetized canvases. These artworks were placed on classroom doors as daily reminders of their commitment to peace.

Cypress High School fostered creativity and community-building through hands-on activities, including painting rocks with uplifting messages, coloring peace-themed pages, and folding origami peace cranes.

At Switzer Learning Center, students collaborated on a peace mural led by the school's art therapist, visually expressing their interpretations of peace. Classroom discussions encouraged students to reflect on symbols of peace, music, friendship, and family. Staff members also took part in a peace chain activity, writing messages of peace on construction paper links to form a connected chain symbolizing unity.

The event's impact extended beyond the day itself. Lake Center Middle School and Lakeland Elementary School incorporated peace-education books into their libraries, ensuring students could continue exploring themes of conflict resolution and peacemaking throughout the year. As Lakeland Elementary's school counselor noted, "This generous donation has sparked students' curiosity about how they can promote peace in their schools, homes, and neighborhoods."

At DNA Prep Academy, students focused on spreading kindness to those in need. They prepared and distributed 250 lunch bags, containing food and a handwritten note with positive affirmations to individuals experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles' Skid Row and local shelters.

For students, educators, and community members alike, these celebrations provided opportunities to connect, reflect, and take meaningful action, underscoring WPDI's commitment to empowering schools as catalysts for peace, ensuring that these efforts leave a lasting impact year after year.

"I loved being a part of this project! I learned how much we can do to spread love and kindness by writing nice notes and seeing people smile when we gave them the lunch bags. It was an experience I will never forget!"

Student at DNA Prep Academy



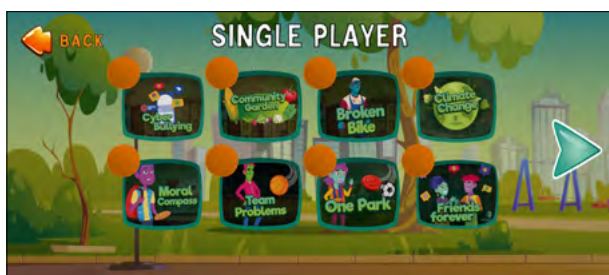
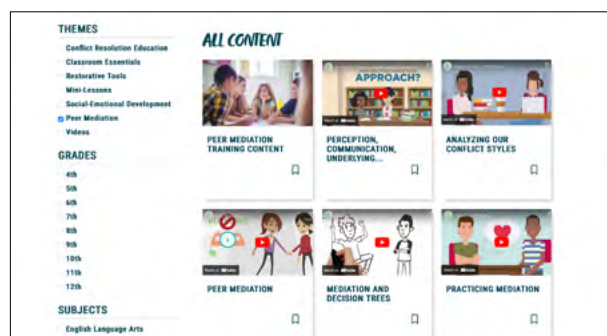
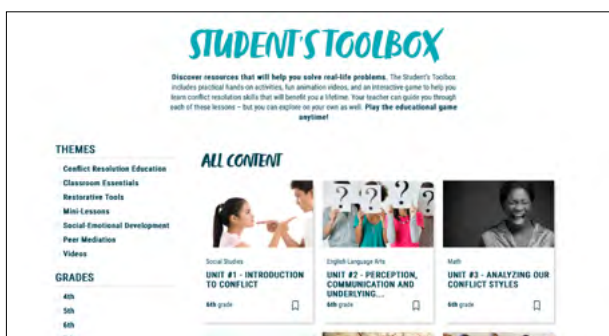
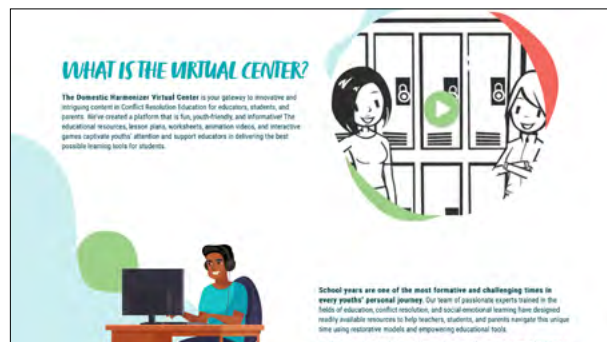
"It opened my eyes so much to see this. It really hit me how small acts of kindness can make a big difference when I made and gave out lunch to people on Skid Row. I really felt like I was making a difference in the world."

Student at DNA Prep Academy



The Virtual Center

887 participants in virtual center campaigns



The Domestic Harmonizer Virtual Center (www.domesticharmonizer.org) is an open source platform designed to support educators, parents, and students. This resource hub offers an array of educational materials, including lesson plans, worksheets, animated videos, and interactive games, that engage students and provide educators with effective tools for teaching peaceful approaches to conflict. The Virtual Center houses the full educational curriculum for teachers, counselors, and students across elementary, middle, and high schools.

One of the platform's features is our peace education game, *Hear Me Out*, which turns conflict resolution into an interactive experience. The game immerses students in real-life scenarios they can relate to, such as dealing with a cyberbully, mending a broken

friendship, managing different personality types, or negotiating at a bike repair shop. Thus, students have the chance to practice problem-solving and communication in a fun, safe space.

This year, as part of WPDI's ongoing commitment to building stronger, more connected families and communities, new features were added to the Virtual Center, including the Inner Spark manual and a social justice module, both designed specifically for high school students. These resources help students tap into their inner strengths, fostering self-awareness and empowering them to create positive change in their lives and within their communities.

In 2025, the DHP will launch the Parent Hub, a new resource offering approaches that support parents in their relationships with their children.



New Partnerships to Expand the Reach of the Program

In 2024, WPDI significantly broadened its reach by forging new partnerships and tailoring the program to meet the unique needs of diverse educational communities. By collaborating with leading educational organizations and specialized schools, the program extended to new regions and communities, empowering educators to foster harmonious and supportive learning environments. These initiatives

included collaborating with regional education service districts in Washington State, as well as the introduction of tailored training sessions for educators at the Switzer Learning Center in Torrance, California. Through a mix of virtual and in-person workshops, WPDI provided educators with practical tools and strategies to promote conflict resolution, emotional regulation, and effective communication.

WPDI Expands to Washington State

WPDI has extended restorative practices workshops for educators by partnering with two leading educational organizations in Washington State: Northwest Educational Services District 189 (NWESD) and North Central Educational Services District (NCESD). Together, these regional entities serve over 55 school districts, creating an expansive opportunity for collaboration and impact.

Through these collaborations, WPDI has hosted a series of in-person and virtual trainings on critical SEL

and CRE topics such as communication strategies, conflict coaching, understanding conflict styles, and emotional regulation. These interactive workshops, complemented by resources from the [Domestic Harmonizer Virtual Center](#), have equipped educators across various counties in Washington State with tools to cultivate more harmonious and supportive learning environments. Looking ahead to 2025, WPDI is excited to continue building on this collaboration, offering a blend of virtual and in-person trainings.

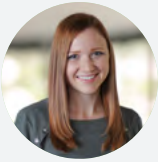


"The DHP is a valued partner for NWESD 189. Our staff got to participate in a "Lunch and Learn" session with DHP discussing conflict dealing with microaggressions. This was well received and provided well supported dialogue for this important topic. Coming into this school year, we have new leadership and support teams with NWESD. We've had two planning meetings with DHP and are committed to keeping our partnership growing during this transition of leadership phase. We are looking forward to participating in the parent workshops offered online to support our families with conflict realities in spring of 2025. Additionally, we will share information to promote special opportunities for our teachers to participate in DHP sponsored initiatives like the P.E.A.C.E. campaign (Professional Educators Achieving Change Everywhere). We trust we will see positive learning outcomes for students as they gain conflict resolution skills and insights."

Anita Tromp,

Assistant Director, Special Programs and Services at Northwest Educational Services District 189 in Washington State





"The Domestic Harmonizer Program has been incredibly valuable in equipping us with conflict resolution skills and practical strategies for collaborating effectively, both within our team and with other agencies that may have differing values and perspectives. Their approach is incredibly accommodating, Monya and Karen have personalized their trainings to align with our mission and vision, ensuring it meets our unique needs. Throughout the process, the DHP team has been flexible, kind, and generous, making the experience both impactful and seamless."

Anna Troutman,

MASH Director at North Central Educational Services
District in Washington State



TOOL: Know Your ACTivators



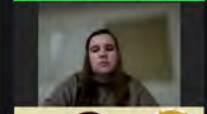
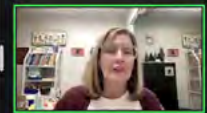
To try to understand the roots of your activators, consider how you feel when you experience each trigger. Categorize each of your activators into either your feeling of powerlessness, inadequacy, or lack of safety by putting an X where appropriate. Then rank the intensity of that feeling from 1-10 (1 not intense to 10 extremely intense).



Activator Example	Powerless	Inadequate	Unsafe	Intensity (1-10)
Example: When someone calls me lazy		X		6



Monya Kian



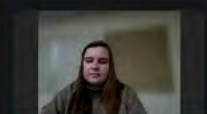
Conflict Coaching Frame



CONFLICT COACHING

is a helpful, research based support that guides a constructive conflict resolution process.

This is not a counseling session nor will you be given specific advice. You will be guided to analyze your conflict and map out a plan for your resolution.



Part 2: “their” side of the story

PART TWO

- Discovering the other person in the conflict
Considering what you need to know about them in this situation
Make generous guesses!
Imagine if the person you are negotiating with is a FRIEND

MINDSET:
 We all have different experiences and values, and we have common needs.

TOOLSET:
 Human needs placemat

SKILL SET:
 Perspective taking







New Partnership with the Switzer Learning Center

WPDI also began working with Switzer Learning Center, based in Torrance, California. Switzer has over 50 years of experience providing specialized education to children with unique needs, who face challenges such as severe emotional disturbances, learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, and other health impairments. With a focus on individualized therapeutic and educational programs, the center supports students in building emotional resilience, making positive behavioral choices, and achieving academic success.

This past year, WPDI conducted impactful workshops for all educators at Switzer Learning Center, focusing on SEL and conflict coaching. The trainings also emphasized active listening, open-ended questioning, and creating safe spaces for students to express themselves, helping to build trust and mutual respect within the classroom. This alignment with Switzer’s mission of individualized support ensures that educators are not only teaching but also mentoring students in conflict transformation and resilience.

“My experience with the program has been incredibly rewarding. The opportunity to involve our staff from the Switzer Learning Center has been invaluable for their professional development, especially as they work with special education youth facing behavioral challenges. The program’s focus on peace-building and conflict resolution has provided essential tools for managing complex situations and fostering a more positive environment. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative and expanding our involvement in the future.”

Dr. Sylvia Landaverde,
 Director of People & Culture, Switzer Learning Center



"The Conflict Resolution Education program offered by the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative left a profound impact on me. Beyond acquiring practical skills, it fundamentally shifted my perspective on conflicts. Here's what I took away from the training: firstly, I learned the immense value of empathy and active listening. Rather than approaching conflicts with judgment, I now strive to understand others' viewpoints. This skill has proven invaluable in personal disagreements and community disputes alike. Secondly, the training equipped me with de-escalation techniques. When tensions rise, I can defuse situations effectively, finding common ground and preventing escalation. Thirdly, communication skills became a focal point. I discovered the power of clear, assertive communication — a vital tool for resolving conflicts constructively. Additionally, I embraced the principles of nonviolent communication. Lastly, the WPDl program emphasized the long-term impact of conflict resolution. It's not merely about quick fixes; it's about creating lasting peace. I now feel a sense of responsibility to pass on these skills to others, contributing to a global culture of peace. In summary, WPDl's approach encourages us to actively choose peace, recognizing that conflicts can be opportunities for growth and positive change."

Mr. Joshua Ortega,

Professional Development Coordinator at the Switzer Learning Center





Games for Change Collaboration

In 2024, WPDJ proudly joined forces with [Games for Change](#) (G4C) through a theme partnership for the G4C Student Challenge. G4C is a nonprofit dedicated to empowering game creators and innovators to inspire real-world change through digital games and immersive media. Their program, the Student Challenge, is a game design competition that connects students' love of gaming with digital learning, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and civic engagement. As a theme partner, WPDJ

inspires and guides students and educators by hosting workshops on conflict mediation centered around our *Peaceformers Challenge*. Our theme invites students to craft their own games based on an imagined world where players face the challenge of resolving resource conflicts in a peaceful way while encountering violence or natural disasters. The objective is to design a game civilization where peace and fairness prevail, ensuring resources are shared equitably among all groups.



Health and Wellbeing

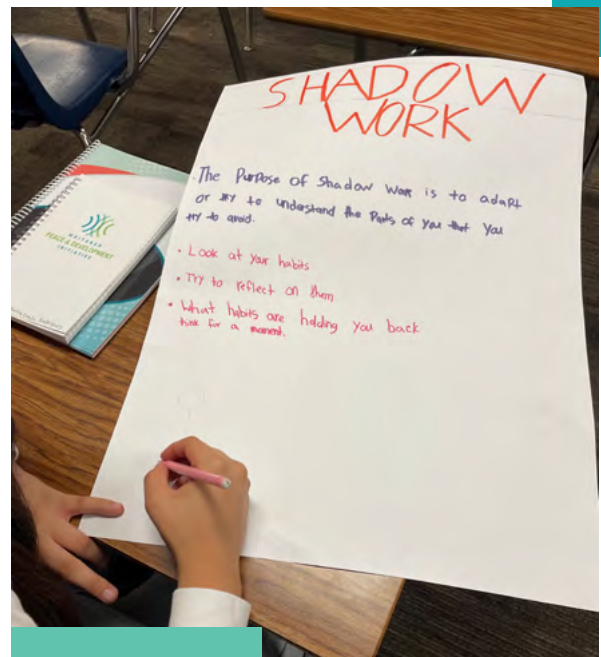
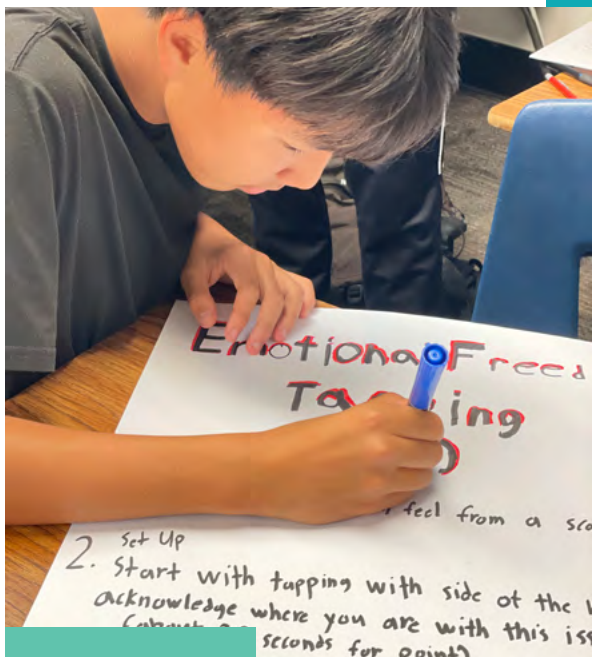
WPDI's Health and Wellbeing programs are designed to foster resilience, emotional intelligence, and personal empowerment within communities. Through the programs, individuals—especially young people—develop the tools they need to navigate life's challenges, heal from trauma, and cultivate strong, supportive relationships. Our initiatives address critical gaps in mental health support, Social Emotional Learning (SEL), ensuring that individuals have access to the knowledge and care they need to thrive.

From empowering high school students through *Inner Spark* to integrating SEL into elementary and middle school activities, WPDI is committed to creating spaces for learning, healing, and growth. By combining conflict resolution strategies, mental health awareness and community-driven engagement, we strive to break cycles of trauma and foster lasting peace.

Inner Spark

For teens eager to drive personal and collective growth, *Inner Spark* is a project that emphasizes mindfulness, conflict transformation, and self-improvement strategies that help students tackle challenges like stress, anxiety, trauma, and relationship-building. The practice of being in

community with others, safe to share their feelings and experiences, transformed the way they related to their own emotions. Participants are encouraged to speak their truths, confront biases, and take risks, knowing that discomfort is often part of the process of transformation.



This program was revamped and significantly improved by the WPDI team in 2024. The curriculum is divided in 4 parts, which include:

1	2	3	4
Understanding Me –	Caring for Myself and Others –	Building Healthy Relationships –	Peer-to-Peer Support –
Tools to manage emotions, heal from trauma, build resiliency, and strengthen mental wellbeing.	Tools to foster gratitude, cognitive restructuring, and responsible decision-making.	Techniques for conflict resolution, healthy boundary setting, and effective communication.	A formal framework for mentoring peers facing challenges, with ample practice sessions to build confidence.

Augustus Hawkins High School: Pioneering Restorative Practices and Transformative Education in South Los Angeles

Hawkins’ Diverse and Dynamic Student Body

Augustus Hawkins High School, located in South Los Angeles, is part of the largest school construction initiative in LAUSD’s history. Opened in 2012, the school features three specialized Small Learning Communities (SLCs): the Critical Design and Gaming School, the Community Health Advocates School, and the Responsible Indigenous Social Entrepreneurship School. These innovative SLCs foster focused, mission-driven education within a collaborative campus. This diverse and dynamic student body reflects the strength and challenges of the surrounding community. Hawkins was established in response to overcrowding at other local high schools and a critical need for trauma-informed educational spaces in a neighborhood deeply impacted by poverty and violence.

Trailblazing Restorative Practices

Hawkins High School is the first school in Los Angeles to adopt the Inner Spark program as it combines the school’s missions of advocating for community health while recognizing the need to respond to conflict using restorative approaches. This shared mission supports Hawkins’ proactive,

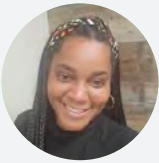
multi-tiered approach to conflict resolution and wellness, which addresses issues such as school disruptions, physical altercations, and substance-related challenges, while fostering a safe and inclusive learning environment for all. It also delivered to students science-backed tools they can apply to their lives.

Students shared with us how the training impacted their thinking, their perspectives about their emotions, and that it gave them empathy for the experiences of others. Students also shared that it helped them navigate their own negative thinking, and to transform their thoughts to those that serve them better. Inner Spark participants mentioned that they would be able to share the tools that they learned with others on their school campus and in their lives.

Furthermore, the Inner Spark training this past year was an important part of the growth of the program as it delivered important lessons regarding the tools that are most applicable and relatable to students. The feedback delivered by the participants became an integral part of the learning process of the curriculum design for the DHP team.

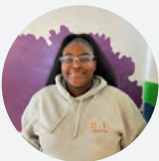


Feedback on the Program



"I am really proud of the students who completed the Inner Spark Peer-to-Peer Program. They demonstrated great insight and understanding of the tools to help manage stress and encourage personal growth and are applying those interpersonal skills in our mock classroom clinicals. This training is a great asset to student learning in my class and enhances their ability to deliver quality support to their peers."

LaKeisha Jones,
Hawkins High School Health Teacher



"I learned a lot about mental health and ways to cope with my emotions as a growing teen/young adult. One thing that stuck out to me was the Shadow Work prompt. It's basically acknowledging the person/thought [inside] that you don't want to think about or deny. It says not to deem that part of you as anything. Just to take it, accept it, and try to deal with it healthily. Another thing that helped me was that advocate, Ms. Karen. She talked about how our thoughts are not ours. Someone from the team added on to that and said we are just the person observing our thoughts, not the thoughts themselves. These things really stuck out to me, and changed my mind."

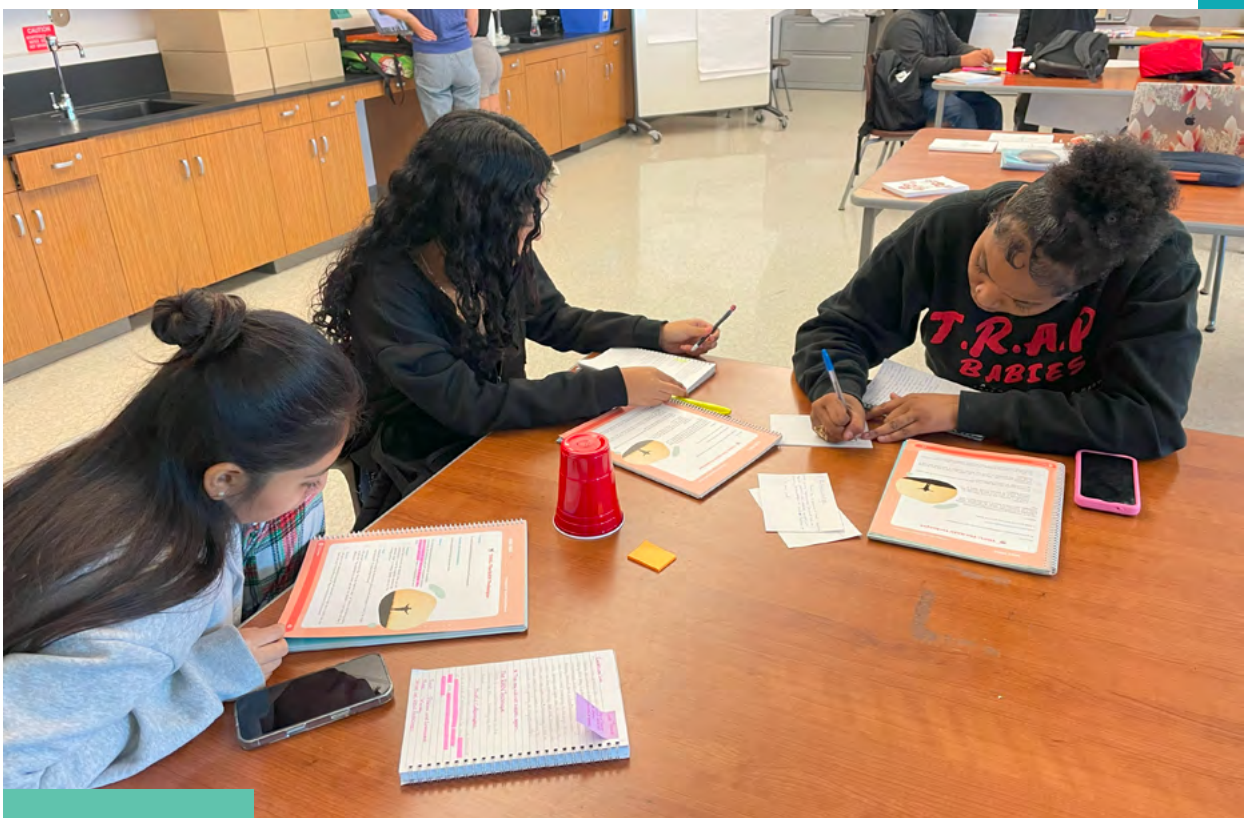
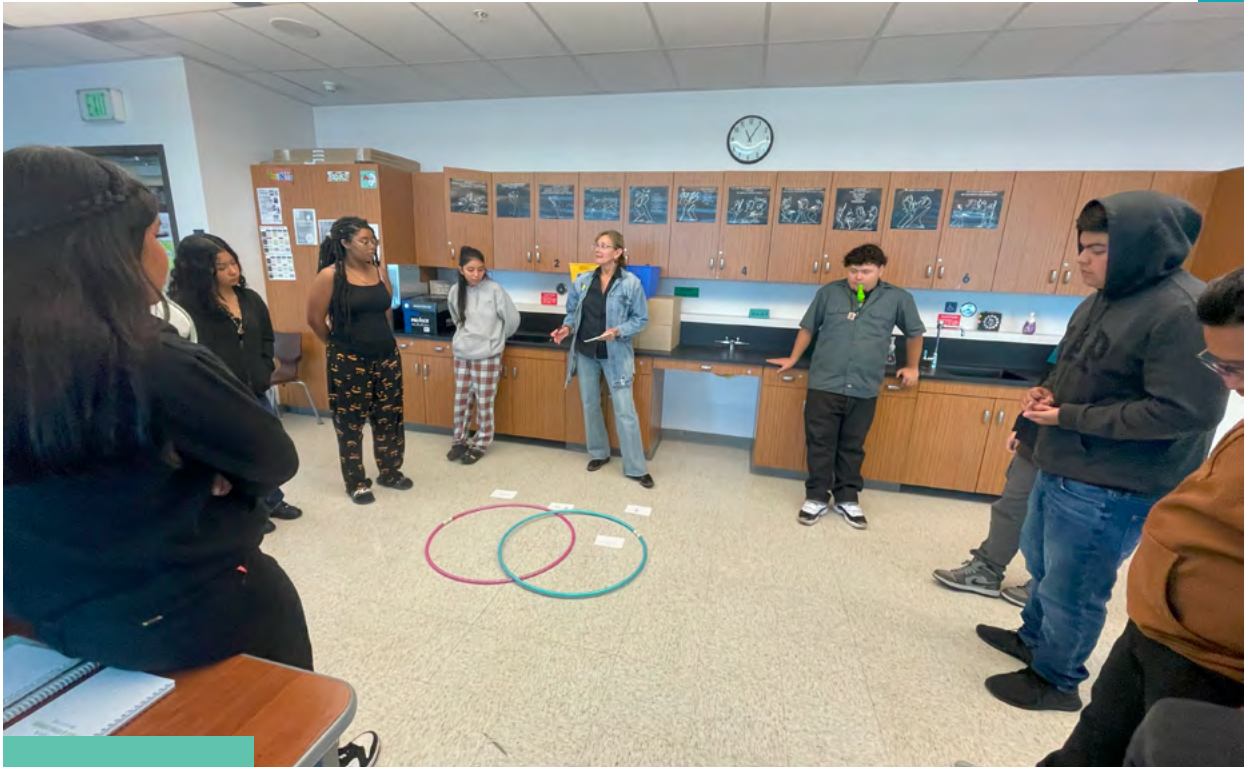
Kayleen,
Student at Hawkins High School

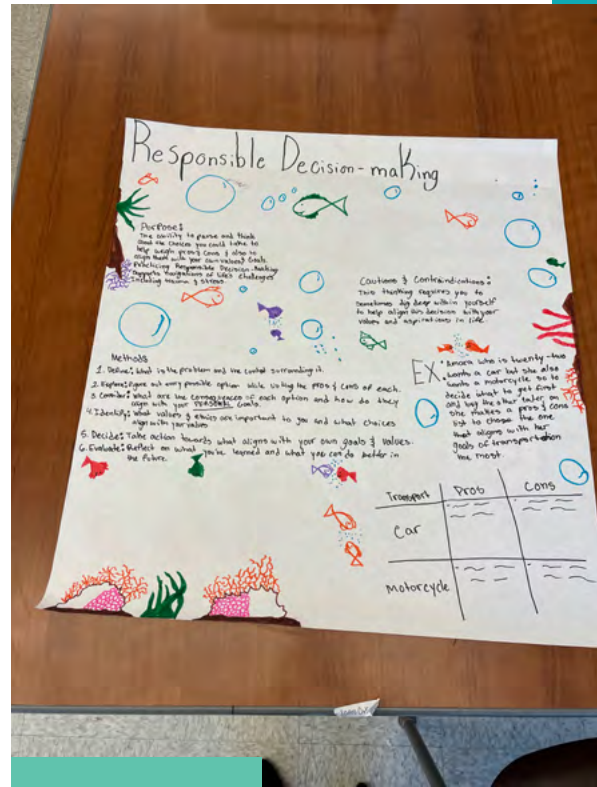
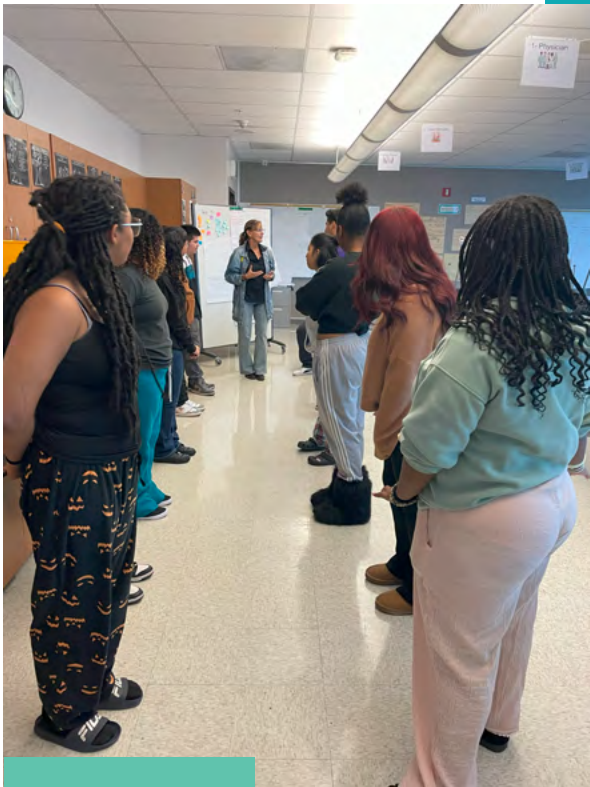


"Being in Inner Spark has helped me learn tools that can help me to regulate and identify my emotions. It taught me tools like the EFT Tapping method, which helps with stress, anxiety, PTSD, and chronic pain. When I tried this method, it made me stop hurting. I also felt more calm and stress free. I've learned to acknowledge and accept my emotions. I realize that it is okay to feel any emotions that I have, because my feelings and emotions are valid. I learned different ways I can set boundaries and ask people about their boundaries, so that I don't cross them or so that we can find a way for both of our boundaries to be respected. Lastly, I learned that breathing can be a really good technique to use even though it may sound boring and cliché. I will use these techniques to help my friends and family deal with stress and also use them for myself."

Crishawna,
Student at Hawkins High School







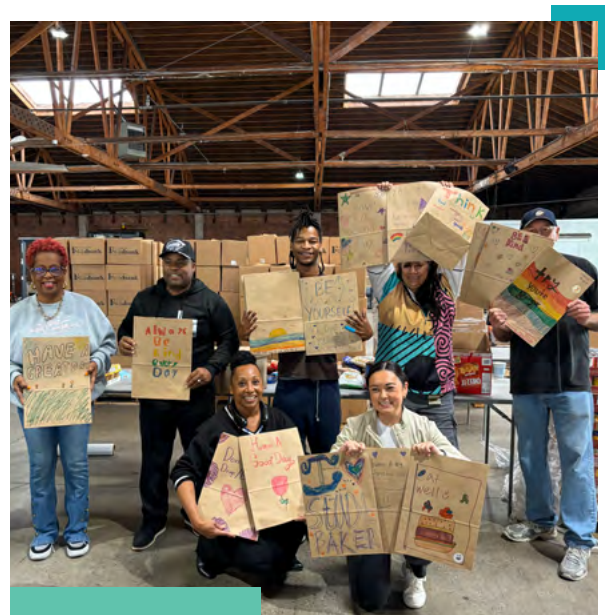
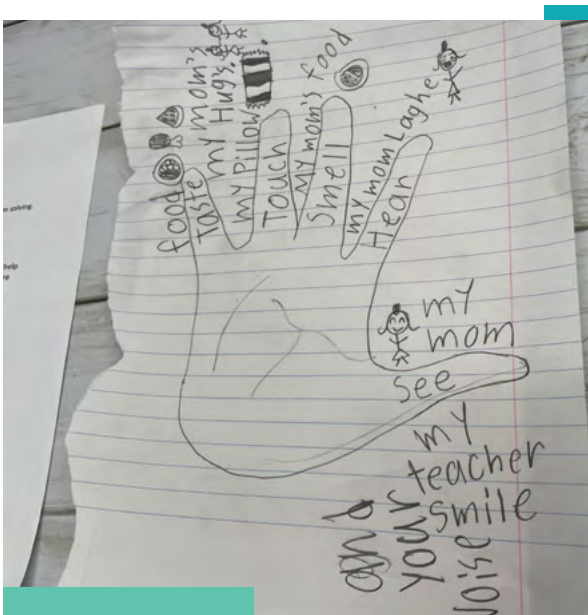
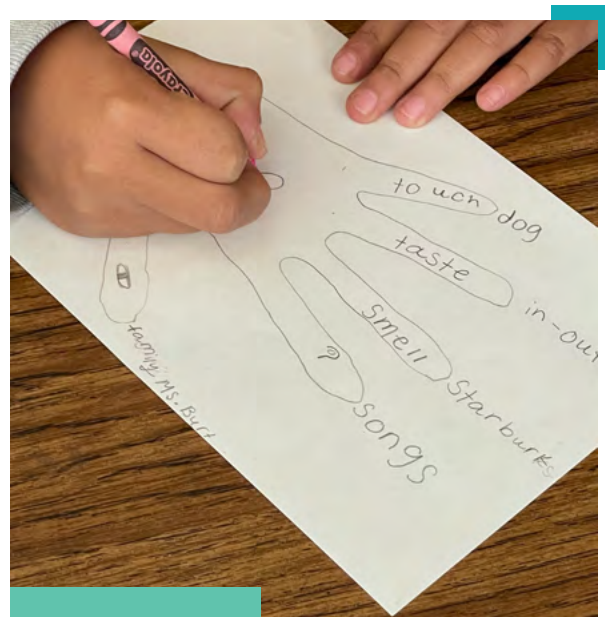
Expanding Social-Emotional Learning Initiatives

In 2024, the WPDI team embarked on a new journey to broaden the reach of SEL tools and bring them directly to students outside of the established peer mediation and Inner Spark.

At Studebaker Elementary, we focused on kindness and gratitude, engaging students in a hands-on activity with a meaningful purpose. Students decorated approximately 125 paper grocery bags with heartfelt messages of kindness, peace, and support. These artistic creations were donated to

the Foodbank of Southern California in Long Beach, where they were warmly received and the students showed incredible enthusiasm for the project.

At Jersey Elementary, the focus was on communication as a cornerstone of peacebuilding, while at Lake Center Middle School, the spotlight was on gratitude. Students spent time creating thoughtful “thank you” cards for their friends and family, fostering a culture of appreciation and connection.



Guest Lectures at the Asian University for Women

This past year, WPDI partnered with the Asian University for Women (AUW) to provide guest lectures on CRE and SEL to a group of 25 students preparing to become teachers. AUW is a liberal arts university based in Chittagong, Bangladesh, dedicated to empowering women from across Asia and the Middle East by cultivating critical thinking, leadership, and cross-cultural understanding, preparing students to become agents of change in their communities.

The WPDI team introduced students to practical tools to navigate conflict, and build resilience in their personal and professional lives. The collaboration has been profoundly inspiring, as students shared their real-life challenges and explored ways to apply the strategies they learned to their everyday experiences. This partnership has not only strengthened AUW's commitment to fostering leadership but also amplified DHP's mission of spreading peace and conflict resolution globally.

"The work and resources WPDI has put at our disposal have had a significant influence on the education of students at Asian University for Women in Chittagong, Bangladesh, both during a curriculum class and after class. The Conflict Resolution Education Trainer, met with students for two hours for 3 weeks during the literacy instruction class to teach about social emotional learning, conflict resolution, and setting up school based conflict resolution programs. Students have been so encouraged by the class sessions, that they have chosen to write their thesis based on social emotional and conflict resolution ideas presented in class. After the class, they met with WPDI's trainer several times to discuss the challenges of developing school based programs of conflict resolution in the Rohingya Refugee Camps in South Bangladesh. Their work with NGOs in the area has the potential to extend the program's impact beyond the class as they seek to become new leaders of peace and development in southern Bangladesh."

Dr. Glenn DeVoogd,

Professor: California State University,
Dominguez Hills and Asian University for Women, Chittagong, Bangladesh





Conclusion



Our Partners





WHITAKER
PEACE & DEVELOPMENT
INITIATIVE

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