

## WIDENING THE CIRCLE<sup>®</sup>

Exploring relational and  
restorative schools  
through a local, national and  
international lens

EA INAUGURAL RESTORATIVE  
PRACTICE CONFERENCE

23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023

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Finnish Forum for Mediation  
and Restorative Justice

[www.sovittelu.com](http://www.sovittelu.com)

[https://sovittelu.com/vertaissovittelu/  
in-english/](https://sovittelu.com/vertaissovittelu/in-english/)

[www.restorativeforum.fi](http://www.restorativeforum.fi)

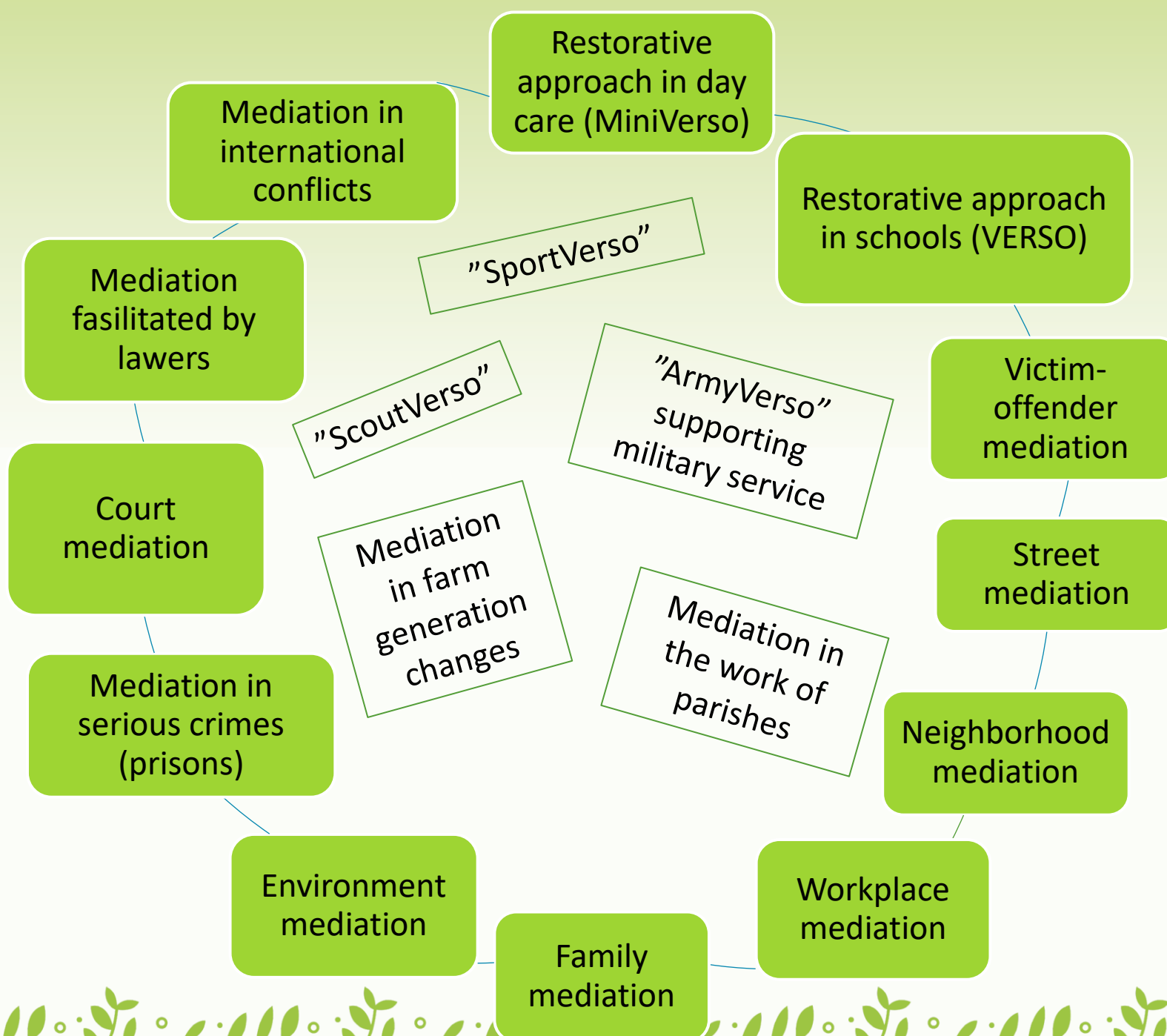


*“.. so, first mediation makes  
our school more peaceful,  
then our city more peaceful,  
and finally the whole country  
more peaceful! It starts like  
expanding all the time...”  
(a peer mediator pupil)*

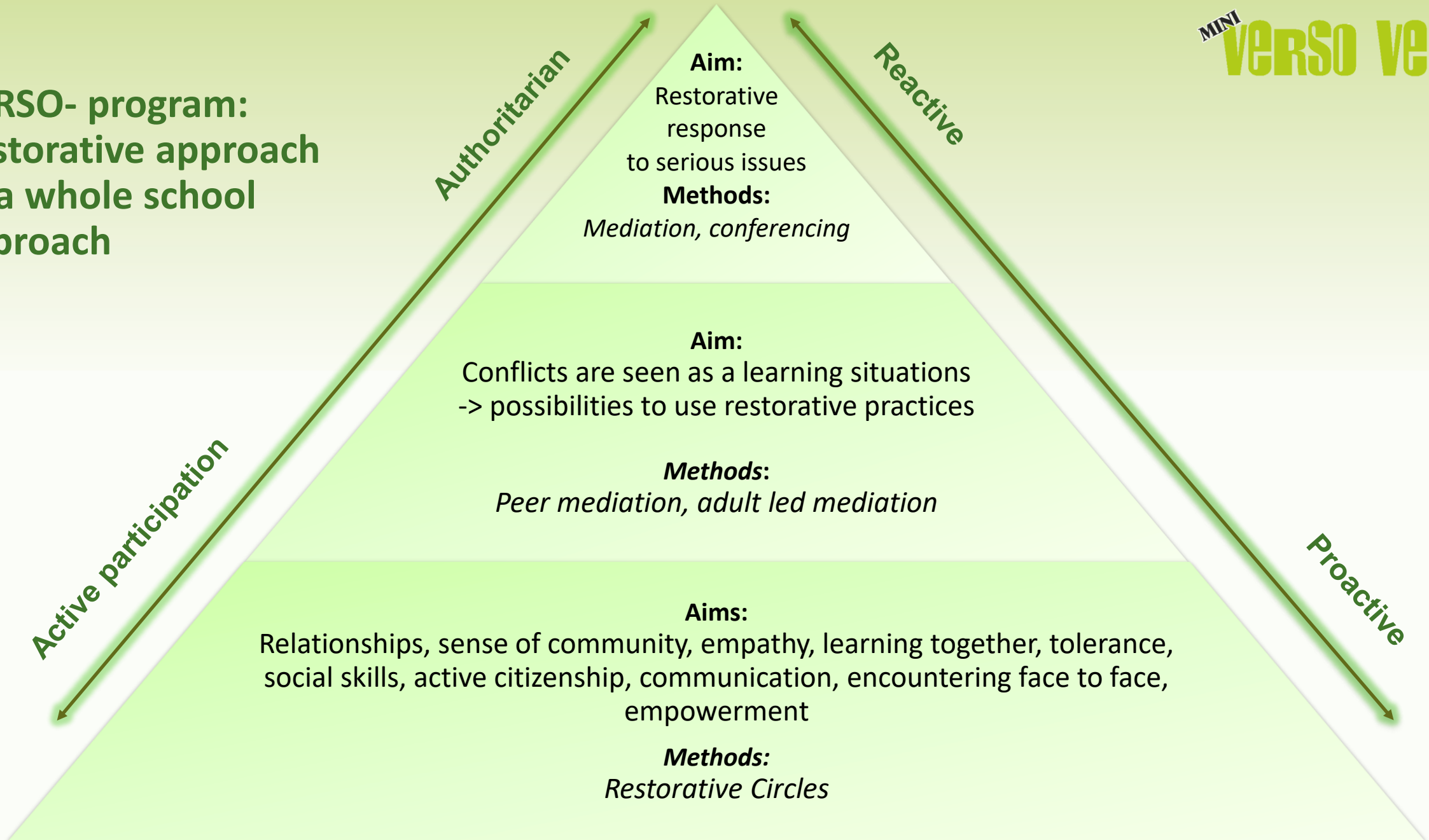
**VERSO**  
OHJELMA

## Access to mediation services in Finland

By implementing restorative approach and mediation in a school culture, schools are connecting to the conflict management tradition and development in Finnish society.



# VERSO- program: Restorative approach as a whole school approach





# Access to participation for all members of a school community



## MiniVerso in day care:

- \* Day care staff as restorative encounterers and mediators
- \* Staff and children to take advantage of mediation
- \* Parents sharing their worries and notices

## Verso in schools:

- \* Students as peer mediators
- \* Adults as advisors of Verso activities
- \* Staff and students benefit from peer mediation
- \* Parents sharing their worries and notices

## Restorative approach and adult led mediation:

- \* Day care staff and school educators to work as restorative encounterers and mediators
- \* Parents in active co-operation and sharing their worries and notices

## Mentoring:

Day care staff and teachers to maintain and develop the restorative approach locally supported by the VERSO programme



**Children's rights  
are emphasized!**



STUDIES IN RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

## Restorative justice from a children's rights perspective

Annemieke Wolthuis and Tim Chapman (eds.)

eloven

**We can say NO to misbehaviour and criminal action,  
but we never say NO to a child.**

**"The right to be heard and to take part in decision-making are fundamental issues in increasing sense of community and avoiding the exclusion of young people.**

**Every child has a need to be respected as a unique person, and it is the responsibility of adults to ensure a safe growth environment for children.**

**The rights of the child cannot be realized without children being given the opportunity to exercise these rights. "**

**(Gellin M. 2022)**

# The Step Model for mediation in schools and nearby society

## **1. Peer mediation in schools**

Cases: bad name calling, pushing and kicking, smaller fights, isolation, threats and blackmail, bullying in cyberspace, hiding someone's property; these cases in early stage after assessment of mediation advisor

Mediated by trained peer mediators in schools

## **2. Adult led mediation in collaboration with parties, mediation advisors, parents and staff members of a school**

Cases: cases not solved in peer mediation, repeating misbehaviour against the rules of a school, repeating social misbehaviour.

Mediated by trained staff members of a school

## **3. Adult led mediation in collaboration with the principal, parties and parents, and when needed police and social worker**

Cases: serious breaking of school's rules, serious violence of other disturbing behaviour reported to the principal, pupil counsellors, members of staff or parents

Mediated by trained principals and/or other trained staff members

## **4. Quick intervention models in co-operation with local VOM-offices and police, social work and/or programmes like Ankkuri (Youthwork + police), Neighborhood Mediation or Street Mediation**

Cases: assaults, property violence, thefts, serious misbehaviour, violence and threats especially among young

Mediated by VOM-mediators and/or trained youth workers

## **5. Mediation in civil and criminal cases in collaboration with VOM-offices, police and prosecutor**

Cases against law: assaults, abuse and defamation, vandalism, violence, property violence, thefts, misbehaviour against law

Mediated by VOM-mediators





# The restorative approach strengthens the learning of social skills



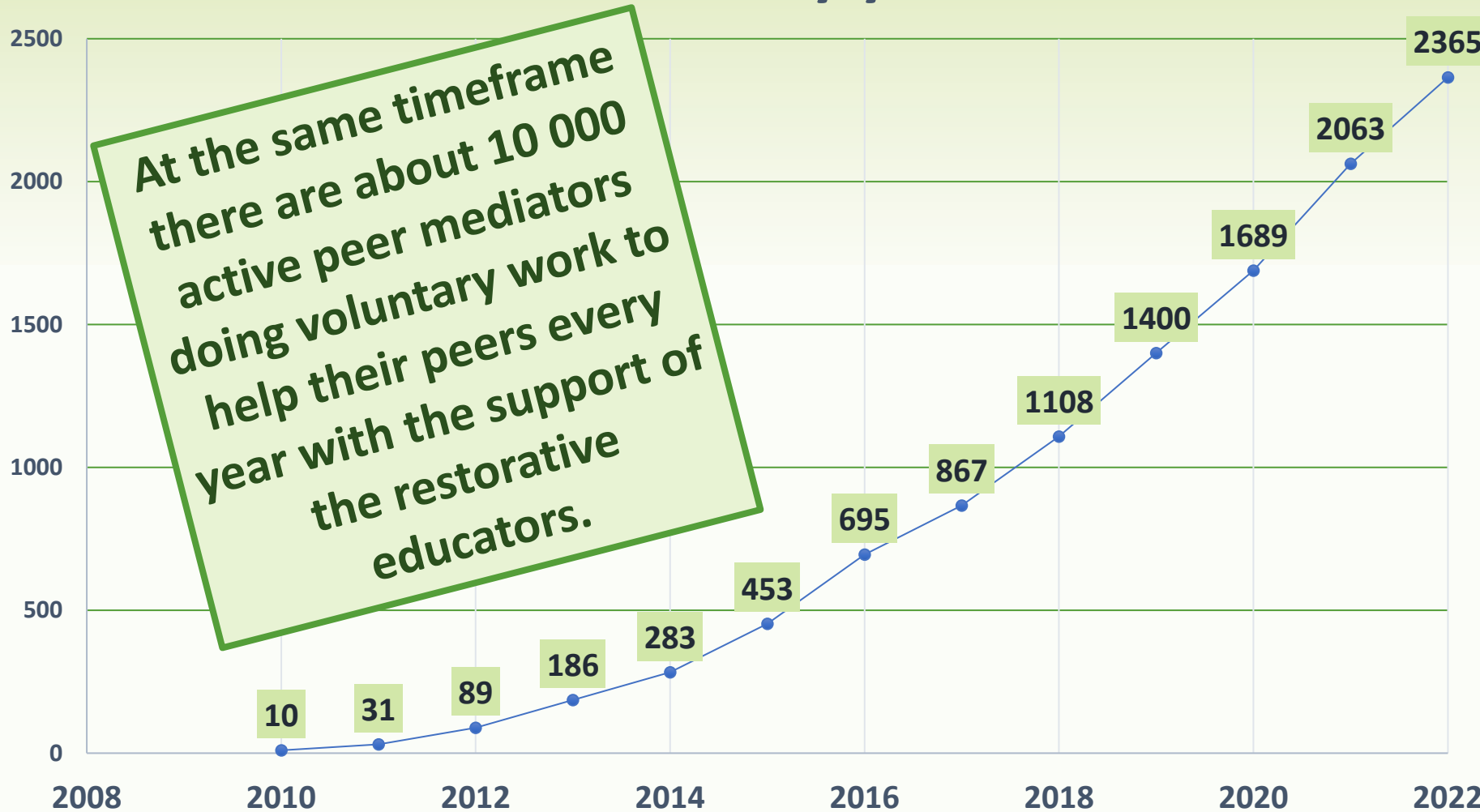
**The skill of restorative encounter** has freed teachers to support the student's ability to learn to interact, take responsibility and change their behavior.

**Restorative thinking and support for restorative participation** have strengthened the understanding of the value of each member of the community when increasing the well-being of the community.

**Restorative mediation** has decreased prejudices, increased understanding and responsibility, and brought respect between community members despite differing views.

Gellin M. 2019. PhD dissertation:  
<http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-337-173-6>

# The number of restorative educators increases every year



"I also feel that the restorative approach has allowed me to get "closer" to the students, because I have experienced that the students dare to be more honest and open, because they feel that they are supported and understood."

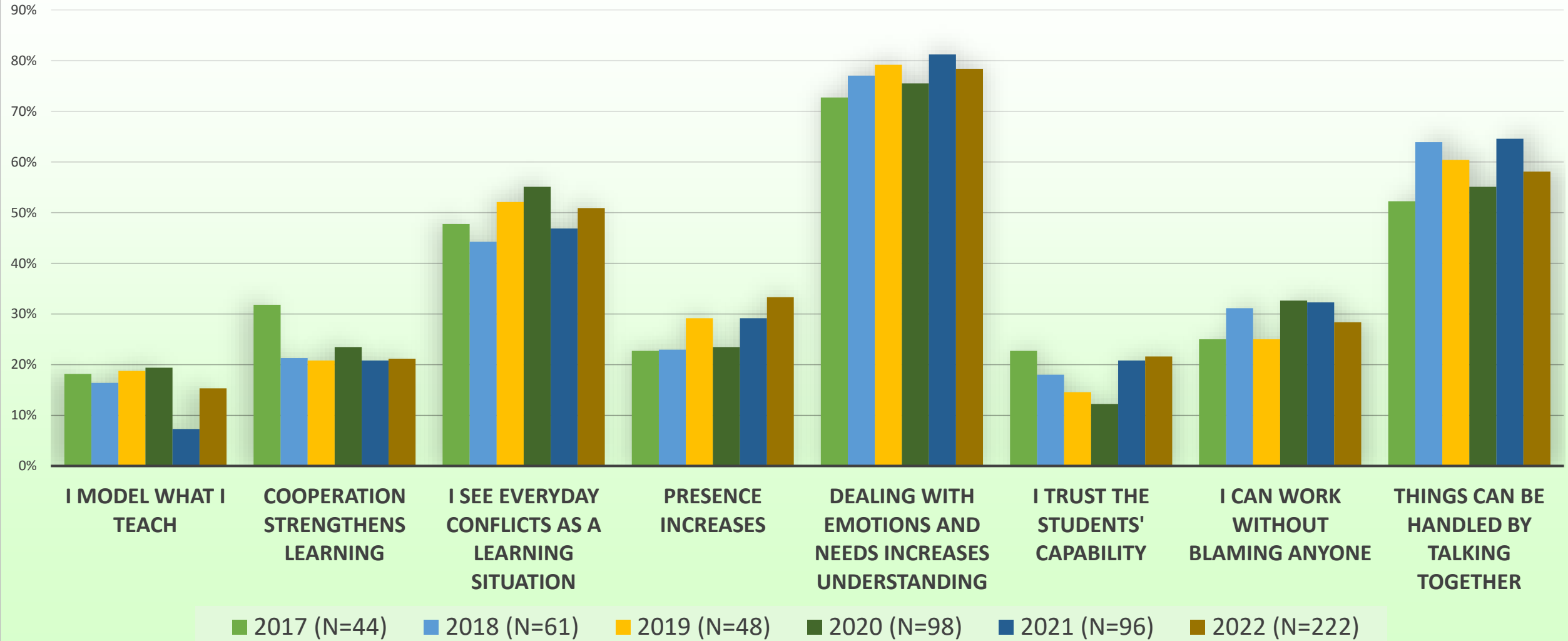
*(a restorative educator 2022)*



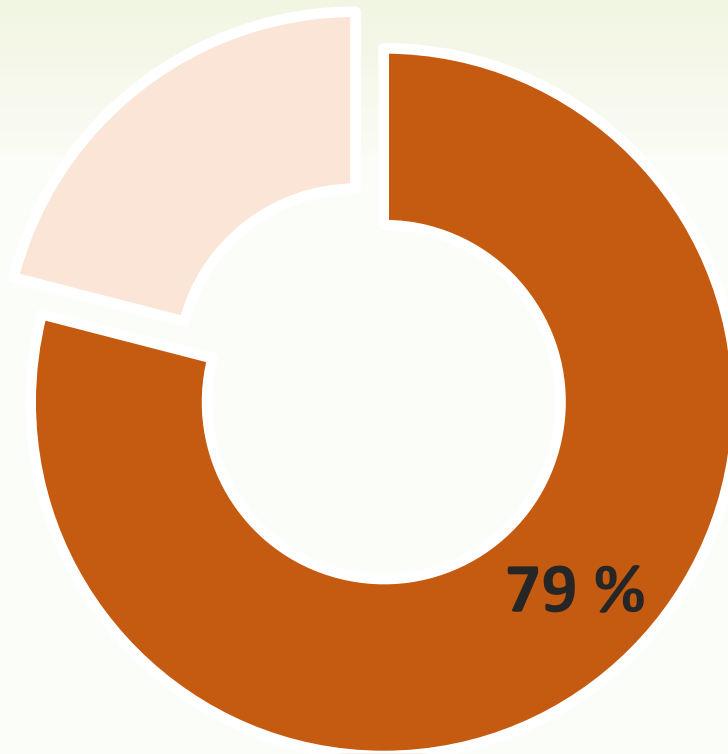
# Restorative approach is important, because

(choose the 3 options most important to you)

(N = total 569 answerers)



# Restorative practices supports respectful encounters

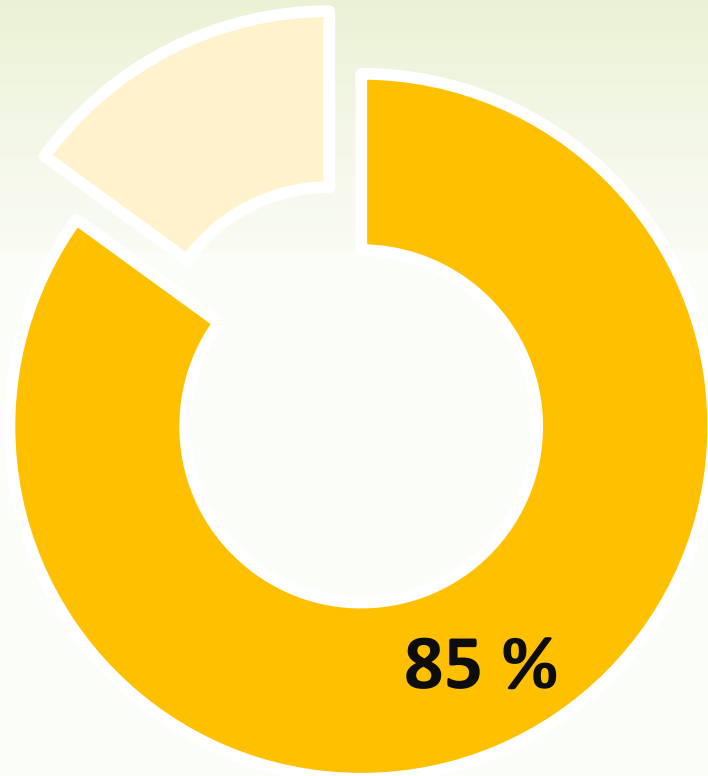


**79% of restorative educators  
are reporting that restorative  
practices have strengthen  
students experiences of being  
heard.**

**N = 569 restorative educators**



# Participation creates a good atmosphere



85% of the students and staff of the schools participating in the Verso program say that the use of mediation improves the school atmosphere a lot.

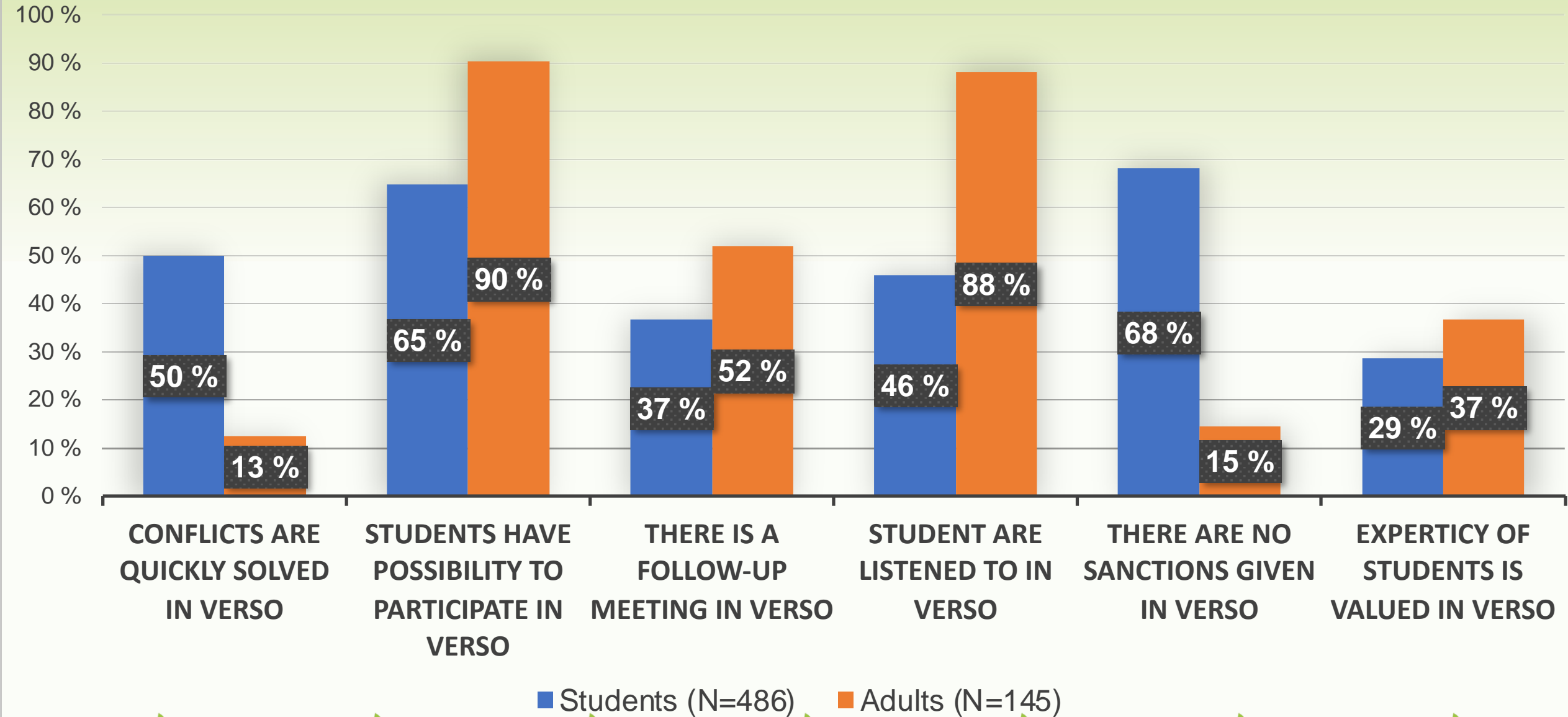
N = 486 students and 145 adults



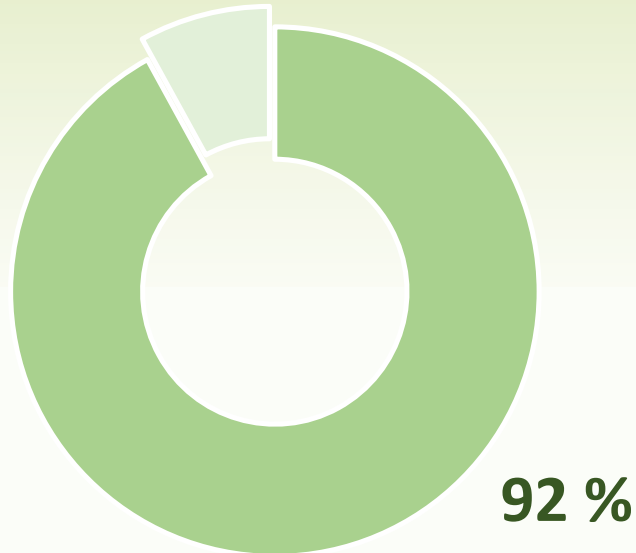


# Verso peer mediation is important because

(choose the three options most important to you)



# The change of behavior matters



According to the students' experiences, more than 90% of mediated situations lead to a positive change in behavior.

**“SORRY DOES NOT  
EQUAL TRUST.**

**SORRY EQUALS  
FORGIVENESS.**

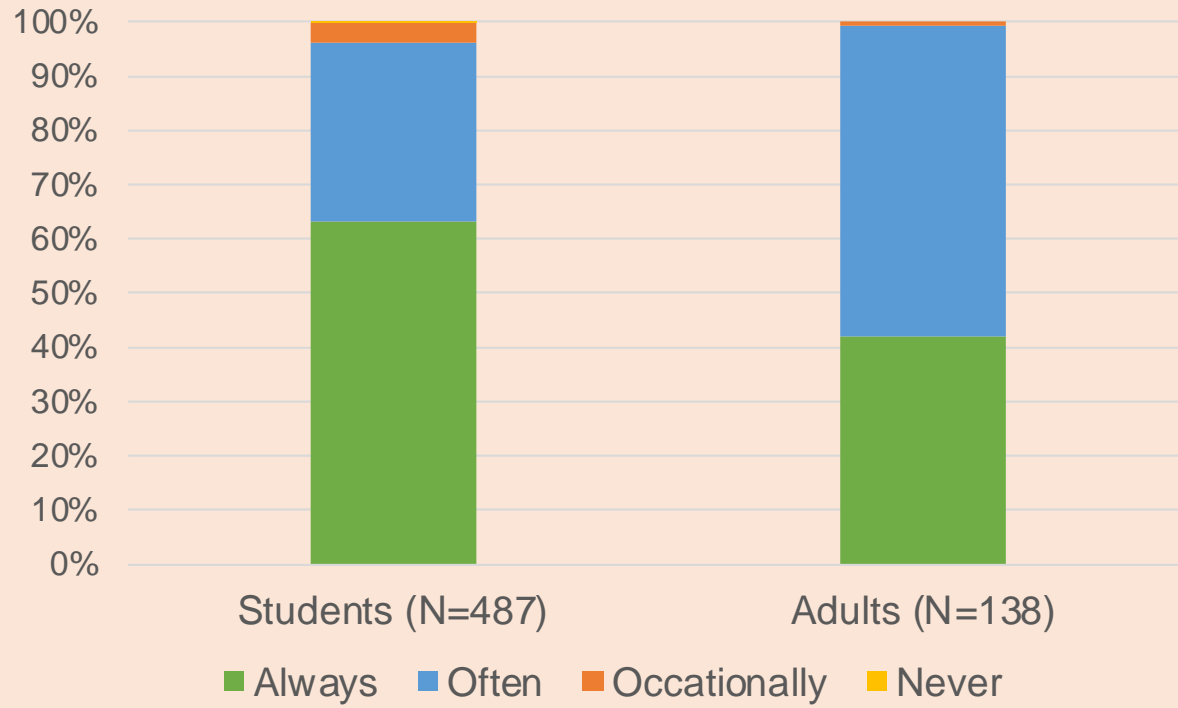
**CHANGED BEHAVIOUR  
EQUALS TRUST.”**

- Dr Henry Cloud

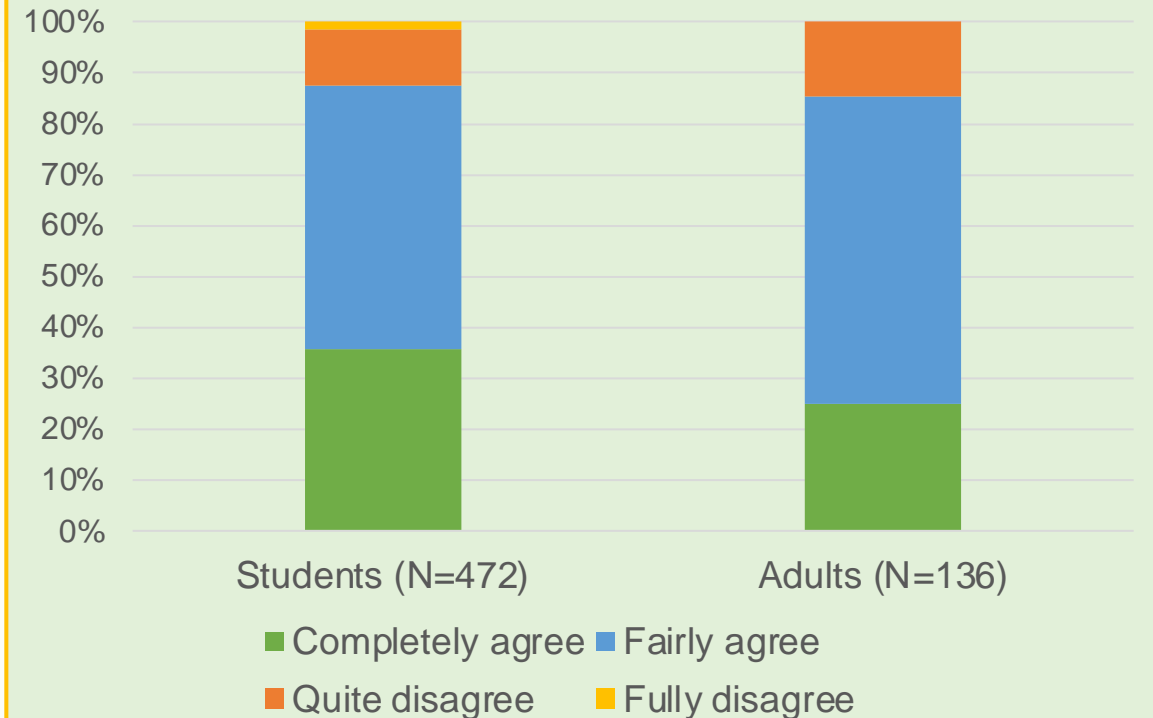
[www.marriagerocket.com](http://www.marriagerocket.com)

# Students value the restorative approach even more than adults

**When there is a conflict, students are listened to in our school**



**Verso peer mediation increases safeness in our school**





## National Education Evaluation Center (KARVI) 2022:

### Students' participation in increasing safe school community should be strengthened



KIUSAAMISTA EHKÄISEVIEN  
SEKÄ HYVINVOINTIA JA  
TYÖRAUHAA PARANTAVIEN  
MENETELMIEN ARVIOINTI

Keskeisimmät tulokset seitsemästä arvioidusta menetelmästä



TIIVISTELMÄT 10:2022

The data collected from the students (N=12000) showed that it is particularly important to strengthen the students' trust that the adults in the school have the will to intervene in bullying.

It is very important that the students are actively involved in planning and developing their school's antibullying work in order to promote a good team spirit and to prevent bullying and misbehavior.

Building positive trust between students and teachers is a key factor, if we want that students are not afraid to express the misbehavior they have experienced.

**40% of the students who answered said that they want to have an active role in preventing bullying, misbehavior, violence and exclusion at their own school.**

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# KARVI 2022: The strengths of Verso - peer mediation

## From a usability perspective:

- Verso - Peer mediation works well for solving conflicts between students and gives the parties responsibility for resolving their own conflicts.
- Students interested in acting as peer mediators -> a method also considered good by students.
- The VERSO-program offers a lot of training and material to support Verso - peer mediation -> using the method in schools has been made easy.

## From a rootability perspective:

- It is easy to implement the restorative practices also in teaching and other activities of the school.
- The use of the method requires the commitment of the staff -> based on the data, it has generally been implemented well in schools.
- The management's support for the use of the method and the good experience of the personnel in the use of the method are important.

## From an effectiveness perspective:

- Increase students' responsibility and agreeing together.
- With the help of peer mediators, conflicts between students can often be resolved without the help of adults.
- Most of the resolved conflicts lead to an agreement, and the situations will not repeat.
- Case-by-case evaluation relevant -> adult-led mediation to help resolve conflicts unsuitable for peer mediation.



# The strength of peers = peer power



**”For life” video in English:**

In web site: <https://sovittelu.com/vertaissovittelu/in-english/>

In Youtube: <https://youtu.Be/3bpaqmkgna4>

**VERSO**  
OHJELMA





Widening  
the circle is  
about  
opening  
our minds.

**Peer power  
is an opportunity!**

**Let's give the opportunity  
a chance!**

Thank you!

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# Some articles

*Chapman T., Aertsen I., Anderson M., Gellin M. 2015. Protecting Rights, Restoring Respect and Strengthening Relationships: A European model for Restorative Justice with Children and Young People. Vol II. Brussels: OIJJ / ECJJ*

<https://sovittelu.com/vertaissovittelu/in-english/>

*Gellin M. 2018. Mediation in Finnish schools: From conflicts to restoration. In: Nylund A., Ervasti K., Adrian L. (eds.): Nordic Mediation Research. Springer, open access. <https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783319730189>*

*Gellin M. 2019. Restoratiivinen lähestymistapa ja sovittelu peruskoulukontekstissa. Kohti eheyttävän kohtaamisen toimintakulttuuria. PhD dissertation. Acta electronica Universitatis Lapponiensis 266. Rovaniemi: Univ Lapland. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-337-173-6> (in Finnish)*

*Gellin M. 2022. Strengthening rights and participation of children. A Finnish perspective on a restorative approach to education. In: Wolthuis A. & Chapman T. (eds.). Restorative justice from a children's rights perspective. Eleven Publ. Pp. 291-310.*

*Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on child-friendly justice 2011. The Council of Europe programme "Building a Europe for and with children". Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. (www.coe.int/children)*  
Suomeksi luettavissa: <https://op.europa.eu/s/vJdl>

