

# Educator's Voice

NYSUT'S JOURNAL OF BEST PRACTICES IN EDUCATION

VOLUME VII, SPRING 2014

## Included in this issue:

Resilience Reimagined: Mindfulness Practices in the Classroom

Creating a Caring Majority

Building Community with a Kinesthetic Classroom

Developing Social Consciousness through Media and Literacy

The Guided Memoir Process: A Reflection in Four Voices

Promoting Social and Emotional Well-Being through Meditation

Decreasing Test Anxiety: A View from a Special Education School

Combating Test Anxiety

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# Promoting Social-Emotional Development and Physical Well-Being

## *In this issue ...*

Considerable attention is currently focused on developing students' cognitive skills, on looking at outcomes, at products of learning, and things that can be measured. But developing the ability to understand self and others, to manage our feelings, to express emotions, and to listen well, leads to the cultivation of deeper attention and empathy while strengthening the ability to reason, understand, and interpret new information. The development of these qualities can benefit students as individuals and as members of an increasingly collaborative and diverse society. These are lifelong skills and teachers are poised to help students acquire them.

The authors in this issue examine a variety of topics and offer related classroom practices connected to social-emotional learning and physical well-being. They explore reflective writing and socially responsive media. They raise awareness about bullying, and offer advice for coping with test anxiety. They include ways to use mindfulness techniques like yoga, deep breathing, and meditation to reduce stress, increase attention, and cultivate a positive school climate. All together the articles in this volume remind us that learning can include the creation of caring classroom communities in any setting.

## Social-Emotional Intelligence

“Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”

— *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)*

“. . . academic intelligence offers virtually no preparation for the turmoil — or opportunity — life’s vicissitudes bring. Yet even though a high IQ is no guarantee of prosperity, prestige, or happiness in life, our schools and our cultures fixate on academic abilities, ignoring emotional intelligence, a set of traits — some might call it character — that also matters immensely for our personal destiny.”

— *Daniel Goleman*

“Research underlying social and emotional development and learning (SEDL) suggests that a child who is anxious, afraid, preoccupied, depressed, or alienated is a child whose courage or ability to learn is impaired. There are clinical and educational methods available to help children focus their attention even when other thoughts or feelings intrude . . . SEDL is a contributing component to educating the whole child and engaging the whole school so that students are healthy, physically and emotionally safe, actively engaged, supported, and challenged by a well-balanced curriculum.”

— *New York State Guidelines and Resources  
for Social and Emotional Development and Learning*

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<http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/>

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ* (p.36). NY: Bantam Books.

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/sedl/SEDLguidelines.pdf>



*Now more than ever,* educating the whole child is an issue that demands our close attention. At a time when educational pressures are greater, the world is increasingly complex, and lives have become more stressful, successful learning cannot be reduced to, or defined by a test score. In addition to thinking, comprehending information, and acquiring knowledge, we know that focusing on emotions and feelings is not separate from, but integral to academic success. NYSUT continues to support the development of social and emotional learning and physical well-being for every student.

Learning and intelligence theorists from Bloom to Gardner have emphasized the importance of feelings and emotions in learning. While standardized tests do not measure self-awareness, self-discipline, motivation, or empathy, these traits are vital to a student's healthy cognitive development. As educators we know it is necessary to address each of these elements in a well-rounded curriculum that supports all dimensions of learning. It might be difficult to focus on math after being bullied on the playground. Or, it might be instructive to discuss feelings and emotions while trying to interpret history. Social-emotional learning can be embedded in everything we teach and nurturing it can help to create a more positive school climate engendering future citizens who are more self-aware, understanding, and sensitive to the diverse needs of others.

The authors in this volume explore a range of classroom practices which emphasize the importance of learning in the affective domain. From developing resilience and practicing mindfulness, to promoting social consciousness and combating anxiety, these concepts are illustrated from various perspectives by classroom teachers, building principals, guidance counselors, and professors who graciously shared their insights and experiences. The result is a rich collection of applied theory that exemplifies what social and emotional learning looks like in best practice.

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# Educator's Voice

NYSUT'S JOURNAL OF BEST PRACTICES IN EDUCATION

VOLUME VII, SPRING 2014

## Promoting Social-Emotional Development and Physical Well-Being

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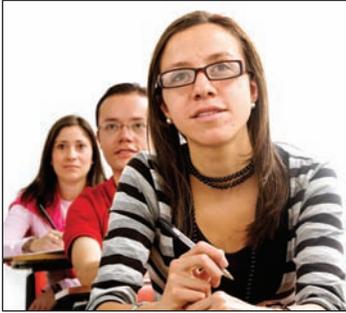
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# Resilience Reimagined: Mindfulness Practices in the Classroom

## SUMMARY

Mindfulness techniques help students and teachers focus inwardly on reducing stress, developing clear attention, and interacting more positively with others. This group of authors present a research-based discussion on the benefits of teaching deep breathing, intention setting, and yoga to build students' repertoires of mindfulness skills that support social and emotional development and physical well-being.

*If resilience "... is the force that drives*

a person to grow through adversity and disruption" (Richardson, 2002, p. 307) then mindfulness can be defined as its counterpart; the practice of harnessing our full attention through focused intention and practice. The force of resilience is not static and predetermined, but can be developed purposefully over time by incorporating simple mindfulness practices (Klau, 2013) that include deep breathing, intention setting, and yoga.

Our students confront adversity and disruption regularly in school. Teaching resilience is a basic component of social-emotional learning but it is rarely taught explicitly. Mindfulness practices can help students (and their teachers) learn to relax, to develop

focused attention, and to suffer from fewer distractions. Mindfulness is essentially "receptivity and full engagement with the present moment," (Black, 2011). Being mindful allows individuals to focus clearly on the reality of a situation.

Amanda Eilenfeld shares one of her experiences with mindfulness:

*One afternoon, a student was feeling anxious about going home. She threw herself on the floor crying and yelling in the hallway. This student has limited communication and does not handle change well. It had been a long day, and I could feel my frustration creeping in as she refused to get up off the floor. Many thoughts went through my head and I could feel myself becoming overwhelmed. It was then that I felt the piece of yarn hanging from my bag*

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*— a reminder learned in a training that I had to stop, breathe, and think before I react. I stopped and suddenly saw the situation for what it was. This scared little kindergartner was sad and didn't understand why we were going home early that day and not to lunch like every other day. I got down on the floor with her, held her close and signed that we would eat lunch tomorrow and today she would eat lunch with mom. I sat there for a few seconds holding her and she just let out her frustration through tears. She calmed down, and we were able to walk to the bus hand in hand.*

In his book, *Understanding the Stress Disease Connection*, Maté (2003) reviews the myriad ways in which chronic stress negatively impacts our physiology, leading to a host of often preventable diseases. Chronic stress also affects the way that we as teachers, and our students, cope and consequently meet the increasing demands of the classroom, home, and life after school.

Lantieri (2011) discusses the benefits of contemplative practices — or those practices that facilitate deep thought and reflection, including quieting the

mind through deep breathing and yoga — which includes the practice of intention setting. She suggests that developing resilience through

“... engagement in contemplative practice has positive effects on the health and well-being of teachers, that these effects may extend to their students through direct and indirect interventions and that this impact may be especially pronounced for students who are at risk of reacting to stress in ways that are destructive (p. 289).”

We take breathing for granted. We do it automatically because we breathe to stay alive. We are often not conscious of it. However, most of the time we practice shallow breathing. By learning to breathe deeply and consciously, we can boost the amount of oxygen we take in, increasing energy and decreasing our stress level. By making breathing a conscious strategy we can use it to calm ourselves or to calm our students in stressful situations both in and out of the classroom.

Controlled deep breathing is an exercise that involves careful attention to the breathing process. Essentially, it is making room for the diaphragm,

*continued on following page*

Mindfulness practices can help students (and their teachers) learn to relax, to develop focused attention, and to suffer from fewer distractions.

## Resilience Reimagined: Mindfulness Practices in the Classroom



located just beneath the lungs, to lower into the abdominal area, then taking in and releasing breath using the full capacity of the lungs. An image one can use to develop conscious breathing technique is as follows:

Sit up (or stand) with a straight back and a soft, relaxed front. Place one hand on the chest and the other hand on the belly. As you inhale, breathe deeply and feel the belly rise as it becomes filled with your breath. Then feel your belly fall as you exhale, expelling as much air as you can. Repeat this exercise 2-3 times to re-energize all of the cells in your body.

By practicing controlled deep breathing you are better prepared for times when the stress level is being heightened and you need to be able to calm yourself. By looking within ourselves and at our students we can reevaluate situations from a different perspective, by creating conditions that allow us to think. We know that when in a heightened state of stress, the body's natural fight or flight response is activated. Since children and teens are operating with a developing brain, they do not have the mature reasoning ability of an adult with a fully developed pre-frontal cortex, the thinking and reasoning part of the brain (Lau, JY et. al. 2011). Controlled deep breathing allows students to calm themselves so they have access to the thinking and reasoning

part of the brain, instead of reacting to fight or flight messages from the limbic system.

These days it is not uncommon for students to come to school feeling stressed for a variety of reasons. Some experience complex trauma resulting from poverty, disability, neglect or abuse. Among other difficulties, their behavioral, cognitive, and emotional response abilities are impaired. They tend to become easily frustrated and overwhelmed by seemingly small stressors (NCTSN, 2013). Resilience is essential to navigating the increasingly complex and stressful world we live in.

### **The Importance of Modeling**

The Social Emotional Development and Learning Professional Learning Community (SEDL PLC) was created in our school to improve outcomes for students by fostering the social-emotional competencies of educators. The SEDL PLC members reported greater calm in their classrooms, reduced need for creating behavior intervention plans, more students on task and focused more of the time, and better quality student work.

In a training offered collaboratively through the Capital Region BOCES and the Greater Capital Region Teacher Center we learned about mindfulness practices. Cultivating

Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) is a program developed by the Garrison Institute supported by researchers at Penn State (Jennings, et al. 2009). The CARE program focuses uniquely on developing teachers' social and emotional skills. Through a capacity building process in which teachers receive "explicit instruction to promote social and emotional literacy" (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009 p. 504) supported by administration and coaches, educators become more aware of their own emotions, are better able to regulate them, are more responsive to student needs and become more personally and professionally resilient. As a result, in the classroom, teachers experience,

“. . . stress reduction, increased mindfulness, and improved relationships with colleagues, [that] have the potential to break the negative cycle whereby teacher and student actions play off of each other, leading to increased teacher stress, poor classroom climate, and continued student misbehavior (Lantieri, 2009, p. xiii).”

Before the training, we used to focus on building students' repertoires of skills without realizing how important it was for the teacher as role model, to embody and exemplify those skills for them. It is no secret that students learn from what we do as educators, more than what we might tell them to do. If

we embrace a mindset of continual social-emotional development for ourselves and use mindfulness practices that support our students as well, they will see that we truly value these practices and will have examples of how they can use them independently.

Some of the core competencies related to social-emotional learning include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. There is a growing body of evidence in the fields of social-emotional learning and brain research that suggests that fostering mindfulness practices for students and teachers has the potential to dramatically improve conditions for teaching and learning in the classroom, including increased motivation, focus, and achievement (Lantieri et al., 2011).

Practicing and modeling controlled deep breathing is one simple thing educators can do to be at their best for their students. The practice of deep breathing to regulate emotions may begin as a conscious one but over time it can become almost automatic. Once people develop a routine, they will find that they are using the controlled deep breathing technique without having to think about it when a situation arises.

Eilenfeld describes, “regular practice for me has become five minutes every morning after I arrive at school in the

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By practicing controlled deep breathing you are better prepared for times when the stress level is being heightened and you need to be able to calm yourself. By looking within ourselves and at our students we can reevaluate situations from a different perspective, by creating conditions that allow us to think.

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car, before I start my day. I close my eyes, breathe deep calming breaths and completely relax. I do not think about what I have to do, where I have to go, or the stress of the day that may come later. Thoughts may enter my mind, but I simply notice that I am thinking, let the thoughts go, and return to focusing on my breath. It's time just for me.

By being more mindful, developing my own social-emotional competencies, I can “be present” for my students. I focus completely on them and what is happening in the moment. I model authentic practice because my students see me using breathing as a tool, both deliberately and in context. This is vital for my students who need to be able to draw on their social and emotional skills to navigate real world situations in the classroom and throughout their lives.”

### **An Elementary Perspective**

In a classroom with 5- and 6-year-old children, there tends to be a lot of energy in the room and these students can be very excitable. When returning from recess or lunch we have to transition back into instructional time. We take a couple of deep breaths. My students are deaf, so it is natural for me to use the American Sign Language sign for calm to indicate that it is time to be

relax and become calm. This is an adaption I made based on my students' needs. I quiet my voice and repeat the calming sign as we breathe together several times until I see them starting to relax. Then, we can proceed to whatever is next.

Practicing deep breathing makes sense at other times as well. Sometimes teachers want students to be excited, but not all the time. Constant heightened energy exhausts both teacher and students. I notice anytime my students become overly excited to the point where we are no longer productive, my patience is tested. After we breathe together, the classroom dynamic changes. Students are able to engage and focus and they come up with better questions and produce higher quality work.

Breathing exercises become part of the daily routine and create an environment conducive to learning over time. At the beginning of the year, students are very impulsive; however, as the year progresses, the amount of time needed to help them achieve calm, is reduced. After only a few months of practicing breathing techniques, I am often able to just give the sign for calm and students calm themselves almost instantly.

The impact of the controlled deep breathing, intention setting, and yoga techniques was obvious and huge.

### **A Middle School Perspective**

Middle school students respond to modeled mindfulness strategies as well. The impact of the controlled deep breathing, intention setting, and yoga techniques was obvious and huge. Students' agitation decreased as a result of implementing these mindfulness practices. Sometimes they would arrive in the morning already agitated. After learning these new strategies, many students reported feeling better and more relaxed. When triggered, they stopped, breathed, and were then able to process what was going on before reacting.

Upon returning from the CARE training provided through the SEDL PLC, we began controlled deep breathing with our students. A custom made sign that reads "BREATHE" in bright blue lettering hangs in our classroom. We would take time each day and breathe in and out deeply several times. The students responded positively, actively participating in the guided deep breathing exercises and many reported feeling "better" and "more relaxed" after completing the exercises.

In the classroom, intention setting is another strategy that can be used with students as a part of mindfulness practice. It can also help students choose how they would like to perceive and approach their experiences that day.

We begin by explaining and providing many examples of what an intention is and why and how they are used. Ultimately, intentions are more a way of being in the present moment, and how you choose to perceive your experiences, than goals of how you want to be in the future. Because we live in a future-focused culture, this can be a difficult concept for both adults and the students with whom they work. For this reason, we start with intentions that resemble short term goals and move gradually toward more present moment intentions as you might experience in a yoga class. For example, a goal-oriented intention might be to "become more patient" while a present-focused intention might be "patience," meaning you intend to view your experiences through a lens of patience. In both cases, better choices can result from the perspective developed through intention setting.

Initially, defining an intention with your students is analogous to Task Analysis 101. It is impossible to expect students to make good choices without showing them how to operationalize those choices. I first put the word on the board according to Merriam Webster: "An intention is any meaningful action." I then give a concrete example based on what I know about my students. For example, one

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## Resilience Reimagined: Mindfulness Practices in the Classroom

Helping students develop their awareness and control by giving them the tools that allow them to self-regulate, or manage their own behavior, is empowering.

boy does BMX bike tricks. He was missing some parts he needed to repair his bike. I asked him to share with the class. “In your mind you have an *intention* to put this beautiful bike together so you can ride it. Think about the steps you have to take to accomplish that. What do you have to do?” Students can usually come up with the steps easily. He knew he would have to behave for his mother, wait for his mother’s payday, make plans to get the parts at the bike shop, and put the parts on the bike. I then explained, “Here in our classroom you can set an intention for how you want your day to go. You have a choice. We are here to help you, but we can only help you as much as you want to help yourself. It has to be about what you want for yourself.”

Next, we discuss the word “specific” — “You knew specifically what you needed to be able to fix your bike. What are the specific steps you need to have a good day?” It is really interesting because they come to realize the answers are inside of them. Each student and educator in class has the opportunity to set an intention at this time. Intentions set vary by individual, but all develop the self-awareness and self-management social-emotional core competencies.

Some typical student intentions include “Positive day,” “Take a break when I need one,” “Remember to breathe,” “Patience.” With the personal sense of purpose facilitated by intention setting, and with the breathing and yoga, they have the tools to better manage their own behaviors.

When a student’s frustration is triggered, I ask, “Will this help you fulfill your intention?” and the reply is often “No, but...” I then say, “Well, you have a choice. What can you do instead?” And, they are able to calm themselves, think and make a better choice based on their intention. This is the key.

Helping students develop their awareness and control by giving them the tools that allow them to self-regulate, or manage their own behavior, is empowering. That is not to say it is easy. Non-traditional learners, who have challenges in traditional settings, now have the added intensity that new regulations pose. Emotionally and cognitively the increased intensity manifests in different ways every day. At times, we just need to stop and breathe. Staff will say, “Give me five.” Then, they model breathing right in front of students. When we take care of ourselves we are better poised to take care of our students.

## The Yoga Studio

After the December break, in an adjoining room or *studio* beside the classroom, students began participating in a yoga practice *with staff* twice a week. The goal was to deepen their experience with controlled breathing and give them an additional tool for relaxation. When it is time for yoga, the students help to set up the room by clearing space and placing mats for our practice. To my amazement the students, who were all boys, loved it! I witnessed growth in their confidence, willingness to take risks and enhanced physical strength.

While doing yoga may seem awkward to some at first, an open mind is always encouraged. Through practicing yoga poses we are simply opening up our bodies and opening up our minds. It comes with practice just like breathing or anything you do in life.

Students are also taught about etiquette for the yoga studio, which is likened to sports. They are asked to take off their socks and shoes, as is customary for yoga, just as wearing sneakers is customary when on the basketball court. Every practice is begun with sitting quietly and breathing. Students often experience their minds racing at first. They understand that this is okay, and are reminded to return to the breath and notice when their thoughts begin to slow down.

After that, we go through different traditional yoga poses and whenever possible, make connections to the science of human anatomy. On a big diagram we point out the targeted areas on the body and discuss how working with these can relieve stress. One example is sitting for long periods of time which can cause sciatica. We look at the sacrum on the chart. We then do traditional poses in a Vinyasa flow style. In Vinyasa, breathing is coordinated with the movement. Breath is taken in and then released as the pose is executed. Some poses we teach include sun salutations, forward bend, downward facing dog, plank pose, and the cobra pose.

Math connections can also be made in yoga. After practicing, we discuss angles and parallel lines. We count. When we are in class, whether it is writing a sentence, solving a problem or even getting ready to go home, I find I can ask my students to recall how we do the sequence in yoga, to help them remember that every process has steps.

One student with autism had a really hard time engaging in yoga last year. It's beautiful to see him now comfortably seated and automatically going into the breathing pose. This was a young man who would not take his sneakers off. Now he is setting up the mats and asking with disappointment

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# Resilience Reimagined: Mindfulness Practices in the Classroom



on non-yoga days, “It’s not a yoga day?” These little diamond moments make it all worthwhile.

## Implications for educators

In the article “Pedagogical Recycling: How Colleagues Change Colleagues’ Minds,” Cindy O’Donnell-Allen discusses the idea that “the key to lasting changes in mind is sustained participation in professional development spaces where colleagues support one another as they *mindfully* recycle practices and ideas along the full continuum (O’Donnell-Allen, 2005, p. 59).” The SEDL PLC provides such a professional development space, with consistent administrative and collegial support. In this environment, participants were able to take the new ideas they learned and use them as raw materials to be re-imagined and re-created in a new context.

“Giving teachers flexibility, giving them a range of skills, giving them different ways that it can look, and allowing them to take their own personality and match that to what they want in their classroom has been the best way to get authentic, true practice.” *Natalie Walchuk, Principal, Glenview Elementary, Oakland, CA* (Edutopia, 2013).

“As we become increasingly mindful, we can begin to respond from a place of freedom and choice. In other words we can act with resilience.” (Klau, L.,

n.d.). By fostering mindfulness practices that promote resilience in teachers and students, such as controlled deep breathing, intention setting and yoga, social-emotional core competencies including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (“Social and Emotional Core Learning Competencies.” n.d) are all deepened. Not unlike the new instructional shifts required by the introduction of the Common Core Learning Standards for Mathematics, which challenge teachers not only to teach algorithms and computational skills, but to understand foundational concepts that allow for deep mathematical comprehension, we need educators who understand Social Emotional Learning deeply and fluidly, if we want students to fully develop the social-emotional core competencies they will need to be college, career and life ready.

There are a considerable number of effective researched-based SEL programs available. Many can be found in the CASEL guidebook or in the New York State Board of Regent’s guidelines for social and emotional development. Encouraging and empowering teachers and School-Related Professionals to take an active role in social and emotional learning by supporting educators’ social-emotional development and providing multiple opportunities for them to lead is critical to making it work for your school.

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By fostering mindfulness practices that promote resilience in teachers and students, such as controlled deep breathing, intention setting and yoga, social-emotional core competencies including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making are all deepened.



# Creating a Caring Majority

## SUMMARY

The Caring Majority program teaches sixth graders to be ambassadors who become helpful allies to their peers in a school-wide effort to eradicate bullying. Each cohort of trained caring majority ambassadors helps its younger counterparts to collaborate in creating a more harmonious school climate.

## *From the first day of school at*

Boardman, first graders are taught our motto, “At School 9E, we don’t say you can’t play.” Boys and girls skip around at recess, pigtails flying, legs swinging on monkey bars. Smiles abound. Children’s voices call out, “Come play!” All is right with the world ... until one day, when all is not right. It’s an inevitable day ... a day when a child feels unwanted, whether another child isn’t following our school’s anthem, and tells him that he can’t play, or when a child conveniently ends the game of “House,” or soccer when another child approaches. Enter the Caring Majority.

**At Boardman School 9E  
We have a Caring Majority  
No need to bully  
No need to shout  
Peer mediation will work things out  
Use good manners  
And be polite  
Treat others well  
And they’ll treat you right  
We’re Boardman School 9E  
We’re Boardman  
A Great Place to Be!!!**  
— *To the tune of George Benson’s  
“The Greatest Love of All”*

The plight of the unaccepted child, the one who was chosen last, the one who was not invited to birthday parties, the one who was called unkind names, or

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**Karen Siris, Boardman Elementary School**  
**Cherie Meyers, Oceanside Federation of Teachers**

the one who was merely ignored, was brought to our attention again and again by parents as well as by the children themselves. We now know that social and emotional learning plays an important role in our classrooms. Helping our students recognize, understand, and regulate their feelings not only helps engage students in learning, but has a major influence on preventing bullying in our classrooms (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2011).

Columbine came and the plight of the victim turned bully or perpetrator was brought to national and international headlines. Currently, 49 states have passed anti-bullying laws. New York state legislators finally took note with the unfortunate suicide of Tyler Clemente and many others, and the persistent and important lobbying of NYSUT and groups such as the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). Many pending bills finally became laws. While the research tells us that the bullying which takes place in the lives of the gay, lesbian, and transgender children far surpasses incidents in the heterosexual population (Brackett, et al., 2011) we know that this dilemma is widespread and can affect any student population.

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## New York state definition of bullying

The definition of bullying is wide and varied, and it's hard to find two states with the same description. The New York State Education Department suggests the following language for the code of conduct in each school district:

*"Harassment/bullying"* means the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by threats, intimidation or abuse, including cyberbullying as defined in Education Law §11(8), that

(a) has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being; or

(b) reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety; or

(c) reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause physical injury or emotional harm to a student; or

(d) occurs off school property and creates or would foreseeably create a risk of substantial disruption within the school environment, where it is foreseeable that the conduct, threats, intimidation or abuse might reach school property.

(e) For purposes of this definition, the term "threats, intimidation or abuse" shall include verbal and non-verbal actions. (Education Law §11[7])

(f) *"Cyberbullying"* means harassment/bullying, as defined above, through any form of electronic communication.

(From: Amended Dignity for All Students Act: Student Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Prevention and Intervention, NYSED.gov, 2013.)

There are three major players in the theatre of harassment: the bully (perpetrator), the victim (target) and the bystander (observer). Yet, it is the minority of kids who are using their power to inflict the pain.

### Dynamics of Bullying

Bullying is an age-old problem, one that causes thousands of children to suffer through childhood and adolescence. In order for bullying to occur, there must be what is described as an “imbalance of power” and a desire to be in control of a situation. In addition, behaviors typically occur repeatedly and over time. In many cases a person who exhibits bullying behaviors wants the approval of the bystander as an audience. Bullying behaviors fall into the following categories:

- physical bullying: using physical means to show power (hitting, punching, kicking, etc.), damaging /stealing property
- verbal bullying: name calling, teasing, taunting, making offensive/discriminatory remarks, verbally threatening or intimidating
- social/emotional/relational bullying: intentionally excluding others from social interactions, spreading rumors, gossiping, ostracizing, alienating, using threatening looks or gestures, extortion
- cyberbullying: sending insulting and threatening messages through social media

There are three major players in the theatre of harassment: the bully (perpetrator), the victim (target) and the bystander (observer). Yet, it is the minority of kids who are using their power to inflict the pain. The majority of our students are bystanders so it made great sense to look to the power of the bystanders for the answers. Establishing new social norms in our schools that reward “upstanding” and frown upon “bullying” behaviors might hold the key.

### Understanding the Bystander

There are many reasons that children who stand by and watch do not intervene. First and foremost, they fear becoming the next victim. They have watched what happened to the targeted child, and above all else do not want that happening to them. In addition, they feel powerless to help the victim because they have not been taught the strategies to help.

Even the youngest children in elementary school understand the concept of the bystander. They do because they have all been in the situation of passively watching bullying behaviors take place. When asked why they don't speak up, you invariably hear the same answers, “I am afraid the bully will make me the next person he teases,” or “I am afraid he will turn all my

friends against me,” or “I don’t know what to say to the bully.” The older children may say, “I have reported it to adults before, but nothing ever happens. Even when the bully gets a consequence, he does it again, and again, and again.” The children reveal that they feel powerless and that they do not have the words or tools to stand up to the bully.

### **Evolution of the Caring Majority**

Social learning theory postulates that students who have undergone and survived relevant experiences, are more credible role models for their peers. Interactions with peers who are successfully coping with their experiences result in positive changes in behavior (Salzer & Shear, 2002).

Putting theory into action, our work with creating a “Caring Majority” of students who speak up against bullying behaviors began. If the silent majority of kids — those that watch bullying behaviors take place — stand by helplessly, then they are implicitly allowing this to happen. If we can empower the silent majority to reduce the fears bullies create, then we could potentially strip the bullies of their power. It is the influence of the silent majority then, which would make the difference in the lives of so many.

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## **Theatre of harassment**

### **The perpetrator**

Let’s first take a look at the characteristics of the child with the bullying behaviors. Note that we hesitate to call this child a “bully” as the term is sometimes over used and can cause serious incrimination. Behaviors include a lack of empathy toward others, which typically develops in children around the age of 8. A child that displays these behaviors is physically and verbally aggressive and continually seeks and needs to feel power in relationships. He is easily slighted when not given this power by his classmates and may provoke fights when there has been little or no reason. Contrary to popular thought, the child with bullying behaviors has average levels of self-esteem (Olweus, 1993).

### **The target**

The targeted child, or victim, falls into two categories. The passive victim often suffers from social anxiety, lacking social skills needed to defend herself against bullying behaviors. She is a people pleaser, is compliant and fears confrontation. The provocative victim is sometimes not recognized as a victim at all and sometimes falls into a bully/victim cycle. He is restless, irritating to others and does not have the skills to defend himself. This child is often diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (Olweus, 1993).

### **The bystander**

In schools, it is the bystander who hears and sees what is happening, yet does not usually intervene. The data indicates that 85 percent of students are neither bully nor victim, but instead stand by as their classmates are either physically abused or emotionally alienated (Garrity, Jens, Porter, & Sager, 2002). According to Sagarese and Gianetti (2003), “bystanders make or break bullying episodes.” A Canadian study of student bystanders found that 43 percent of respondents said they tried to help a victim. The remaining 57 percent stood by and watched, but did nothing. Of that number 33 percent confessed that they should have attempted to help a victim but didn’t. Finally, 24 percent responded, “It was none of my business.”

If we can empower the silent majority to reduce the fears bullies create, then we could potentially strip the bullies of their power.

The findings about bullying were shared with our sixth graders. Interested students were asked to write a letter telling why they wanted to join our school's efforts to end bullying behaviors. The process evolved over the years to include an application that students complete describing their understanding of caring behaviors, as well as their desire to stand up for others. Even in the early days of the program, many children in the sixth grade volunteered to help out.

Their letters were inspiring as they shared the good deeds they had already accomplished in their short lives. They had volunteered in soup kitchens; they had donated their hair to Locks of Love; they had given up their snacks for a friend who did not have one. Based on the concept of a caring majority, students learned their help was needed in assisting the school community to turn around the children who stand by and watch bullying behaviors. They learned that it is important to speak up and help stamp out bullying (Garrity, C, Jens, K, Porter, W. & Sager, 2002). First though, they needed to be trained in how to do this and how they could then transfer what they learned to the other students in the school.

The children waited anxiously, wondering if they would be accepted as caring ambassadors. They received a

confidential, congratulatory letter, letting them know that they had been chosen for a special job in our school. The letter explained that with this position came a big responsibility, one that required their "best selves" to be displayed every day, because they were now role models for the rest of the students in our school. Students were assured that the adults would not be disappointed or angry if they didn't want to take on this big job. It involved missing some time from class for training, and many hours of recess time for small group work as they gathered information for their presentations and skits. They were also told any work missed in class had to be made up.

Each year sixth graders take this responsibility seriously and are proud for being chosen. The congratulatory letter asks for a parent and student signature agreeing that the student accepts the position and its duties, and that the parent approves as well.

The application asks: *Why do you want to be a Caring Majority Ambassador?* One sixth grader explained:

*I want to be a Caring Majority Ambassador because I believe in being an up-stander and helping people. I get along and work well with adults and my peers. I am an excellent listener and I love to stand up for what is right.*

When asked the next two questions, *What character traits do you possess that would make you a good Caring Majority Ambassador? How have you been a positive role model for others?*, the same student replied,

*I have a big heart. I am very reliable, trustworthy, and I feel comfortable helping others. I always put myself in someone else's shoes and try to see the situation from their view. I am not judgmental and I enjoy leadership roles. I am involved in peer mediation and Kiwanis-Kids. It would be an honor to be selected to be a Caring Majority Ambassador.*

### **Caring Majority Ambassador Training**

Bullying prevention and positive school climate is not something new at our school. We aren't just beginning to have discussions about bullying, we are actively involved in its eradication. Every adult and child in our building, every day, lives with the knowledge that when we walk through our school's doors, we walk into a place of safety, where every person is respected, and valued.

With the pressure for high student performance, it is becoming more and more difficult to pull children from class. The sixth grade teachers meet

with the principal to determine a good day for training. The teachers realize the importance of maintaining a caring culture and know that the more comfortable children feel in school, the greater chance for academic growth. This is evidence that the Caring Majority has become an integral part of our school.

As we begin our day of training, the children are welcomed and thanked for volunteering to work to make our school a caring and welcoming place. They are also commended for their commitment and willingness to give up some of their time for our mission. They always share their own stories, and a bond begins to develop within the group.

We discuss the seriousness of bullying in schools, and share poignant videos about what can happen. They already know quite a bit from their own experiences as well as what they have seen in the news about suicides and bully-cides. It is important for the children to realize that bullying is rarely the sole reason for these suicides, and that there are other psychological and sociological components. However, it is stressed that we would never want to hear that a child's unkindness to another ever had a part in another child's desperate acts. A Power Point presentation gives information about

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Every adult and child in our building lives with the knowledge that when we walk through our school's doors, we walk into a place of safety, where every person is respected, and valued.

## Being an Upstander

### Directly Intervene

by discouraging the bully, defending the victim, or redirecting the situation away from the bullying.

### Get Help

by rallying support from peers to stand up against bullying or by reporting the bullying to adults.

the causes of bullying (psychological, familial, school), the characteristics of the bully, the victim, and the bystander, and the statistics about bullying in schools. The focus of our discussions is the importance of turning the children who stand by and watch into students who take a stand against bullying. We talk about turning the *bystanders* into *upstanders*.

Through discussion and role playing the new ambassadors realize that being able to speak up for their friends takes courage. They learn about a study done by Charisse Nixon and Stan Davis, called *The Youth Voice Research Project*. In this study, 13,000 targeted students were surveyed to find out the most effective peer interventions. The results indicated that things got better for the target when their peers did the following: spent time with them, talked to them, helped them get away, and called them after the incident to see how they were doing. The least effective interventions included: blaming the target, ignoring the situation, and confronting the bully. (Davis & Nixon, 2010).

We also use the term “allies” to define the children who *befriend* the targeted child, and suggest that at least two or three allies work together when confronting a bullying situation. It stands to reason, that if bullying behaviors involve an imbalance of power, with the bully wielding this power, it will take more than one child to ask him or her to stop. If a group of children come to the aid of a target, it begins to strip the bully of his powers, eventually leaving him alone, with no audience for his unkindness.

### The Ambassadors Work

Once given the background knowledge about bullying and strategies to empower the bystanders, the ambassadors get to work. They divide into small teams and through consensus choose a lower grade level as their audience. They take the information they have learned and create their own PowerPoint presentations and skits to inform their younger classmates how to become upstanders and members of the Caring Majority in our school. They take their work very seriously, and come during their recess time to develop their plan. They are helped with editing and revising their presentations and when ready, a grade level presentation is scheduled for each of the groups. It’s great to watch how they take ownership of the work they are doing and how they feel responsible for imparting what they have learned to their younger classmates.

The ambassadors bond with the younger students, as they ask the children to relate experiences of times they felt left out or of times that someone said something unkind that hurt their feelings. Younger students were also asked about times they saw feelings being hurt, and what they did in those situations. Not surprisingly, most students were bystanders; the children who hear and see what is happening, yet do not intervene.

Each new group of ambassadors is amazing in their commitment and dedication to teaching all the children in our school how to become *upstanders*.

The younger students listen attentively to the ambassadors as they stand in front of them teaching them about kindness, caring, and inclusion and as they give them the tools to become helpful allies to their peers. Through these conversations they come to understand that the bystanders provide the audience a bully craves and the silent acceptance that allows bullies to continue their hurtful behavior. They realize that passively accepting bullying by watching and doing nothing is not acceptable. They learn that encouraging the bullying by laughing or cheering actually makes them complicit in the bullying situation, without having been the one who actually initiated it. Through discussion, the ambassadors agree that the key to stopping bullying

would be to turn the *silent majority of bystanders into a caring majority of upstanders*.

The ambassadors continue the work with their young students throughout the year. They visit their classrooms, share lunch tables and spend time during recess. They are there as role models and friends to their

younger classmates. They listen to their problems and help them find solutions as they develop powerful and lifelong bonds.

*“The children in my class know that the Caring Majority ambassadors can be counted on, that they have now become a part of their support system, along with their parents and teachers. Students need only ask if they can talk to an ambassador, and it will be arranged. The help and guidance given by these ambassadors, their peers, can often be more valuable than that offered by an adult.”*



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## Creating a Caring Majority



### In the Classroom

From first grade on, children know about the Caring Majority. Many aspire to one day be a Caring Majority ambassador. Each year, two or three ambassadors are assigned to each room, and become part of the fabric of that classroom. Just like the teacher has a leadership role in the classroom, so do the ambassadors.

Before beginning this effort in any setting, it is essential that the school culture that the importance of a safe and nurturing environment. Without mutual respect among all constituents, asking our students to stand up for each other will not be successful. With high-stakes testing and teacher evaluations that now have so much importance for both students and teachers, everyone should understand the value of an environment of caring and trust. Schools have to be welcoming places.

It is crucial to be particularly aware of the child who is not easily assimilated with his peers, who may be lacking in social skills, and to give him an extra special greeting each morning. Knowing that someone is happy to see

us each day adds incentive to wanting to be in school to learn. The common element among schools reporting an increase in academic success, improved quality of relationships between teachers and students, and a decrease in problem behavior, is a *systematic process* for promoting children's [and teachers'] social and emotional growth. As one Boardman teacher explained:

*"Our feelings and our attitudes affect the whole room. Even if we don't realize what we are doing or how we're behaving, I think we send out signals subconsciously and the children pick them up. As soon as I focused on Farah's positive characteristics and spotlighted her in the classroom, everyone else looked at her that way, too ... She is now branching out to other children. If the girls she seeks out aren't very receptive, she joins another group. The other girls seem happy to have her. Things really changed for Farah. There is no question."*

Teachers understand that by modeling positive and supportive interactions, by providing opportunities for students to work together in the classroom, and by developing class rules that value kindness and preclude exclusion, they can support the development of positive peer relationships and minimize harassment.

Another teacher knew her change in practice was important and effective when she revealed that her student was opening up and trusting her more.

*“When you get to know a child better, when you listen deeply to what he has to share, you start to understand his life. You can’t help but feel for him. When he opened up it was wonderful. I have to attribute this change to my own change in belief about my role in the classroom and to my own change in actions.*

Principals and educators must continue to realize that to reach the academic goals we are striving for, we cannot forget the social and emotional needs of our students. The time spent creating positive relationships among all members of our school community is valuable and essential. Mentoring programs such as the one described here are easily transportable and can play a vital role in any school community. Students clearly respect the opinions of their peers, and with proper guidance from caring adults who give their students the autonomy to share ideas with their classmates, programs such as this one have a powerful effect in our schools.

## Positive School Culture (what we do in schools) = Positive School Climate (how we feel in schools)

- Display warmth, positive tone, interest and involvement
- Talk to each other and students with respect and understanding
- Alert other staff members if they are displaying unacceptable behavior toward a student
- Structure activities to minimize opportunities for exclusion

### Conclusion

A school community that values the importance of kindness and inclusion of all students and teaches strategies for standing up for others understands the importance of creating a positive school climate. Coupled with meaningful integration of social and emotional learning strategies into existing curriculum, valuable strides can be made in creating citizens with respect for the diversity and uniqueness of all members of our society.

Talking to the children encourages our work to continue. When asked how they feel when they stand up for others, some replied:

- I feel like a hero when I save a person’s social life ... I feel like that person looks up to me and I know then that I am really a part of the Caring Majority.
- I feel great because I know I’ve done something great today.

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We are showing children how to stand tall, how to stand up for themselves and others, and how to stand up for what's right.

- When I help I am not scared because I know my friends and classmates will support me.
- I feel anger at the bully and sadness for the victim. Sometimes I am afraid to ask the bully to stop. This year, I'll speak up whenever I feel it is necessary.

The Caring Majority program is part of our efforts to support positive school climate as the backbone of our bullying prevention plan. Our work to develop empathy and caring in our students has reaped great rewards, not only for our students today, but for them throughout their lifetimes. Heightening understanding about recognizing and regulating emotions, coupled with our students learning strategies to stand up for themselves and others has had a valuable impact on our school. Any child at Boardman Elementary School can tell you that life around our school means being kind, caring and inclusive to all. Our school song says it well, "Visit our school and you will see, we have a Caring Majority."

The Caring Majority plays a powerful role in teaching children that the power of the bystander is one solution to the age-old problem of bullying. At Boardman, we are showing children how to stand tall, how to stand up for themselves and others, and how to stand up for what's right.

We are proud of the culture of caring that is evident in our classrooms, hallways, lunchroom, and playgrounds. This is validated by parents as they report their children's understandings of positive relationships with friends and family. We encourage all members of our school community, staff members as well as parents, to model the behaviors that we espouse and hope that our students exhibit the same behaviors in their daily lives. Once this is achieved, we will make progress in changing the dynamics of bullying.

If you are interested in starting a Caring Majority program at your school, feel free to contact us at *bullyinterventionexperts@gmail.com*. We are happy to help!

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# Building Community with a Kinesthetic Classroom

## SUMMARY

Kinesthetic learning is demystified through this author's insightful discussion on movement as a method for meaningful learning in the classroom. She explores the language of movement, provides clear examples of its use through specific activities, and draws important connections between movement and social-emotional learning.

### *Children by nature*

are movers, they learn quickly and implicitly through kinesthetic and tactile experiences (Dunn & Honigfeld, 2009). Creative movement is a remarkable way of teaching and learning cognitive and affective skills and improving physical, mental, and social and emotional health. Cross curriculum lesson plans that incorporate movement are an excellent tool to assist students with relating and internalizing the various subjects much more clearly. Because information that is abstract and hard to follow can be made concrete in a student's mind through movement, the outcome is filled with extensive learning experiences. Because movement is organic and generated through self-discovery, each student can choose how they want to move. The learning objective, however, can be very focused on anything from the design of the solar system to

concentric circles. With planned integration, the teacher is attentive to the curricular objectives yet open to what naturally develops out of the students' enthusiastic curiosity and willingness to participate. The resulting lessons are interdisciplinary, cross curricular, and involve students naturally.

Current research correlates arts education to academic achievement and supports the theory that cognitive and affective concepts taught through movement activities are successfully learned and retained (Deasy, 2002). When students are stressed, feeling overwhelmed or insecure, it is challenging for them to learn, which sometimes results in negative classroom behavior. Moving rhythmically rids the student of anxiety and relieves muscular rigidity. Conversely, it increases energy and focus. Movement supports emotional and cognitive understanding because it forces students to open up

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## Joy Guarino, United University Professions

their minds through physical expression. By associating a movement to a concept, this type of learning experience helps to bridge verbal and non-verbal communication to assure that new information will be retained in long-term memory; therefore it is highly likely to be recalled. The individual's physiological change alters the classroom atmosphere. Students learn how to convey their emotional feelings through movement and cognitively learn how their self representation affects others around them. As students become comfortable in the group, they begin to feel secure enough to take risks. Moving together creates strong personal connections with a common purpose, opens communication, and encourages collaboration. Moving creatively with an awareness of self and others' personal space inspires mutual respect, caring, and community. The classroom culture then shifts creating a safe, welcoming environment that is more conducive to learning.

Movement in the classroom is universal and inclusive: it can open doors for students with diverse needs and abilities, as well as students in traditional

settings. The following encounter was my third visit with a group of students aged 12-18 with Down Syndrome:

*The classroom was filled with bodies moving in different directions, tempos, and dynamics. I called, "Freeze." Suddenly, the space was motionless as students held a static pose. I announced, "Pay attention to your body shape...are your arms and legs reaching or crossed? Are you standing up high or crouching low?" In previous visits, they introduced themselves by pantomiming their chores and recreation interests. We discussed how they felt about themselves and practiced creative movement options (see Figures 1-3). On this day, I hoped to combine their feelings with movements. "Some of you mentioned that people laugh because they don't understand you. Show me in a body shape how that feels." One boy sat on the floor and faced the wall. The entire group's movements were low, slow, closed, and hidden. Then I encouraged them to talk about what it feels like to be accepted. They shared times of feeling loved and part of a team. The resulting movement was*

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Movement supports emotional and cognitive understanding because it forces students to open up their minds through physical expression.

## Building Community with a Kinesthetic Classroom

A simple circle dance brought about a profound sense of belonging. Working in groups fostered mutual respect and cooperation.

*open, high, and much faster. “Freeze and hold the shape,” I called, “...and relax. Now, create a shape that shows me how you want to feel.” They all formed high, open shapes. I continued, “Reach and physically connect a body part to someone near you.” The students connected elbow to ankle, wrist to knee. “Freeze and hold. I want you to carry this feeling with you. If someone laughs, remember this shape and know how much you appreciate yourself and each other.”*

In any aspect of education, kinesthetic and tactile lessons allow for first hand experiential learning. Through involvement in the program’s structured activities, the students continued to express their feelings and expand their emotional range. It was a compelling moment that empowered everyone in the classroom. A simple circle dance brought about a profound sense of belonging. Working in groups fostered mutual respect and cooperation. This was just one of many scenarios where I’ve witnessed the transforming power of creative movement.

### **The Benefits of a Moving Classroom**

Movement activities work well, in conjunction with, and as a compliment to traditional book learning. Kinesthetic

and tactile lessons provide an implicit learning opportunity for critical thinking, analysis, organization, and problem solving, and can be in fact, much more reliable at helping students to retain knowledge than reading textbooks and memorizing facts alone (Reber, 1993). Through movement activities students have an immediate opportunity to experience, observe, examine, and reflect on decision making by using body-based language to activate the mind and body as an integrated whole. Students recognize more clearly the details of their physical and emotional responses to a situation. By analyzing their movement choices, students become more open-minded, respectful, tolerant, and accepting of assessment.

Movement activities encourage proper alignment/posture, endurance, and balance. In addition, Eric Jensen (1998) suggests a correlation between movement and emotions. Sensory motor experiences provide a direct link from the cerebellum to the emotional and pleasure centers in the brain. Exercise has a direct positive effect on brain chemistry, raising levels of endorphins, adrenaline, serotonin, and dopamine. Consequently, students who show responsibility for the conditioning and care of their bodies may have a positive attitude and ultimately a healthier life style. The *Blue*

*Print for Teaching and Learning in the Arts* (2007) affirms as well that movement embedded in classroom learning enhances psychomotor development and physically develops self-control and refinement of gross motor skills. Students not only learn to recognize and trust their impulses, but to act on or contain them as they choose. It also suggests an understanding of the relationship between bodies and personal space which guides students with suitable responses to a crowded room or inappropriate touch. As a form of self-expression, creative movement is a release and a social tool that primes the brain for new ideas (Jensen, 2001).

When children are exploring through their senses, they have an aesthetic frame for expressing feeling — a positive alternative to many destructive choices. Psychologist and author Daniel Goleman (1995) popularized the term “emotional intelligence” or EQ in his landmark-selling book, *Emotional Intelligence*. Goleman describes emotional intelligence as the capacity of recognizing our own feelings and the feelings of others for motivating ourselves and managing emotions in our own relationships. He believes that EQ is developed by acquiring skills through five dimensions: self-awareness, managing



emotions, motivation, empathy, and social skills. When children engage in movement individually they obtain a diverse movement vocabulary that assists with physical functions and expands emotional responses to certain situations. When people move in groups or in a classroom environment they achieve a new level and a new found maturity in social interactions and with emotional expression. In both cases, children experience each component of Goleman’s emotional intelligence, resulting in better organization and problem solving, recognizing options, developing coping skills, increasing focus and concentration, increased self-esteem and cultural literacy, recognizing strengths, improving critical thinking and analytical skills, in addition to learning successful cooperation and teamwork.

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# Building Community with a Kinesthetic Classroom

Students who show responsibility for the conditioning and care of their bodies may have a positive attitude and ultimately a healthier life style.

## From Pedagogy to Practice

*The Dance/Movement Education: Emerging Theories* project is supported by the SUNY Research Foundation Incentive grant. The goal and purpose of this research was to discover significant trends in movement education.

Community partners from classroom and after-school recreation settings in Buffalo were interviewed. Next, original psychomotor, cognitive, and affective skill building lesson plans specific to the needs of their underserved populations were designed. Cognitive and affective concepts taught through movement activities were successfully learned and retained.

Classroom students had fun as they willingly used movement in a learning environment. In 15 minutes students understood the food chain through a game of leap frog. The participating teachers enjoyed observing the process and noted it was a meaningful activity for students. One teacher commented, “I was amazed at how quickly students could learn new topics through kinesthetic activities.” Teachers also remarked on how the classroom community demonstrated self-esteem, empathy, and respect. “They seemed proud of what they did and more open to taking risks. After only two sessions

some of my reluctant risk takers were in there taking guesses and giving answers.” Another teacher observed, “At first it was hard for them to show emotion on cue. I even commented, ‘Amazing how all day long you show your emotions but on cue you can’t.’” The teacher noted later students were able to recall behaviors and control their emotions.

## The Tools to Create Comfort or Teaching Tools

The question surfaced — if learning cognitive and affective skills through movement activities is successful and enjoyable why is it not more widely used as a means of instruction in the classroom? Every day movements form the basis for creating kinesthetic lessons. We move every day. By implementing movement in a meaningful way, teachers can bring aesthetic, cultural, social, and historical values to the classroom. With an understanding of the basic tools, every teacher can design consequential lessons. Movement lessons can ultimately create comfort and persuade change by encouraging participants to consider basic motions by starting small.

It is helpful to begin with the vocabulary of movement. There are three fundamental ways of moving:

- Shape — an interrelated arrangement of body parts of one person or group.
- Axial — movements around ones' own axis.
- Locomotor — traveling movements that traverse a space.

Each can be linked to cognitive and affective skills. By calling out correlated movement suggestions, teachers coach their students to simulate an academic or social concept. The following three examples offer suggestions for how to create movement that best reflects the concepts so that ideas transfer to learning.

**Activity 1:** The Director — this activity uses shaping to focus on clear communication but can easily be used for addressing leadership, vocabulary, and patience. All of these skills assist with developing healthy relationships. Students are placed in groups of three. One student is the director, one the shape maker, and one the blind-folded person.

- The blind-folded person stands with his or her back to the shape maker as to not see the shape.
- The shape maker forms his or her body into an interesting shape.
- The director must instruct the

blind folded person to get into the shape by using descriptive words. It is very important not to use gesture to show or use touch to guide the blind folded person.

**Activity 2:** Physical Telephone — this activity incorporates gestures to address the malice of gossip. By seeing how small changes in the process affect the final outcome, students develop personal responsibility and empathy. It also requires focus, absorbing information quickly, and memory. Students stand in a line facing the back of the person in front of them, as if waiting in line.

- The last person in line, taps the person in front of them on the shoulder. The student turns around and is shown four gestures.
- Without talking or repeating the gestures, he or she turns and taps the next person in line and repeats what he or she saw. This continues down the line.
- When the gestures reach the person at the front of the line, that person and the person who initiated the gestures face the group and simultaneously perform.

**Activity 3:** Circles — this activity entails moving around a concentric circle pattern to discriminate different

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## Shaping

### Placing body parts into different points of the kinesphere

- High/Medium/Low
- Closed/Open
- Symmetrical/Asymmetrical
- Real/Abstract

## Axial

### Movement around ones' own axis

- Gesture
- Stretch
- Twist
- Curve
- Swing
- Drop

# Building Community with a Kinesthetic Classroom

## Choreographic Elements

Element	Example	Example	Example
Space	level	direction	spatial pattern
Time	tempo	rhythm	pause
Energy	direct, indirect	strong, light	sustained, sudden

Laban's Effort Actions

degrees of intimacy and is also excellent for learning about the solar system and molecular structure. By understanding the relationship between bodies, students come to respect personal space. Students engage in a conversation on the various relationships they have with people in their lives. A pre-drawn concentric circle pattern is used to represent social distance.

- The teacher calls out one relationship (ex. friend) and asks the students to move to what they believe to be the appropriate circle. The students apply locomotor movement that indicates the relationship.
- The student creates a shape that also signifies the relationship.
- Another relationship title is called. The students move to the suitable circle and pose.

- The teacher asks one student to make eye contact with another student and gesture in an appropriate way.
- This continues and the students adapt their movements and gestures accordingly.

Although the lessons are specific, they provide a framework of content and strategies for lesson development and implementation. As always it is important to tailor the lesson based on the key concept being taught, the student population being addressed and the context of the specific learning environment.

## Conclusion

Kinesthetic learning can be applied as a method to help students develop affective and cognitive skills. It is research based and its purpose is extensive, encompassing psychomotor and social-emotional concepts. Creative movement conveys to students the social and emotional attributes of self-awareness, social awareness, and self management that instill a deep connection to and understanding of self, others, and community. Movement has the capacity to reach a diverse range of students and can be incorporated across the curriculum as an integral tool for learning.

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Creative movement conveys to students the social and emotional attributes of self-awareness, social awareness, and self management that instill a deep connection to and understanding of self, others, and community.



# Developing Social Consciousness through Media and Literacy

## SUMMARY

These authors present a portrait of the *Ditmas News Network*; a program that promotes culturally responsive media and provides students with enriching opportunities to investigate, analyze, and report real news stories to an authentic audience of peers, teachers, and school leaders. DNN anchors tackle tough stories, near and far, and always with an eye towards cultural sensitivity and an unyielding commitment to make stories relevant to the student body at IS 62.

### *As the camera*

persons check the audio/mic function and space for the interview, the reporters use their relationship skills to connect with an interview subject or relate their story to an authentic audience. Although the students who shoot the show segments on each team may not have worked together before, they learn to respect one another and to understand and respect one another's capacities as team members.

The Ditmas News Network (DNN) at Ditmas Junior High School, IS 62, is a dynamic program grounded in social justice and relevant world events. Building on important topics, DNN encourages students to take a stand on controversial issues by reporting on a

schoolwide news broadcast to 1,300 public middle school students in Brooklyn. The program is produced, written, and performed by students twice a week before classes begin.

The DNN is a program that engages a diverse team of 33 students in grades six through eight. This team is trained in basic reporting, researching primary and secondary sources, developing scripts, doing still photography, interviewing, editing sound, and producing video. Students working with DNN help to enhance school culture while developing social consciousness through media and literacy. The news-cast is a time when differences shine. The team comprises students from diverse backgrounds, including students from regular education, those

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**Michelle Meyers, United Federation of Teachers**  
**June VonGizycki, United Federation of Teachers**

with special needs, English language learners, and gifted learners. DNN participants feel like an integral and respected part of the overarching school community when one of their own becomes the anchor.

In 22 minutes of early morning, school-wide television time, the DNN team delivers the news on issues and concerns from their school community and through their own eyes. These middle school anchors tackle unique and sensitive topics such as the Trayvon Martin case, the Boston Marathon massacre, understanding Uzbek and Pakistani traditions, and confronting anti-Semitism. In the process of pulling together their reports, students gain empathy from directly interviewing and being part of the segment team in a technical and crucial capacity.

The experience for students on the DNN team goes far beyond the average social studies or English language arts class. The program inherently supports the development of social and emotional learning as it promotes collaboration, boosts self-awareness and self-esteem,

and encourages students to develop empathy while facilitating strong bonds and teamwork. Students also engage in creative and critical thinking tasks as they find themselves editing interviews on a deadline, cutting what needs to be cut to make a segment more compelling, and performing other technical tasks. These assignments involve student broadcasters in real problem solving and decision making with an authentic, viewable, audience.

*“Being in this program has transformed the way I think and act. Before DNN, I didn’t know what was going on around the school or the neighborhood. Frankly, I didn’t care. Then DNN came along and my job was to know what was going around, when and where.”*

— A DNN anchor

A student-run news network can be offered as a differentiated, project-based option for students in the context of the regular full class ELA program or in many other ways. These student media productions can be integrated

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Students working with DNN help to enhance school culture while developing social consciousness through media and literacy.

# Developing Social Consciousness through Media and Literacy

The DNN program integrates culturally responsive practice into project-based activities that are aligned with the Common Core state standards.

into the curriculum in collaboration with social studies, science, and other content classes. Much of the program would be relevant for students in high school or the upper elementary grades. This program can be offered as an after-school enrichment program, or scheduled to support and/or enhance Common Core literacy learning and even remediation.

## Gathering the News

DNN students have presented their work to diverse audiences around New York City, including Jewish parochial high school students, adult voters, teen media film producers, peer/adult poets, and teacher educators at York College. These presentations allow Ditmas student media producers to engage these audiences face-to-face.

In the process of investigating a story, various people meet together to discuss the facts. Guidance counselors, parents, community leaders and other support staff offer round table commentary or research insights on such issues as: national disasters, grieving, racial profiling, obesity, and bullying.

*“Students use Google docs to share their ongoing scripts and story lines. They use audio recorders. Camera persons do the filming. There are audio sound check persons. Real world broadcasting and teleprompter skills are practiced and learned in service of CCSS Reading, Writing, Speaking/Listening, and Knowledge skills. Of course, they also learn and use special domain broadcasting words such as, continuity, sound check, takes, camera angle, zoom, audio check, editing, framing, and blocking.”*

— Ditmas teacher Angelo Carideo

The DNN program integrates culturally responsive practice into project-based activities that are aligned with the Common Core state standards. In the process, students produce substantial text products including informational, persuasive, and analytical reports, in addition to creative writing pieces. They use the productions to observe and report on rituals and traditions that support the school’s heart and soul by recording school concerts, elections, special guest appearances, dance performances, and community events. All of these are posted online to showcase and share them. They draw audience feedback in a way that is accessible to the students who create them.

*“From my perspective as a literacy and social studies educator, the use of the media studio technique effectively involves students in opportunities to do project-based learning. As the students work together in media teams, they investigate, interview, examine and critique neighborhood, national, and global issues. They work in teams of four and have to outline the story, do the interviews, then edit the material, and come up with intro and closer for it. So instead of just reading local print and online news reports, DNN story writers went on site to interview adult residents in a Kensington, Brooklyn neighborhood about the closing of a local library branch. Students edited the actual neighborhood reaction to this controversial budget cut. Tough local, economic times were concretized for DNN reporters when they stood in front of a favorite pizza shop and read the closing sign plus the posted notice of taxes owed by the shop.”*

— Ditmas teacher David Liotta

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## Aligning DNN with the Common Core Standards

DNN Writing	DNN Listening and Speaking	DNN Reading Informational Texts
CCR.W1 Write arguments to support claims with relevant evidence	CCR.SL1 Engage in collaborative discussions	CCR.RI.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis
CCR.W2 Write informative/explanatory texts	CCR.SL2 Interpret information in diverse media	CCR.RI.2 Determine central idea of the text CCR.RI.3 Analyze in detail how an event is introduced
CCR.W4 Produce clear and coherent writing for task, purpose and audience	CCR.SL4 present claims and findings	CCR.RI.4 determine meaning of words as used in text
CCR.W5 Use technology to produce and publish writing	CCR.SL5 Include multimedia components	
CCR.W7 Conduct short research projects	CCR.SL6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks	CCR.RI.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue
CCR.W8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources		CCR.RI.8 Trace and evaluate arguments / claims in a text to distinguish claims supported by reason and those not supported by reason.
CCR.W9 draw evidence from informational texts		CCR.RI.9 Compare and contrast one author’s presentation of events with another author’s
CCR.W10 Write routinely over time		Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010)

## Developing Social Consciousness through Media and Literacy

Despite cultural and age differences, Ditmas commentators are often surprised by the extent to which they share common responses to culturally charged events.

### **Culturally Responsive Practice and Curricular Integration**

The stories reported by DNN are sometimes “ripped from the headlines” but very often are based on the students’ backgrounds and life experiences. One example was when several anchors joined the team and requested we create segments that would explain various Uzbek and Pakistan traditions. When Vietnamese poet Thanhha Lai visited the school, a fifth grader from Uzbekistan volunteered to cover that story so she could do the translating for students in the ESL class from Uzbekistan.

And Pakistani students were extremely excited and uplifted to be able to function as expert sources when the team focused on the Diane Sawyer interview of teen heroine Malala Yousafzai. ESL teacher Sofia Rashid developed a lesson on argumentation based upon “Would you take a bullet in the head to speak out for the right to education?” It prompted impassioned responses from Ms. Rashid’s bridge class students. These Uzbek, Haitian, Spanish, and Pakistani students inspired DNN anchors to use interviews as catalysts to encourage other students to react to the issue.

Despite their cultural and age differences, Ditmas commentators are often surprised by the extent to which they share common responses to culturally

charged events. For example, in a round table DNN discussion with our Yachad adults wearing black hats and payot (long side curls), an important message was brought home to Ditmas students. Attire profiling can influence people’s opinions of different cultures. The DNN news team and classroom students noted that while they would never have approached ultraorthodox students in their Kensington neighborhood even on the same line at a store, they now would try to strike up conversations. Selasie, a Ditmas eighth grader noted: “They (the IVDU students) told me things that really opened me up to them as individuals.” Another student, Margaret, was surprised that the parochial Jewish high school students were just as touched and as emotional as she was about the 8-year-old boy who was an innocent bystander casualty of the Boston Marathon.

The Spanish foreign language teacher focused literature learning and dual language poetry/memoirs on literature of authors who arrived in the USA speaking only Spanish. She covered Santiago and filtered Spanish phrases for the poetry of Thanhha Lai, the Newbery winner who arrived in Alabama speaking only Vietnamese. The concept of being on-air inspired the sixth grade informational literacy instructor to have the ELA DNN team member support his class’s authoring

DNN teaches 21st century skills or “the three C’s”: collaboration, critical thinking, and communication.

book/movie reviews and product reviews so they could be part of new DNN segments. Their writings could be included in the 3, 2, 1 . . . Action DNN e-book and print publication. These carryovers to classroom literacy instruction expanded cultural conversations focused on cross cultural explanations.

Evaluation tools are regularly embedded in the Ditmas News Network program. Students and teachers develop rubrics based on project-specific literacy, related content, and use of media tools criteria. These rubrics should be continually referenced as the students develop products, and review them. Evaluative criteria must include: presentation of ideas clarity, voice quality, word choice, conventions, evidentiary support, historical/research information, segment flow, on camera team conversation flow, use of opener and closer, and effective interviewing. On-site teacher feedback forms, as well as peer feedback forms are also designed by the students so that they received explicit audience assessment of their products.

DNN teaches 21st century skills or “the three C’s”: “collaboration, critical thinking, and communication (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011).” Students walk away from this program able to design viable marketplace commercials, Power Point presentations, movies, and media

messages. Students become informed and sensitive media users and readers as well as communicators and producers of media and face-to-face presentations utilizing video and audio technology. They become globally aware citizens. Attaching these electronic products to resumés demonstrates career competence as participants in the global media marketplace. DNN also affects the real-life citizenship and civics connection since DNN participants immediately are engaged in social problem investigation.

*I had always pictured myself being a lot of things, but never once had I thought that I could or would dare to be an anchor. Now look at me. I'm writing scripts, coming up with ideas of my own, and helping my partners with their scripts. I won't stop my media work now. Watch out for me, or rather tune in to catch me on air!*

— DNN seventh grader

### **Learning Video Production**

DNN is an effective and replicable program. Students who produce the broadcasts as well as those who listen benefit from social-emotional learning while gaining content knowledge about relevant issues and events.

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# Developing Social Consciousness through Media and Literacy

## Making video news production in your classroom

- Step 1:** Decide on a curriculum connection as the focus for student News Media products.
- Students in an ELA class can be asked to identify a broadcast news/online news story that connects with informational or fictional texts they are studying. Students in a welcome class can prepare a special feature on their native country or its music or culture to include on a regular show or in tandem with DNN English speaking peers.
- Step 2:** Be willing and ready to accept multiple student creative projects or approaches for your content product goal. Students may opt to poll peers or neighborhood passersby on the story or editorialize an issue. This immediately authenticates the product, making it culturally responsive for the student (Deal and Peterson, 2006) and enhances school climate (Cohen, McCabe, 2009).
- Step 3:** Present the product content goal to the students and allow at least 1-2 periods for them to explore individually or in small groups the ways they might approach it and how they might use the media tools to realize that approach.
- Step 4:** Teach the students how to work with media tools (have a student do the explanations if the student is more expert than the teacher). Then work with them individually or in small groups as they develop their initial media products. Sit back as they present their products.
- Step 5:** Build in focus audiences (other teaching colleagues, partner school audiences online, and peer classes on school site) to provide feedback to the working student producers as they edit media work.
- Step 6:** Model for students, if necessary, how to conduct an interview, in voices appropriate for particular audiences.
- Step 7:** Make certain that their videos are “published” online or showcased at a local, regional or national event for live audiences.

While student media productions reflect the supportive expertise of educators Carideo and Liotta, the basic approach can be adapted and replicated in any middle school using any generally available equipment. As Carideo notes: “The beauty of this is that with

just an accessible audio recorder and use of google docs, plus a working school public address system, much of this can even be done as pod cast or video sharable in schools without time or access to more advanced visual technology.”

DNN uses a Sony HUR 1500 camera and the editing and production software, Magix Movie Edit Pro. Any digital camera and available video editing production software will do for entry level adoptions of the approach.

The DNN program requires that students apply the same skills necessary for real life journalism. However, DNN students don’t receive formal training in the use of: cameras, sound, editing software, script development, and ‘on camera’ presenting. Students learn from doing and from one another, and often, from teacher modeling and demonstrations that arise from the needs experienced in the moment as students put the shows together. They see each other in new contexts as team members working collaboratively toward a common goal. The teamwork inherently promotes a positive and rich culturally responsive school climate. When the students get a news assignment, they do two pilot runs before the show. It may look like chaos and disorder at first, but then the ongoing process of story selection, script development, and production of the videos transforms that to ordered learning.

## Conclusion

Ditmas student media productions promote social consciousness and inspire teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, and the PTA to work together to epitomize a connected school community; a school culture.

These broadcasts help to enhance school culture by provoking meaningful discussions about important topics that promote understanding and acceptance of others.

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DNN encourages bonding on a schoolwide level. The use of common media connects all different groups together through news, issues, and pop culture. It levels the playing field for everyone to demonstrate visual, verbal, performing, technical equipment expertise, teaming capacity and collaboration with someone from another class.

— *Ditmas teacher Michael Downes*



# The Guided Memoir Process: A Reflection in Four Voices

## SUMMARY

This empathy-based approach to memoir writing fosters social and emotional learning, while enhancing listening and narrative writing skills, as students learn how to convey stories of the challenges they face. It comes with a toolkit based on the simple notion of daring an imaginary “stranger/reader” to care, which is very accessible — and therefore quite replicable — in working with students for whom other approaches have failed to bring mastery or ignite a spark.

*If you had to choose* any “Page One Moment” where you would like an imaginary stranger/reader (Duncan, 2008) to meet you, to give voice to a burning issue, what would that moment be? What opening scene might you pick in order to help someone who had no reason to care about you — who maybe even was prejudiced against you — to walk in your shoes? If your words had the power to change a heart, practice or policy, what moment in your own life might dare your community to care?

For ninth to 12th graders from Hempstead and Roosevelt, Long Island’s two school districts most profoundly affected by poverty, gang violence, teen pregnancy, early

incarceration and addiction, these questions would start a semester-long journey of solving complicated literary puzzles through a guided memoir process usually reserved for graduate level MFA students. But here every tool would be couched in new and accessible language, designed not to intimidate even those students who came into the project with large gaps in their reading and writing performance.

The “Dare to Care” project, taught in classes sponsored by Herstory Writer’s Workshop, brings high school students together with college partners to teach writing workshops after school. The method is documented in a published curriculum that can be replicated by high school classrooms anywhere.

*Erika Duncan is the founder and executive and artistic director of Herstory Writer’s Workshop, based in Centereach, Long Island.*

*Felicia Cooper-Prince teaches English at Hempstead High School. A member of the Hempstead Classroom Teachers Association, Cooper-Prince has used her training to become a powerful memoir writer in her own right.*

*Margaret O’Connell, a retired member of the United Federation of Teachers, is the principal of the Sharing and Caring Diploma Program for Pregnant and Parenting Girls of Long Beach Reach. Since 2012, she has used the dare to care approach with the homeless and gang involved teen mothers in her charge.*

*Bonnie Thivierge is a retired high school English teacher and member of the Smithtown Teachers Association. She has worked with Herstory as a writer, observer, evaluator and co-teacher.*

**Erika Duncan, Herstory Writer’s Workshop**  
**Bonnie Thivierge, Smithtown Teachers Association**  
**Felicia Cooper-Prince, Hempstead Classroom Teachers Association**  
**Margaret O’Connell, United Federation of Teachers**

There has been increasing awareness of the importance of personal writing within a classroom context, whether through journaling assigned throughout the year or special units devoted to the personal essay. However, without providing students with the tools to examine the elements that allow personal stories to reach larger audiences, opportunities to foster both social-emotional literacy and new pathways to writing proficiency are missed.

When we ask students to write about the most important time in their lives, or the saddest or the happiest moments, the results rarely take them into a new level of social-emotional awareness. Nor do they adequately bridge the gap between personal journaling and writing for a stranger. Within any given group, we find students who are easily able to create those well-organized compositions that they think the schools want. Rarely do these compositions connect deeply personal experiences to larger social issues; rarely do they become journey narratives, taking their writers and classroom audiences into deeper emotional realms.

Could this all be changed if students’ writing assignments were coupled with examining what causes other people to care? Could taking each student seriously as a writer, combined with a hands-on exploration of what causes reader empathy, fast forward those students whose lives had allowed little opportunity to thrive in school settings into creating works of literary power and beauty that would stun us all?

### **The Guided Memoir Process**

It had taken a village to put the “Passing along the Dare to Care” project together involving school administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, and college partners. But the journey that resulted was something the participants would never forget. Some came only for a few times, but most continued week after week in this voluntary after-school program that was designed to become a pilot model to be brought to other districts throughout New York state and beyond.

The educational question was a big one: Could a focus on what created reader empathy address narrative

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## The Guided Memoir Process: A Reflection in Four Voices



structure, college preparedness and social-emotional literacy all at once? Could it provide both a stimulating and safe passage into the world of reading, writing and listening, where other approaches had failed to help students achieve mastery or ignite a spark?

These after-school workshops were part of a larger experiment developed by Herstory Writers Workshop, an organization devoted to giving voice to some of the most isolated and vulnerable populations on Long Island — women in prison, in homeless shelters, women on disability and welfare, domestic workers, Asian, Hispanic and Caribbean immigrants, pregnant and parenting teens and, more recently, to young men and boys — including students caught in the school-to-prison pipeline.

Understanding someone and feeling empathy creates a compassion that reduces the likelihood to harass, bully or discriminate. This program does just that. The members identify with each other and develop a tenderness for others who silently suffer or suffer out loud, but are misunderstood.

Every session starts with the writers reading their stories. It is a homework assignment that they rarely fail to produce. Each participant yearns to understand the pain that their community members face, so they listen with a care and engagement that allows every story being written to be seen as a gift. Then they challenge their peers to use such techniques as inner monologue and reflection to show the strength of their spirit or the hope that brought them through their struggles.

They provide feedback that validates what causes the listener to be “right there” in the moment of the event, giving courage to the other people in the room who might be going through the same thing while inspiring others to take action to change their own attitudes and behaviors. Possible revisions are noted, and the fellow writer is inspired to continue.

Each week, in addition to adding several new pages to their memoirs, the students are charged with reading the stories in Herstory’s *Passing Along the Dare to Care* manual (Duncan, 2010). They study the side-bar topics of “Catching Moments of Awareness on the page,” “The Less-Than-Perfect Narrator,” “Nesting and Weaving,” “There-ness as opposed to About-ness,” and “Working with the Voice of the Child” as they apply each new tool to their work.

The concept of this program is not to provide a cathartic social-emotional experience disconnected from academic development. The curriculum invites the students to employ writing strategies and to identify schemes and tropes used in their peers writing. They speak of the effectiveness of passages and communicate proof of their assertion without offending. A manual is used to guide the writers and shape the discussions. Provided writing objectives aid in the maturation process. The facilitators are not restricted to follow a linear path in implementing the strategies offered. The discussion about student writing evokes the referencing of support provided in the manual.

To date, more than 50 public high school students from four Long Island school districts have participated in this project (Hempstead, Roosevelt, Mineola and Patchogue) along with sixteen mothers from the Sharing and Caring alternative high school and three students from Cardozo High School in New York City. Each semester, 15-25 college interns, volunteers and community engagement students participate in the program, along with a handful of professors and community advocates who write with the students. There have been four college host sites, SUNY College at Old Westbury, Hofstra University, Adelphi University and St. Joseph's College, with sponsoring departments including

Education, Criminology, Social Work, Creative Writing, English, Modern Languages and Religious Studies, providing high school students a rich exposure to a diverse number of disciplines.



### **The Writing Workshops**

Inspiration for the workshop came from the idea of allowing people to reveal themselves in a situation in which at any given moment, just when the young writers were pouring out their hearts, a new stranger might walk in.

As the pedagogy was brought to young people in the schools, it was critical to distinguish the conscious mission of writing to be read and heard from private journaling. A whole new kind of empowerment came to the fore as together the students learned the art of choosing which parts of their stories they wished to reveal and which parts they might wish to protect. Not only did their stories become resources for discussions about what they might do to make their worlds better, but slowly and steadily, as the semester

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Understanding someone and feeling empathy creates a compassion that reduces the likelihood to harass, bully or discriminate.

progressed, a sense of level ground was established, with the students with the lowest proficiency levels in formal reading and writing often stealing the show.

Students from diverse backgrounds participate in the writing workshops including English language learners and honors students side by side. The method has been used with large and small groups. Without even noticing, students are succeeding in a program that introduces advanced writing techniques. From arguing about what would make the most strategic “Page One Moment,” to exploring when to drop into a memory, or when to create an “Invisible Backstitch” without interrupting the drama, 14- and 15-year-old high school freshmen and sophomores and senior level college students became so enthusiastic about how to best dare one another to care, they forgot the differences in their proficiency levels, each bringing in more pages each week while they took turns playing the stranger/reader and the narrator.

### **Bonnie Thivierge: Hear me; see me; understand my story**

The history of telling stories begins before any student had a yellow pad or an iPad. Our stories, the tales of creation and exploration and heroes and monsters began before there was the word. The “call of stories,” as Robert

Coles, a children’s physician so eloquently writes (Coles, 1989), was heard a very long time ago, before the development of an English curriculum and state and national standards for effective narration.

As an English teacher in the public schools on Long Island for more than 30 years, I have taught the stories of the prominent gentlemen authors, from Hawthorne to Faulkner, and have required students to discern important themes, to write with these statements, or to do a research paper on the effects of cloning, perhaps, as a preparation for college reading and writing. As a curriculum writer and classroom consultant, I have observed many practices of classroom instruction, strategies that provide experiences designed to prepare young learners to be effective readers and skillful writers. We might ask these high school readers and writers to express their thoughts in a third person point of view. “How is the American Dream reflected in Fitzgerald’s novel *The Great Gatsby*?” Or, we require them to examine the cause and effect of the Crusades and write a three-page document. What do high school juniors and seniors think about these topics? What voices will we hear when they compare Natty Bumppo to today’s explorer? We are told that in order to write in an honest voice, about a time and place or person, we first need to

know, to feel, to be able to see the situation in which we find ourselves.

As a participant in a unique method that encourages empathy as a basis for understanding literary structures, I entered a world of story writing different from my experiences as an English teacher. As a trainee, co-facilitator and workshop member, I have discovered a method that will allow readers to hear me and see me and hopefully, understand my story.

I observed young mothers of children without fathers, and I listened to Yazmyn write about what she will tell her 2-year-old son about his missing father. When I explained about my spending a lifetime looking for a biological father, she at first thought the story made no sense until she listened more carefully; then our relationship changed. Each of us had “Dared the Other to Care,” a demand we make on readers when we want to engage them or to compel them to continue reading.

What if students set out a problem or observation that honored their own experiences? If Sheena were able to tell us how she felt as a light-skinned Haitian in a dark-skinned environment, or if Nelson described himself as a 10-year-old living out of the back seat of a car with his grandmother, would we care? Would these stories work their way into one another’s

worlds, and by doing so, lead to “Promoting Social-Emotional Development and Physical Well-Being?” an accomplishment schools desire.

What if the students explored their own stories so that they were able to write and read them in their own unique voices? We would be continuing the skein of storytelling that has been at the heart of human experience centuries before Penelope waited for the return of Odysseus.

### **Felicia Cooper-Prince: Taking Students from Victims to Victors**

I trained to co-teach for Herstory Writer’s Workshop, a program that inspires young people to mature socially, emotionally and academically. We went over the goals of the program in which each participant would become aware of the injustices others experienced in their journey and begin to utilize their voices to encourage, empower and renounce victimization.

The process began with an anticipatory set serving as a muse throughout the project. The group members are asked, “If you were to write a book about your life, what would be your page one moment? My students from Hempstead High School wear their emotions on their faces when they

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The students are not just listening to hear a sad story, they want to know how the individuals struggled to survive, heal, grow and seek success. They want to see how their peer’s memoir can be used to change the world.

# The Guided Memoir Process: A Reflection in Four Voices



hear this question. One was anxious to share an experience in a syncopated rhythm that carries the beat of a classical rap song. Another looked challenged as he furrowed his eyebrows, and later we would learn he was conjuring colorful phrases to describe a confusingly painful loss. Two girls grin at each other as they have a silent conversation about the fact that they are beyond page one, because they were in the program last year. Another, she has a blank stare, because never did she dream that anyone would dare her to write her story.

The students are also intimidated the first day. They are sitting at Hofstra University amongst college students who vary in age, ethnicity and backgrounds. However, timidity fades with the desire to share, constructively critique and garner advice. The tool of unification was writing. Lines of division fade as words are used to describe the human condition.

The students are not just listening to hear a sad story, they want to know how the individuals struggled to survive, heal, grow and seek success. They want to see how their peer's memoir can be used to change the world.

Culminating events such as reading in a public venue or having a piece published have enabled family members

and strangers to better understand the injustices that arise due to issues such as physical and emotional abuse, teen-aged-motherhood, assimilation as an immigrant, grieving abortion, grieving the death of a peer or a loved one, gang involvement, rejection, cutting, academic failure, divorce of parents and dysfunctional relationships.

The entire process causes the young people to be less self-absorbed and more globally aware. They don't wallow in the pain of their past, but they move forward with other writers to bring awareness of the pitfalls that serve to stifle progression. They graduate as public advocates.

When they are first asked to write a story that would dare others to care about their problems, most sound like victims at the start. But it works out that they complete that task and they take on the challenge to care about others. The end result, a community of victors.

## **Margaret O'Connell: The Courage to Write and Share**

As we rode from the Sharing and Caring Diploma Program for Pregnant and Parenting Girls to Hofstra University that first day, I wondered what page one moment my students would share with the stranger/reader.

Would the teen mother — who came to the alternative school with a second grade reading level but now arrives an hour early to work on writing — talk about the thrill of being looked at as a real student? Or would the voice of a small child, excited about a new swing, sadly recount the horrors of sexual abuse by the uncle who had days earlier hung the swing? Would they speak of their everyday fears of being identified as one of those girls, bad girls? Would they do what they had been trained through Herstory to do for the past three years ... dare others to care, to share their stories, their shared experience?

These are truly remarkable young women. Most have been born into poverty, began experiencing academic difficulties by grade three, have been sexually abused/assaulted, live in communities of high gang involvement, and dropped out of high school at least two years prior to becoming pregnant.

They are back in school because they want to be here. They want to make a future for themselves and for their children. It is often believed that a sense of hopelessness can contribute to teen pregnancy. Hope for the future can help to make teen mothers more self-sufficient, less depressed, more reliable, better mothers and less likely to become pregnant again until they are emotionally prepared.

Once we are on campus at Hofstra the usual high school posturing takes place. One school on one side, one school on the other. Shy looks are exchanged, but no words. Then the college students come. Gradually the college interns find seats in the middle, they smile, they ask questions of the high school students, and they get answers. They break up the division, four from Hofstra, another three from CW Post who have traveled together, who at first are equally shy. Finally a biology teacher in training, completing her fifth year at Adelphi, who wants to learn more about the real lives of her students joins the group.

Then the magic happens. I join Felicia, the facilitator from Hempstead High, to present an overview, the manual and our hopes for the next few weeks. Then we circle the room and everyone imagines out loud the most effective way to engage a stranger/reader, and suddenly the shyness goes away. One college intern tells about his involvement in a gang and asks how to incorporate flashbacks about his childhood. And suddenly the Sharing and Caring girls relax. They are not alone and they are not so different. Another college intern shares a moment where he was used as a shield by his grandmother and then passed along to a stranger. My girls see that others who came from hard backgrounds have made the college journey.

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Week after week as students brought in new writing, that sense of honoring one another's work grew. There was a quiet dignity during the readings and respect given to all who had the courage to write and to share.

When it is my students' turn to share their own page one moments, the college students are deeply attentive and that gives everyone the courage to begin. The bonding that we might have hoped would come in sessions two and three began that day.

Week after week as students brought in new writing, that sense of honoring one another's work grew. There was a quiet dignity during the readings and respect given to all who had the courage to write and to share.

We wondered at first whether students would find it too difficult to write a 7-15 page paper and to use Herstory's manual for younger writers. We underestimated our group. Students came each week with more work than we had expected.

As strategies for exciting compassion in a stranger/reader become more enjoyable, there was always the question, why Dare to Care? We are daring our students to help someone else share in their experience, to, as the manual says, walk in their shoes. There can be no question that the students were successful.

### **Erika Duncan: My Reflections on Dare to Care**

I will never forget the day when I first met Edwin Solis, who had joined the class a few weeks later than the other Hempstead High School students, only finding out about it "through the talk of the hallways." He was a bit too conscious of my presence at first, as he kept glancing shyly at me. But soon he became lost in the power of his words.

"Seeing my friend lying dead without any hope of coming back, I didn't shed one single tear," he read, as the other students fell silent. They were breathing along with him, as sometimes he read with assurance and conviction, sometimes he hesitated a bit to see how he was being received.

It had taken Edwin several weeks to set up the scene that would allow a reading stranger to be part of the aftermath of the street fight that took his friend's life.

"I had a strong animosity at myself for not showing any emotion at all. A deep sick thought had manifested itself inside my mind. Was the reason I didn't cry was because I felt relieved that his death had actually happened?" he had written when he finished making the opening scene real enough for a reading stranger to walk in his shoes.

Week after week he would add to his piece, while the others around him would pose as his stranger/readers, puzzling out which techniques created empathy for the reader and which created too much distance. Through using a special vocabulary based upon what created empathy in a reader, the differences in skills levels among the participants disappeared.

As we moved around the writing circle, Erika Vasquez, a teen mother from Sharing and Caring, read the opening of her piece proudly and loudly, after spending the first hour of the workshop daring the other students to make sure that their images were vivid enough to create a true sense of presence and wonder.

“People might look at me and think ‘That girl has a happy life!’ Truth is my life has not been a walk in the park. I went from changing my dolls’ diapers to changing my baby’s diapers within a blink of an eye.”

When Erika first arrived on the campus of Hofstra University, she had tears in her eyes. “My grandmother always wanted me to go to college,” she said. “Could someone please show me around?” Four months later her beloved “abuelita” would be among the more than 80 family members, school officials and youth advocates to celebrate what the young people had produced.

Meanwhile Arooj Janjua was working on a piece that opened with the lines: “I just look like a Muslim to most, but to a few I am an unwanted creature, a terrorist. The thought of me being called a terrorist ran through my head over and over again as I tightened my scarf and took my first step into middle school in a hijab. I thought it was bad enough being how I was before. Even though throughout 6th grade I didn’t wear a scarf on my head, all I heard around me was ‘ugly terrorist,’ ‘you need a bag on your head,’ and ‘immigrant.’ I went mute after that. Barely spoke a word. That innocent little girl became what she believed herself to be.”

The trick for the rest of the group, in this guided memoir process, was to help Arooj to follow the story line through a succession of scenes until the reader could see how the journey from being bullied to becoming a bully had so heartbreakingly, inevitably evolved.

The fact that each new piece was a puzzle in narrative form made it safer for the students to enter the dangerous waters that had marked so many of their lives in these districts where teen pregnancy, gang violence and school drop-out rates were high (Duncan, 2002, 2006).

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The fact that each new piece was a puzzle in narrative form made it safer for the students to enter the dangerous waters that had marked so many of their lives in these districts where teen pregnancy, gang violence and school drop-out rates were high.

## The Guided Memoir Process: A Reflection in Four Voices



### **Final Thoughts:**

To begin with a hunch as to how a model might work, to try it out first in one setting and then another and another, to watch it grow as each new teacher and each new site host makes it their own, is a magical and

wondrous thing. This article has focused on the contributions of three classroom teachers who have trained in the Herstory method, but the richness of the project lies in the interplay between these classroom teachers and the teaching artists who have been working with the technique as writers in their own right. As we come together for our training session, we explore the parts of the Dare to Care pedagogy that must remain fixed in order for the methodology to work well. We explore the ways in which each new facilitator can adapt it to fit his or her personality and teaching style.

I could not have dreamed of a project in which teen mothers would be working to create scenes that would help the reading stranger to know how their choices evolved, side by side with college girls who for the first time told the stories of deciding they weren't ready yet to be mothers. Nor that 14-year-old boys were listening with compassion, as they dared the girls to help them even more to walk in their shoes, as the whole class realized that teens who became pregnant were stigmatized whatever they decided.

I could not have dreamed of the depth of the exploration that would be unleashed as one after another, students wrote not from their head, but from their hearts, yet stringently followed the stranger/reader rules to create a 7-15 page paper that would be powerful enough to move the heart and mind of a stranger, using his or her own experiences to move the needle on the justice issue that each student chose. Nor could I have anticipated the kinds of discussions that came up every week, from the effects of family separation through harsh immigration laws, bullying and gang violence, to the need for protection of children, and becoming the family caretaker.

And as I drive from site to site all over this 125-mile long island of ours, I ponder many questions, and the images come back from each new student story in evolution and each story told by a teacher who has been working with the method. And I dream of a time when all writing will be taught with the view to what will allow another person to truly care.



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# Promoting Social and Emotional Well-Being through Meditation

## SUMMARY

Positive affirmations, guided imagery, and deep breathing have been found effective at improving students' and teachers' social-emotional health and physical well-being. The authors describe their approach to teaching mindfulness through meditation combined with a values curriculum in which students are guided towards examining and exploring their own values and behaviors to build a culture reflective of 'peace, respect, cooperation, and responsibility.'

*A constant challenge* for teachers at any level is to engage students to the point they are resistant to distractions. This is even more difficult in the contemporary classroom with widespread technology and social media at students' fingertips. For some students, academic performance is also hindered by limited coping skills which can prevent effective management of anger and frustration. Aggressive behaviors such as bullying or cyberbullying are experienced by one in five students once or twice a month (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012b). In New York state, approximately 24 percent of high school freshmen fail to complete their education (NCES, 2012a). These compelling statistics demonstrate some of the educational challenges that are beginning to receive much more attention at all levels.

This increased awareness of destructive behaviors has led to state laws such as New York state's Dignity for All Students Act which charges schools to create a respectful, tolerant climate to prevent bullying and other harmful behaviors (New York state, 2013). One recent large-scale study found that teachers often observe bullying and would like additional training in its prevention (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennan & Gulemetova, 2013). One useful approach that has the potential to increase self-awareness and reduce distressing behavior is meditation. This practice, when applied in conjunction with values training can be used to develop students' social-emotional skills. We shape the five social and emotional learning core competencies in two stages. First, we develop self-awareness and self-management through

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meditation. Then we use that foundation to progress to social awareness, building relationships with others, and being accountable for our decisions and behaviors.

We seek to promote social-emotional learning by creating activities which foster students' introspection and self-awareness as well as the impact of their actions on others. There has been increased attention to meditation and mindfulness, and self-awareness is growing in all types of organizations including the corporate world and higher education (Gardiner, 2012; La Forge, 1999). There is also an increased amount of attention to meditation and mindfulness in the P-12 environment. Ferguson (1976) reported that meditation produced relaxation which lowered anxiety, increased self esteem, and improved academic performance and social relationships. He recommended that meditation may be especially helpful to special education students. Teachers can be trained to consider their own sensory state as part of the learning situation and how to use various exercises to "open" their senses before teaching. These techniques can

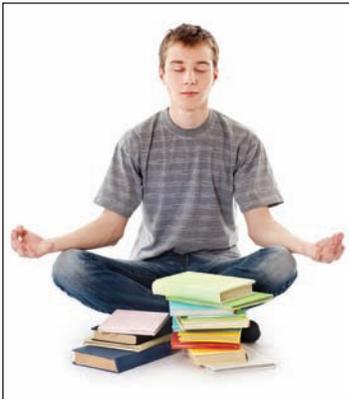
then be taught to students, marrying the intellectual with the sensory to create greater teacher awareness of their own and their students' reactions and experiences (Brown, 1998).

At SUNY Old Westbury, a diverse campus in the SUNY system, students and faculty are receptive to these activities. We started with a classroom-level approach in one course which spread organically to other classes and then activities open to the entire campus. Speakers and workshops on meditation, self-awareness, and relationships with others to develop positive social, emotional, psychological and physical balance have been introduced over the past several years. These have been well received by faculty, students and as stand-alone extracurricular events as well as in a range of college courses in sociology, psychology, and business. The positive reaction led to the development of an entire course "Theories of Social Work, Spiritualism, and Meditation" which connects the core competencies of social and emotional learning to everyday life and especially career decision making (Vaid, 2012). The more faculty and students who

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participate in these activities, the more interest grows.

In our context, spirituality does not include any mention or discussion of religion or religious practices. Rather, we offer students the idea that spirituality means being in touch with the inner-self and the world around us and we ask them to consider what guides them in thinking and acting with their peers, family, teachers, and employers. Faculty, staff, and student interest in speakers on meditation, along with anger management, and other methods of self-development continues to grow. We also turned our attention to students' earlier experiences and how these techniques could be more widely used in the education system before students enter college and thus we have collaborated with a high school vice-principal and teacher to determine the usefulness of meditation and a values focus curriculum on the high school level.

## Background

A major trend in the past few decades has been to recognize the role of cognition (thinking processes) in human behavior (Ellis, 1962; Beck, 1976). It is widely accepted that thinking (self-talk) determines emotions and actions. By changing the self-talk, we can change how we feel and act. We cannot always control events that happen

to us, but we can choose to think rationally about them and thereby change our feelings and actions. With repeated thinking, attitudes — positive or negative — develop. With repeated actions, habits are formed.

The main source of ones thoughts is drawn from beliefs, values, and information. Several theorists (Ellis & Harper, 1977; Zastrow, 1979, 1993) have identified common beliefs that generate irrational or negative self-talk. Thinking in negative patterns and consistently defaulting to should haves, could haves, and what ifs, may perpetuate setbacks and can also distort the reality of a situation and lead us to overact. By using self-talk, and thinking proactively, a more rational philosophy might take hold; “I would like to be treated reasonably well by people and life.” This practice is applicable to students' educational experiences and outcomes. Students who are interested in school and abide by the rules are more engaged in their education and more disposed to learn and finish high school (Archambault, 2009). A meta-analysis of social-emotional development programs found that educators are able to build the social-emotional core competencies of self-awareness, self-management, and accountability. Interactions with others are improved by social awareness, especially of those from different backgrounds, and developing relationships through active

listening and practical methods of handling conflict. These skills were teachable to students of all levels and across various types of environments such as urban and rural schools, resulting in improved student confidence, persistence, ability to plan, and ultimately, their academic performance (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011).

How could we create a classroom environment in which social-emotional competencies could be taught and sustained? To bring about change and transformation, thinking, beliefs and values need to be challenged and changed. We use meditation and the Living Values Education Program (LVEP) (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2004, Tillman & Columbina, 2000; Tillman, 2001) in our classes to meld the individual to the group in order to accomplish this goal.

## **Meditation**

Students at all levels can benefit from reducing their stress through short periods of meditation (Dembosky, 2009). Mindful meditation can reduce one's usual response to anger-provoking situations (Wenk-Sormaz, 2005). Short amounts of meditation may be sufficient to evoke behavior change and positive outcomes. One study of health care professionals found that stress and anxiety could be reduced

with 15 minutes of meditation once or twice a day over a four week period (Prasad, Wahner-Roedler, Cha & Sood, 2011).

The English word meditation is derived from the Latin verb *meditari* meaning “to think, contemplate, devise, and ponder.” Meditation enables one to create new responses, attitudes, values and habits.

There are many types of meditation. *Mantra meditation* involves silently repeating a calming word, phrase or a thought to prevent distracting thoughts. Another kind of meditation — *Prana Yama* — focuses upon the breath. Attention is given to inhalation and exhalation; on the in-breath you absorb fresh air (oxygen) and on the out-breath you expel carbon dioxide and the impurities of the body. *Mindful meditation* has been defined as a moment to moment non-judgmental awareness. It focuses on living in the present moment and broadens the conscious awareness. *Raja Yoga meditation* emphasizes reflection and contemplation. The most powerful form of thinking is contemplation. It is a deep and purposeful thought, weighing the pros and cons of a specific course of action. Thoughts are a creative force and a source of power. Positive and constructive thinking leads to opportunities and choices that contribute to personal growth.

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Short amounts of meditation may be sufficient to evoke behavior change and positive outcomes.

# Promoting Social and Emotional Well-Being through Meditation

To bring about change and transformation, thinking, beliefs and values need to be challenged and changed.

Meditation is much more than achieving a deep state of relaxation. Its practice enables you to look within and make contact with your inner truth and brings you in contact with your intrinsic positive qualities. As you turn your attention within, you become aware of your qualities, virtues and powers. The power of thinking is extensively used to solve emotional and behavioral problems. The positive affirmation technique helps in achieving emotional and behavioral goals. For example, “I am peaceful and calm” or “I am confident, powerful and strong.” This is repeated a number of times a day for 1-2 weeks.

During meditation, purposeful and introspective thought help in the development of values and character. For example, thinking “I am peace. I am. I exist. My essence is peace,” you will absorb the significance of this phrase into your consciousness, be stable in peace, and be free from external influences. The focus is on developing, inculcating and practicing various qualities and virtues. When students develop the values of love, peace and self-respect, this will prevent them from hurting themselves or others. This awareness will lead them to make better choices. Meditation gives a sense of calm, peace and balance that benefits both emotional well-being and overall health. It also enhances skills important for academic performance,

like concentration and problem solving. Meditation focuses on the whole being — body, mind and spirit. Small steps lead to big differences.

## Values Education

The Living Values Educational Program (LVEP) curriculum is supported by UNESCO and has been extensively used (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2004; Tillman, et al., 2000; Tillman, 2001) in more than 65 countries. LVEP centers around 12 core values — peace, respect, love, happiness, freedom, honesty, tolerance, cooperation, responsibility, simplicity, unity and humility. The program focuses on accepting and practicing these values. A number of studies demonstrate that LVEP contributes to improved academic diligence; an increase in student attendance; more interest in school; improvement in test scores; the ability to concentrate; increases in respect, cooperation, and motivation; more self-confidence; decreases in aggressive behavior; improvement in social skills and the ability to solve peer conflicts; greater respect for peers and adults; better student-teacher relationships; and the school achieves a calmer, more peaceful environment (Lovat, Schofield, Morrison & O’Neill, 2002; Lovat, Toomey, Dally & Clement, 2009; Nesbit & Henderson, 2003; Arweck, et al., 2005). LVEP helps in

creating a caring, positive educational climate where students feel valued and safe, and quality learning can take place. It builds a culture of peace, respect, cooperation and responsibility.

### **Our Program - Materials and Strategies**

For both high school and college students, we have found that a nonthreatening way to develop self-awareness, the first competency of social-emotional learning, is to offer a few minutes of quiet meditation at the start of a class. It takes very little time and involves teaching students to calm their breathing by concentrating on their inhale and exhale. If space permits, some upward and sideways arm stretches and bends can help loosen muscles before the breathing. Students seem caught off guard at the calm silence, especially with the excitement of the start of the new school year but readily slow their breathing, listening to instructions. We give instructions to take a few minutes to withdraw into ourselves and to focus on our breathing. “Inhale through your nose, exhale through your mouth to release whatever is troubling your mind.” Depending on the level of collective energy that day, we may do this several times and then move into Prana Yama, breathing through the nose. “Inhale through your nose, expanding your ribcage

and down into your navel; slowly exhale through your nose, listening to the sound of your breathing. At your own pace, inhale again thinking about the front and back lobes of your lungs, filling your body with fresh air.”

Depending on the level of energy of the class, this takes less time as the term moves on and students become more familiar with this practice. Students may sit quietly with their eyes closed and start to focus on their breathing, its depth, and to areas of tightness. They can be asked to breathe more deeply into these areas and consider their breath. Nostril breathing using the fingers to control inhaling and exhaling may also be used as well as counting to four to count out the inhale and exhale. If time permits, students can be asked to visualize a cloud, color, flame or some other focal point to practice clearing their mind of distractions and clutter, which improves concentration.

This simple exercise is supplemented when possible with other methods of self-awareness. After the first weeks of classes, once we are in a routine, we use meditation to move into values awareness. Given these positive experiences for both the faculty and students, and considering that the connection between research and practice may be tenuous (Levin & Cooper, 2010), we choose from the different types of meditation which

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Meditation is much more than achieving a deep state of relaxation. Its practice enables you to look within and make contact with your inner truth and brings you in contact with your intrinsic positive qualities.

# Promoting Social and Emotional Well-Being through Meditation



include using positive affirmations, guided imagery and breathing to improve students' and teachers social, psychological, emotional and physical health and well-being.

The second approach is more extensive and involves adapting the LVEP to our classes. LVEP helps in receiving, developing, and practicing the core values of peace, love, respect, cooperation and tolerance that create a positive educational climate where students feel valued and safe. It builds a culture of peace, respect, cooperation and responsibility. Students are guided to examine and explore their own values and behaviors. The process includes presenting a goal and value to the students and asking them to consider scenarios in which they experienced, for example, respect or disrespect. They relive how it felt and how others might feel in a similar situation in which they were involved and share it with the class or a small group. Visualization follows more easily when they are practiced in prior classes. The Living Values (LV) Curriculum starts with peace and we start with this value in the class by using something like these instructions:

Meditate about your qualities in terms of the value, think, 'I am peaceful, loving and powerful.' Imagine what it would be like to be peaceful. You feel what it is like to

be peaceful. You are at peace with yourself. 'I am peace, calm, serene, quiet, silent, no upheavals, no strong emotions, just quietly being myself. I am at peace with myself, at peace with others, at peace with the world?'

Typically, students focus on one value a month in class discussions, meditation, and visualization of themselves and others, keeping logs, and perhaps role playing one of the values.

Teachers may choose to focus on one, some, or all the values as well as ask students to examine how these are similar or different in other neighborhoods, countries, and cultures. It isn't difficult with a little foresight to fit the value into the lesson of the day.

Our third approach is to build upon the calm and emerging class community to place students in groups to work on a task or project. Stressing the living values such as respect, tolerance, cooperation, responsibility and developing them from the beginning of the term has avoided some of the problems that sometimes occur with group work when students encounter conflicts or simply go off task.

## Resources

We learned about meditation through breathing, guided imagery and positive affirmations from our own library research and by consulting with

experienced professionals in the field. Guest speakers in the areas of yoga (healthy body, healthy mind), anger management, meditation, and related areas have visited our classes and demonstrated how to develop a healthy attitude, mind, and body. We benefitted from programs available from Global Harmony House, located in Great Neck, NY and New York, NY.

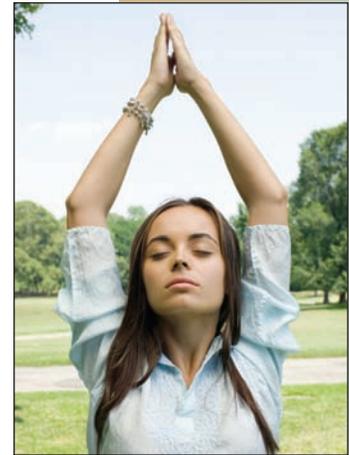
The Association for Living Values Education offers professional development workshops and seminars for educators, psychologists, social workers and parent facilitators. The LVEP resources and activities are in age-appropriate books and describe imagining, visualizations, role playing, games, story-telling, discussions, mind mapping values and anti-values, peace circles and direct instruction of social skills. Creating our own self-paced learning environment, teachers chose a value on which to personally focus for a week to a month so we can understand and share experiences and thoughts with our students.

### **Promoting Social and Emotional development learning**

Students from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds view conflict, respect, unity, and cooperation from different perspectives. Our meditation and self-awareness activity encourages introspection and awareness of how others

may view the same situation. For example, a student sharing an experience of feeling disrespected by another student may listen to feedback and interpretations by others in the class. The slighted student can reframe the situation by considering the reaction of his or her peers. Further, students learn how to recognize situations that are trigger points for anger or depressive thoughts. Globalization includes examining differences in values and behaviors in other cultures. The cultural interpretations of the same situation or experience as well as a reality check of one's reactions in comparison with peers should promote self-examination.

The process we use to incorporate the LVEP is to examine a value such as respect, how it was presented or implied in our respective courses, think about how we felt when respected or disrespected, and consider how we may have demonstrated respect and disrespect to others. We develop a thought "I am respectful" which we use to create a positive attitude and vision of ourselves as we act in the world. We also keep a daily log of our thoughts and behaviors to increase our self-awareness and to reevaluate our interaction with others. These activities allow us to share our experiences and anticipate students' questions, frustrations, and efforts. We practice what we preach, so to speak, before classes begin.



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# Promoting Social and Emotional Well-Being through Meditation

Discussing values and goals with a diverse student body helps students learn the perspectives, values, and beliefs of others and allows for questions and explanation.

Activities such as meditation, yoga, and breathing are based on Eastern world perspectives. To those unfamiliar with these concepts, such approaches may be derided, misunderstood, or rejected by students and parents who consider them a waste of class time or even an affront to their religion. These issues are discussed in class and offer a good opportunity for students to voice their values and concerns. We stress that there is no religious component to this activity. Discussing values and goals with a diverse student body helps students learn the perspectives, values, and beliefs of others and allows for questions and explanation. Students are asked to keep a weekly log of their goals and values and how they enact them. They are encouraged to share their logs with one another to continue this dialogue and to examine how others perceive the same value and interpret an experience.

## Outcomes and Caveats

While we would like to state that this was a smooth and easy process, there were random bumps and cautions. At first, some students may have difficulty understanding the intention of meditation and settling down. One student shook his head and said, “sounds like

some old hippy stuff to me” and proceeded to text while breathing. In another class, we started to lead the breathing and after two inhale/exhales one student declared, “OK, enough breathing for me!” which caused the class to lose focus and start laughing. High school and college students change classes and come in late, behavior that was highlighted when the rest of the class was meditating. At first, latecomers realized they were disturbing the class and either came on time or tried to minimize noise, often waiting to enter the room. The courteous behavior started to erode over time but offered an opportunity to discuss being respectful of the teacher, classmates, and purpose of the activity.

Based on college students’ anecdotal responses, we have found short periods of meditation in the form of controlled breathing and visualization creates a calmer classroom climate both for the students and the teacher. We also noticed that students did not demonstrate the frenetic distracted behavior typical of the end of the semester. However, comparison of one class’s final exam scores with a class from the previous year did not show a significant difference. A sample of college students revealed that meditation helped students remember the contents of lectures (Ramsburg & Youmans, 2013); thus, we are starting to collect data as we implement the

Students from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds view conflict, respect, unity, and cooperation from different perspectives. Our meditation and self-awareness activity encourages introspection and awareness of how others may view the same situation.

meditation and values curriculum on a more consistent basis. A similar calm was found in the high school classes as well but we have no hard data to report as of yet.

Our college students, even those with extensive work experience, remember the one session on meditation or anger management, referring to that class even a year after practicing breathing and visualization in a one-time class.

The students who were enrolled in the semester-long course pronounced it “life-changing” and enthusiastically recommend it to other students.

*...I always felt like an outsider growing up in a destructive environment...My perspective on actions that lead to destructive behavior was silenced or beaten down verbally and physically...having to apply techniques to myself was uncomfortable. I know I will have moments...to react versus taking a moment to explore my surroundings objectively...I have recognized the triggers that create unwanted thoughts or feelings...*

— A female student in her 20s

*I think I benefitted most from the meditation portion of the class. I am a soul, not the labels of male, White, student, American, etc. I still to this day use a simple type of meditation. I sit in a quiet area, clear my mind of all thoughts and focus on breathing.*

*It calms and relaxes me. I also share this technique with everyone I know. From this positive thinking I noticed I am less angry... I try not to focus on the past too much anymore. I focus on my future and planning for a better tomorrow.*

— A male student in his 20s

*The skills...from this course are... priceless...that I can take with me throughout my entire life. The breathing techniques...have definitely made a major difference in...how to control my reaction in certain situations. If I were to feel myself becoming angered by something surrounding me I simply employ the slow deep breathing exercises. As an educator, having the time to reflect on my practice is very crucial to the improvement of my instructional style.*

— A female student in her 20s

In the group assignments, we found that college students do not balk at working with others whom they don’t know in completing assignments both in and out of class. The high school students were assigned into groups with a peer teacher, a student sometimes performing sometimes only slightly better than others in the group. Although there was some pushback, the students assumed responsibility for their preparation of material and being ready for the next class. This required more than the average amount

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# Promoting Social and Emotional Well-Being through Meditation

We have found short periods of meditation in the form of controlled breathing and visualization creates a calmer classroom climate both for the students and the teacher.

of work outside of class. The group dynamics are more positive and high-functioning than students without exposure to meditation and LVEP.

Most recently, a group of college students majoring in a range of areas such as criminology, business, and science were inspired by the campus sessions and material including stress management and daily affirmations mailed out to the entire campus community.

They started a student club “Inner Souls” to promote meditation and values. We are heartened by the students’ reactions and outcomes enough to share our experiences in this paper.

It is important to stress that students at any level, including teachers, be advised that the practice of meditation, self-examination, visualization and living values is a continuous, life-long process. Some days it is easier to focus than others and as human beings, we may find it difficult to be peaceful, cooperative, or respectful in a situation that is important to us. We as people and teachers need to be honest in sharing our experiences, frustrations, and successes in our adoption of these techniques in our quest for self-improvement in order to model this process for others and improve our learning environment.

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RESOURCES RECOMMENDED  
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Association for Living Values Education.  
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# Decreasing Test Anxiety: A View from a Special Education School

## SUMMARY

Test anxiety is sometimes an unintended consequence influencing our current school climate as states and districts rely more and more on the use of testing data to drive decision making. These authors discuss the atmosphere of testing and its impact on students' emotional well-being. They also suggest some practical ways to help students and teachers cope with anxiety that results from the pressures of mandated annual testing.

*A special school in* upper Manhattan serves a distinct population of high-need atypical learners, including students who present on the autistic spectrum and those who exhibit any of the array of conditions classified under the diagnosis of emotional disturbance (ED). At the heart of this diagnosis are behaviors and social deficits that make test-taking even under ideal conditions difficult (Roughan & Hadwin, 2011), to say nothing of test situations that require these students to sit and focus for the two to three hours a day necessary to complete many of these instruments. When this difficult time demand is further compounded by tests that must be administered over several days, or even weeks, the potential for acting out and/or shutting down behaviors on the part of ED students is greatly increased.

An additional challenge for administrators, staff and students is that the anxiety produced in this testing environment

doesn't simply evaporate once the tests are done. The lingering effect of anxiety spills over into other classroom work and further inhibits effective learning for a population of students already encountering obstacles to their educational development, such as an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. Under normal circumstances these students have an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers and demonstrate inappropriate types of behavior or feelings. Many of these same students are characterized as having a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression that tends to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. On test days, incidents of students ripping up tests, attempting to run out of their classrooms, or just putting their heads down and completely giving up, are commonplace and on the rise as tests now reflect the new, more demanding Common Core Learning Standards.

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**Barry Daub, P.S. M811, Mickey Mantle School**  
**Brian Joyce, United Federation of Teachers**

Confronted with this pronounced test taking anxiety, and the classroom disruptions created by inappropriate behaviors, it was time to put our heads together and figure out how we could support our students and staff through this incredibly challenging process and create a learning environment that provides, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), including instruction in self-management of challenging behaviors, positive behavior supports, and social skills development.

**Emotional Disturbance and the Challenge of Meeting Students' Social, Emotional and Academic Needs**

Mattison (2011) observed that approximately 40 percent of American students classified with ED (roughly 200,000 nationwide) are taught in self-contained classrooms or specialized schools; many ED students experience both school settings over the course of their educational careers. While greater investigation of the strengths and differences of these educational settings is indicated, Mattison reported that ED students in specialized schools, despite having more intensive emotional and

social needs, demonstrated greater general and specific improvement than did their ED peers served in self-contained classrooms in the general education environment. Mattison attributed this “stability” to the “comprehensive and intensive levels of both educational and mental health interventions” characteristic of the self-contained school (Mattison, 2011, p. 31).

This self-contained school environment places the psychological and physical well-being of the students at the center of all planning and curriculum efforts. In keeping with much of the current research on effective educational delivery to ED populations, the emphasis is on creating a context for social and emotional learning. As Adams (2013) noted, the discourse around definitions of SEL “can sometimes seem frivolous,” but in fact there are “real implications with regards to creating a shared understanding and framework around a student’s growth” (p. 107), particularly when that student has special learning needs.

Our staff and administration have adopted an SEL framework similar to that used in school districts in Alaska,

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The lingering effect of anxiety spills over into other classroom work and further inhibits effective learning for a population of students already encountering obstacles to their educational development.

## Decreasing Test Anxiety: A View from a Special Education School

Learning to identify and label emotions is a critical step toward cultivating emotional intelligence.

Illinois, and Minnesota, that prioritizes active listening and feedback across all school constituencies (Adams, 2013). Consistent with a focus on social and emotional learning, administrators and staff have been working to incorporate elements of the RULER program: Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating, developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. RULER identifies four “Anchors of Emotional Intelligence”: Charter, Mood Meter, Meta-Moment and Blueprint. These anchors are the fundamental RULER tools that enhance individuals’ ability to understand and regulate their own emotions and to consider and empathize with how others are feeling. The anchors also foster the kind of healthy emotional climate essential to personal growth.

The school’s evolving SEL program has effectively incorporated the charter and mood meter anchors, in our classrooms. Each classroom creates its own charter, a collaborative document that helps establish a supportive and productive learning environment. It is created by members of the community, outlining how they aspire to treat each other. Together, the community describes how they want to feel at school, the behaviors that foster those feelings, and pro-social guidelines for

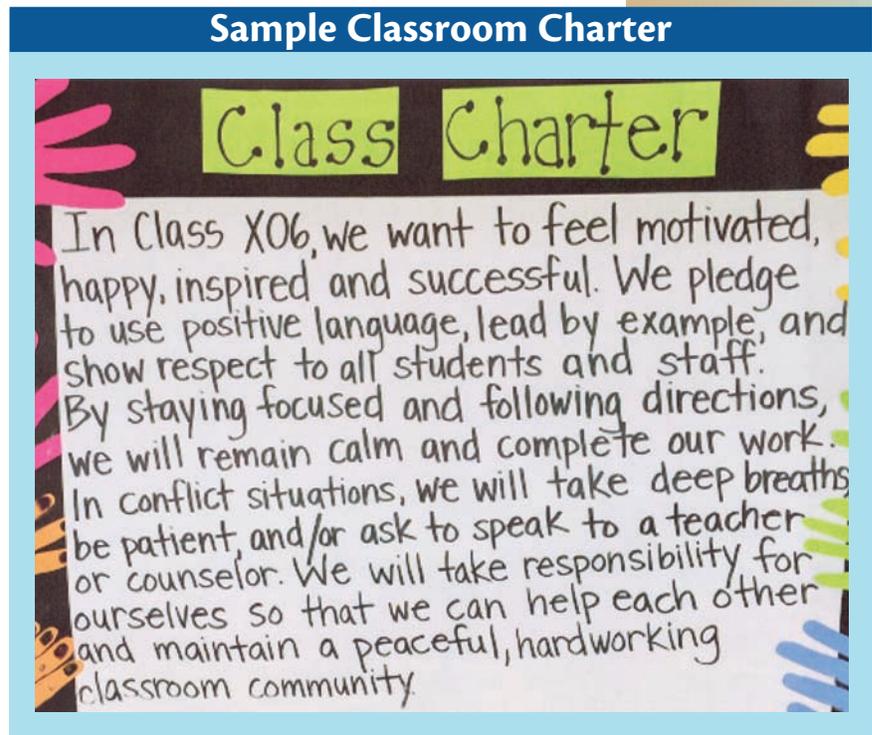
preventing and managing unwanted feelings and conflict. By working together to build the charter, “everyone establishes common goals and holds each other accountable for creating the positive climate they envision” (Yale Center. . . , n.d., para. 2).

The classroom charters are revisited weekly to ensure that all members of the class remain on the proverbial “same page” of expectations and agreement. The RULER program defines mood meter as a practice for identifying and labeling feelings as they’re experienced, as this is a critical step in learning to appropriately regulate those feelings. The teachers have developed and share a practice of daily check-ins with their students, modeling and reinforcing the use of accurate and targeted language. As the RULER website explains: “Learning to identify and label emotions is a critical step toward cultivating emotional intelligence. Using the mood meter, students and educators become more mindful of how their emotions change throughout the day and how their emotions in turn affect their actions. They develop the self-awareness they need to inform their choices. Students learn to expand their emotional vocabulary, replacing basic feeling words with more sophisticated terms. They graduate from using words like ‘ok’ or ‘fine’ to using words like ‘alienated’ and ‘hopeless,’ or ‘tranquil’ and ‘serene.’

By teaching subtle distinctions between similar feelings, the mood meter empowers students and educators to recognize the full scope of their emotional lives and address all feelings more effectively.” (Yale Center . . . , n.d., para. 3).

### Using SEL to Battle Student Test Anxiety

The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs established Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to provide concrete guidance to schools and staff serving special needs students. PBIS is a systems approach to establishing the social culture and behavioral supports needed for all children in a school to achieve both social and academic success. PBIS is not a packaged curriculum, but an approach that defines core elements that can be achieved through a variety of strategies. Recognizing we needed to arrive at some supports to help motivate our students to face their social and emotional deficits, and to alleviate our students’ high levels of test anxiety and corresponding negative behaviors, we looked to the school’s own Universal PBIS Team, staffed with a cross section of dedicated teachers, counselors, and paraprofessionals. The core of the Universal PBIS Team’s mission involves advocating for our students’ academic success and social emotional well-being, so we knew this was a



natural group to embrace this challenge. We charged the team to work closely with our teachers and leverage our established schoolwide SEL and PBIS initiatives together in devising ways to counter the mounting student test anxiety.

One example of this effort was using the existing mood meter practice, which students and teachers were already familiar with, to explore and acknowledge students’ feelings about taking these standardized tests. They were encouraged to identify their specific concerns and to distinguish anger from fear, frustration from boredom, and so on. The charter component of our SEL programming was also employed by the Universal PBIS

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## Decreasing Test Anxiety: A View from a Special Education School

Team and our teachers to this same end. For instance, the school's themed behavior matrix of a Respectful Responsible and Safe (RRS) environment came in handy for teachers as they made test-related connections and engaged in direct teaching of what it means for students to be respectful and responsible in the classroom, consistent with the agreed upon principles of their classroom charter. This effort was mirrored and supported by our counseling team who began to work with our students to develop their individual social-emotional competencies related to test-taking.

### **Focus Fridays**

The conversations with our Universal PBIS Team members centered on trying to figure out what we could do to reduce the overall anxiety, and subsequent disruptive behaviors, that far too many of our students were exhibiting during the state testing periods. This conversation resulted in the idea of our piloting what we now call Focus Friday. Focus Friday is a test simulation practice that was designed to slowly build up students' test-taking endurance in the months leading up to test day. Students gain familiarity with the test format and question types and learn strategies that help them formulate responses to test questions. The program kick-off entailed an outreach

to parents to inform them that we would be giving students practice exams every Friday morning, in an effort to better support their children through the upcoming state English language arts and math exams. The Focus Friday schedule alternated ELA and math test training so that the first Friday covered 15-20 minutes of multiple choice ELA training, while the next Friday's session provided 15-20 minutes of multiple choice math training.

Over a period of three months, the training increased by 10 to 15 minutes each session for both subjects and incorporated different response structures, such as short answer and extended response, in addition to multiple choice. At the conclusion of the Focus Friday intervention, students were receiving an hour's worth of test practice experience. While this time frame is still shy of what is expected in the actual test situation, it was generally agreed that this was the most time the school could devote to test practice without compromising the critical work of core curriculum delivery.

The administration and staff continue to explore the appropriate balance of test preparation within the context of both SEL practice and differentiated learning delivery to our students. But we are optimistic about the path we are on, and our optimism is borne out

by the yearly increases we've seen in student progress on the NYS ELA and Mathematics exams.

## Testing Supports

During the two weeks of ELA and Math testing, the PBIS team members created a raffle with valuable prizes designed to reinforce the motivation of students who find it difficult to even think about dealing with their emotions and anxiety around testing. This raffle was dubbed *Do Your Best on the Test*, and was designed to mirror the school raffle that is held at monthly school assemblies. These monthly raffles recognize students who received *RRS Just Did It* cards for their practice of RRS behaviors. Given this tie-in, our students are familiar with the raffle process and don't have the expectation that the positive recognition necessarily results in a prize.

The raffle rewards approach has proved quite popular. The exchange featured in the sidebar box was modeled by the PBIS team for teachers to engage in with their students.

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## Testing Supports: Raffle Rewards Approach

**Student:** How can I win this bike?

**Teacher:** You have a chance to win this bike, and more, by earning as many "Do Your Best On The Test" raffle tickets as possible.

**Student:** How do I earn these raffle tickets?

**Teacher:** You can **earn 5 tickets** during the upcoming **ELA test** – if you are quiet, respectful, focused, complete the whole test using all your knowledge, and when done – go back over the test again to recheck it and make any changes you think are needed.

**Student:** Is there a way to earn more tickets?

**Teacher:** Yes, great question. You can **earn 5 more tickets**, if **after you complete the test**, you sit quietly in your seat until all your fellow students are done as well.

**Student:** What about the Math Test?

**Teacher:** Great question again!! All of the above applies to the Math Test as well. In other words — if you behave the same way during both the ELA and Math test — you can **earn up to 20 tickets** toward winning the bike, as well as other prizes.

**Student:** What are some of the other prizes I could possibly win?

**Teacher:** In addition to the bike, we will also raffle off an iPod Shuffle, a Razor Scooter, and a Digital Video Camera.

**Teacher:** Remember — the more tickets you earn, the better your chance of winning something!!

**Teacher:** And a bonus — In addition to the "Do Your Best On The Test" raffle, you can also earn entry into the next two student/staff sporting events to be held on each Friday following the ELA and Math test. Entry into these events, will be determined by your teacher, based on your overall behavior during test week.

# Decreasing Test Anxiety: A View from a Special Education School

Most importantly, as students' test anxiety-driven behaviors decreased, our students' progress on the standardized tests started to increase.

## Summary

Our efforts to leverage our internal SEL and PBIS-related tools and initiatives, combined with the establishment of our Focus Friday program, has resulted in a drastic decline of students ripping up tests, running out of classrooms during test time, or giving up all together. Most importantly, as students' test anxiety-driven behaviors decreased, our students' performance on the standardized tests started to improve.

Although we know we are on the right track, there is still more to do, as our efforts to assist students in managing text anxiety have revealed that we need to establish a common social and emotional awareness and a common language in our school around SEL skills, emotion words, and feelings, in the same way we established and promoted a schoolwide language around behavioral expectations. With this in mind, last year we created the SEL Integration Committee. The mission of this committee is to identify,

## Acknowledging Positive Student Behavior

Universal Behavior Supports	Target Population	Social Emotional Learning Standards	Connection	Data Points
Gotcha Being RRS, a.k.a. Just Did It Cards	Standardized and Alternative Assessment	<p><b>Self-Awareness — 1D</b> Students have a sense of personal responsibility</p> <p><b>Self-Management — 2C</b> Students using effective choice-making and decision-making skills.</p> <p><b>Social-Management — 4B</b> Students develop constructive relationships</p>	<p>Just Did It cards reinforce a sense of personal responsibility by providing consequences for their actions.</p> <p>Just Did It cards reinforce effective choice-making and decision-making skills by providing opportunities for positive consequences for their actions.</p> <p>Just Did It cards teach about and reinforce constructive relationship by creating opportunities (random acts of kindness) for positive interactions between staff and students, thereby strengthening the relationship between both parties.</p>	<p>Decrease in students with 10 or more referrals.</p> <p>Student and staff attendance at monthly RRS Booster assemblies where cards are collected for a prize raffle.</p> <p>Tracking of card distribution across classrooms.</p> <p>Tracking of card purchase and distribution year to year.</p>

implement, integrate, assess and sustain social-emotional learning programming at the school, in order to increase students' engagement and academic and social-emotional functioning and support our students' overall independence.

Since the creation of this committee, we have now aligned all our SEL initiatives within our PBIS framework, encouraging our staff to view everything we do through an SEL lens.

The chart at left is part of the matrix that specifically aligns an extrinsic motivation with the learning of SEL skills.

This year, the SEL Integration Committee members, in collaboration with classroom teachers, are rolling out the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA), a comprehensive system that supports intervention planning, progress monitoring, and outcome evaluation in the social-emotional domain. It has been designed to help schools meet the emerging social-emotional learning standards. In particular we would expect to see continued growth and development in self-management: a child's success in controlling his or her emotions and behaviors, to complete a task or succeed in a new or challenging situation. This competency may be

expressed by staying calm when faced with a challenge. We also anticipate improved goal-directed behavior which we define as a child's initiation of, and persistence in completing tasks of varying difficulty, the ability to keep trying when unsuccessful, and the determination to seek out additional information needed to achieve ones goals.

In addition to the established SEL competencies, the DESSA measures optimistic thinking: a child's attitude of confidence, hopefulness, and positive thinking regarding herself/himself and her/his life situations in the past, present, and future; ability to say good things about herself/himself, look forward to classes or activities at school and express high expectations for himself/herself.

This nationally recognized tool, designed to measure individual student social-emotional competencies, will help classroom teachers better understand the SEL needs of their students and allow our counseling staff to create more targeted group and individual IEP counseling goals.

It is hoped that the results from the DESSA can be used to strengthen our Focus Friday efforts going forward, yielding information that can better enable our teachers in targeting students with extreme text anxiety so that we can step in to

ameliorate those stressors. The goal is to enable our students to approach test taking and assessment with less anxiety so that they can better apply themselves and their learning in their test taking.

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# Combating test anxiety

## SUMMARY

These two authors explain how mindfulness techniques can be used to decrease test anxiety. Relaxation, deep breathing, and visualization are easy methods to master and can be used by students and adults of all ages.

## *Neuroscience teaches*

us that emotions strongly influence learning. While positive emotions help to foster motivation and encourage interaction, negative emotions can promote avoidance and limit learning efficiency. How often, for example, have we heard a parent or teacher say, “If she really wants to do it she can.”

Luckily, our emotions are not carved in stone. Our social-emotional development is influenced in large part by how we deal with life’s stressors. A little bit of test anxiety, for example, can serve to keep us alert during an exam.

Excessive anxiety, on the other hand, can be crippling — sending us into fight or flight mode, reducing memory, and stifling learning efficiency.

We trust that the suggestions offered below will assist in the development of positive social-emotional skills that will help assure success for all our students.

## **Teach Students to: Self Talk in a Constructive Way**

Attitudes and beliefs help determine how we react. One way to combat anxiety is through what is called “self-talk.” It is essential to avoid use of negative cue words or negative self-talk and to concentrate on more positive phrases.

Irrational beliefs (beliefs not based on the facts or reality) contribute to strong emotional reactions and negative behaviors.

Negative self-talk before and during tests can cause students to lose confidence and give up on tests. Silently shouting “Stop!” or “Stop thinking about that,” interrupts negative self-talk and the worry response before it can cause high anxiety.

After eliminating the negative thoughts, immediately replace them with positive

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*Tom Kulaga is a school psychologist at Marlboro Middle School and a member of the Marlboro Faculty Association. He holds an M.S. degree in education from Brooklyn College, national certification as a school psychologist, and diplomate status in school-neuropsychology. He is past-president of the New York Association of School Psychologists, webmaster of [www.nyasp.org](http://www.nyasp.org), and serves as adjunct instructor for the School Psychology Program at Marist College.*

**Peter Faustino, Bedford Teachers Association**  
**Tom Kulaga, Marlboro Faculty Association**

self-talk or relaxation. Positive self-talk can build confidence and decrease test anxiety.

Negative: “No matter what I do, I will not pass this test,” becomes:

Positive: “I studied all of the material, I will do fine on this test.”

Negative: “I am no good at math, so why should I try?” becomes:

Positive: “I’ve worked hard and I will try my best on this test.”

### **Teach Students to: Release Muscle Tension**

1. Put your feet flat on the floor.
2. With your hands, grab underneath the chair.
3. Push down with your feet and pull up on your chair at the same time for about five seconds.
4. Relax for five to 10 seconds.
5. Repeat the procedure two or three times.
6. Relax all your muscles except for the ones that are actually used to take the test.

### **Teach Students to: Visualize a Calming Scene**

1. Close and cover your eyes using the center of the palms of your hands.
2. Prevent your hands from touching your eyes by resting the lower parts of your palms on your cheekbones and placing your fingers on your forehead. Your eyeballs must not be touched, rubbed or handled.
3. Think of some real or imaginary relaxing scene. Mentally visualize this scene. Picture it as if you were actually there.
4. Visualize this scene for one to two minutes.

### **Teach Students to: Relax Through Deep Breathing**

1. Sit straight up in a chair in a good posture position.
2. Slowly inhale through the nose.
3. First fill the lower section of the lungs and work up to the upper part of your lungs.
4. Breathe out through your mouth.

### **Teach Students to: Practice Long Term Relaxation**

An effective long-term relaxation technique is cue-controlled relaxation response. This involves the repetition of cue words, such as: “I am relaxed,” “I can get through this,” or “Tests don’t scare me.”

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You’ll find more information on test anxiety from these authors on NYSUT’s website: <http://www.nysut.org/resources/all-listing/2012/august/for-parents-tips-for-combating-test-anxiety>



# Cyberbullying – The New Age of Harassment

## SUMMARY

The reality of cyberbullying and its far-reaching effects are described in this author's cautionary review of the many ways that cyberbullies pervade the landscape in our schools. This author presents an overview of the digital footprint, explores some of the reasons for cyberbullying, and offers tips for schools on its prevention.

*For school-aged children, being* harassed before, during or after school is a long existing problem. While many schools have certainly mobilized to address the issues associated with bullying on school property, the problem has unfortunately expanded beyond the school. Since the classic schoolyard bully now extends into the cyber world, our digitally bound youngsters are at risk in new and different ways. Within this vast network it can be difficult for adults to monitor and protect children from the dangers they face from the cyberbully. With the advent of mobile devices, the bullying that goes on “beyond school” can sometimes hover right under the radar. Undermining trust and peer-to-peer relations, cyberbullies have no boundaries and their efforts can easily disrupt the natural flow of social dynamics that reinforce classroom culture. This type of harassment can have far reaching

effects on students' social and emotional well-being and can interfere with learning and the healthy development of social relationships.

### **Cyberbullying: What Is It and What Does It Look Like?**

According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 93 percent of teens use the Internet and 63 percent of teens go online daily. Lenhart (2010) shares that among teens, 75 percent have cellphones (up from 63 percent in 2007), 50 percent talk to friends daily (up from 35 percent in 2007), and 54 percent send text messages daily (up from 27 percent in 2007).

“[Cyberbullying is the]...willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cellphones, and other electronic devices (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).”

*Nancy Sharoff is a teacher on special assignment in Ellenville, NY and a member of the Ellenville Teachers Association.*

## Nancy Sharoff, Ellenville Teachers Association

Cyberbullying can take many forms. These include rumor spreading; flaming — sending angry, rude, vulgar messages; harassment — repeatedly sending a person offensive messages; cyberstalking — harassment that includes threats of harm; denigration — put downs; masquerading — pretending to be someone else and sending/posting material that makes that individual look bad; outing and trickery — sending/posting material about a person that contains sensitive, private or embarrassing information; and exclusion — intentionally excluding a person from an online group, such as an IM (instant message) buddy list.

Here is one example of a cyberbullying text: “U R 1 ugLE l%kin chk. Ill b suR 2 catch U l8r.” (Translated: You are one ugly looking chick. I’ll be sure to catch you later.) Another example is creating a fake Facebook page in an innocuous name, yet with sufficient clues contained within the page to give the appearance of being an actual student in school and using that page to post derogatory comments about classmates. The emotional and mental toll on the student who appears to be the creator of the page can be such that they avoid coming to school and when in school they are ostracized by their friends.

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## Cyberbullying – The New Age of Harassment



Cyberbullying occurs in (but not limited to) the following environments:

- Instant messaging (IM) — This venue allows for multiple users, has the appeal of anonymity and the ability to exclude others; text can be copied and sent to others.
- Chat rooms — This venue allows for real time communication with the ability for the cyberbully to exercise exclusion.
- Polling websites — This venue has questions which allow participants to vote for youth with particular traits.
- Email — This venue allows the cyberbully to send offensive messages and masquerade as someone else.
- Text messages — In addition to text, cellphones have the ability to send images and video as well. The rise in the use of cellphones has led to two phenomena related specifically to cyberbullying: “Bluetooth Bullying” and “Happy Slapping.” Bluetooth Bullying allows a cyberbully to send a message to all Bluetooth-enabled cell phones within a certain radius; it is meant to shock and upset the victim as he does not know from where the message is originating. Happy Slapping involves a target who is approached and provoked in some

manner while a third person videotapes the event on a cellphone. The video is uploaded to a social networking or media sharing website.

### Reasons for Cyberbullying: What Does the Data Say?

“The perception of invisibility can influence behavioral choices. It undermines the impact of the potential for negative consequence. This makes it easier to rationalize an irresponsible or harmful action due to the lack of potential for detection (Willard, 2007).”

According to a study by Hinduja and Patchin (2009) the top three reasons given by cyberbullies for their actions are: revenge (22.5 percent), the victim deserved it (18.7 percent), and ‘for fun’ (10.6 percent). Cyberbullies justified their actions with the following excuses: “It was just text,” “I didn’t mean to hurt them,” and “I was just messing around.”



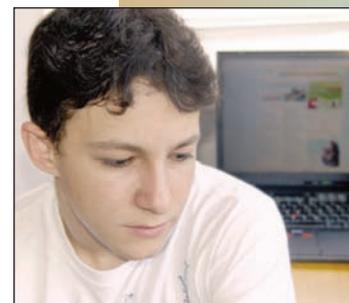
Why are people willing to do or say things on the Internet that they would be much less likely to do or say in person? Perhaps because the young and adolescent brains have not yet developed to the point where they can make decisions and exercise self-control. Youth are very “now” oriented; their focus is on the present and not on any long-term implications so there is no connection for them between action and consequences.

### **Prevention: A Call to Action**

In an effort to address issues of bullying in public schools, New York state lawmakers passed the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), which took effect in July 2012. This act seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment (bully-free) for elementary and secondary school students when they are on school property, a school bus, or at a school function. While this act helps to address incidences within the school ‘environment’, school districts need to raise awareness and help students develop strategies to deal with the cyberbullying that is beyond the reach of school districts.

Hinduja and Patchin (2009) have identified six elements for an effective school cyberbullying policy. These six elements include clear and specific definition of language that relates to and is communicated to ALL

stakeholders; graduated consequences in place for violations; procedures for reporting incidences; procedures for investigating incidences; clearly stated language in a school district’s Acceptable Use Policy regarding in-school discipline of a student’s off-campus speech which has a “substantial disruption of the learning environment” (Tinker v Des Moines Independent Community School District, 1969); and preventive measures (workshops, professional development, assemblies). Preventive measures are most effective if set-up as a three pronged approach — staff, students, community/parents. The staff receives training on identifying incidences of cyberbullying (some possible signs include avoiding friends, appearing sleep deprived, and reluctant use of cellphones and computers), reporting incidences and on how to incorporate cyberbullying into their curriculum. New York state’s DASA amendment (July 2013) requires teacher candidates to complete six hours of training in harassment, bullying and discrimination prevention. Students are instructed in issues of cyberbullying through a variety of resources, including small counseling groups. Students are also instructed using Common Sense Media curriculum units that are available for free for teachers to use within the classroom (see resource section). Students are



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## Cyberbullying – The New Age of Harassment

Regardless of the approach taken to address the issues of cyberbullying, one of the key components is teaching our students how to detect and manage their own emotions and make good social decisions.

made aware of procedures for reporting incidences through assemblies at the beginning of the school year. Parents and guardians are provided with various opportunities to attend workshops dealing with not only cyberbullying, but also how to manage their “connected” child.

As educators, we need to assess cyberbullying in our districts. To do this effectively, anonymous surveys are recommended, with the terms clearly defined (cyberbullying, etc.). Surveys can be used to ascertain whether a student has been cyberbullied, where the incidence(s) occurred, who the bully was (anonymous, school friend, friend of the family), and frequency of occurrences. It is important for these surveys to be conducted at regular intervals in order to evaluate trends. As educators, we need to educate and be educated on the subject. In addition to assemblies for students, the use of peer mentoring has been used to familiarize students with issues related to cyberbullying. A simple Web search will show that there are a number of organizations that provide resources to help educate students and that offer professional development options for K-12 educators.

Educators can incorporate concepts of cybersafety and cyberbullying into their curriculum. Specifically, at the elementary school level one might use the book, *Officer Buckle and Gloria*, by Peggy Rathmann; though this book addresses safety rules in general,

Internet safety rules can easily be added into the discussion. At the middle school level, the use of hoax photographs (pictures of 30-foot alligators, etc.) can help students understand that not all they see or read online is true. At the high school level, students can focus on their personal use of technology and how these affect their lives. As educators, we need to make certain that our students are aware of the district’s monitoring and filtering software (normally maintained by the district’s Instructional Technology position and is required by law for districts to adhere to the Children’s Internet Protection Act ).

Instruction about cyberbullying and what it means to be a responsible digital citizen needs to begin in the primary grades. Englander (2012) studied more than 11,000 third through fifth graders in New England schools during 2010 to 2012. In her findings she reported,

“Most elementary cyberbullying occurred in online games. Use of Facebook increased among third, fourth, and fifth graders between 2010-12, especially among girls. Cellphone ownership increased in every grade.” (Englander, 2012)

Regardless of the approach taken to address the issues of cyberbullying, one of the key components is teaching our students how to detect and manage their own emotions and make good social decisions.

How can we as educators and the educational community address the issues surrounding cyberbullying and help to ensure the learning and social and emotional well-being of our students?

“... [the] best way for a school district to protect its students & protect itself from legal liability is to have a clear and comprehensive policy regarding bullying and harassment, technology and their intersection: cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).”

### **The Digital ‘Footprint’: What Steps Your Students Should Take Now**

It is never too early — nor too late — to teach about one’s digital footprint. As the music group, The Police, sing in their song, “Every Breath You Take,” “... every move you make, every step you take, I’ll be watching you.” There is a permanent record of everything that you do online, or, what others have posted about you online. The Facebook account you thought was private is NOT actually private. The picture taken by someone who was a friend yesterday, but is no longer a friend today is now part of a larger online photo sharing website, with the rights set to “public.” An email address you had 12 years ago and deleted 11 years ago is still available for all to view. How easy is it to access this information? Go to the Internet Archive (<http://www.archive.org/>) or

### **Tips for Staying Safe Online**

- Set up a Google Alerts to monitor your online presence. Not only should you use your names as the search query, but also any aliases (gaming avatar names, etc.) that you may be known as online.
- Never, ever post anything about yourself or anyone else that you would not want to see as the main story of tomorrow’s newspaper or this evening’s television news story. Ask yourself how you would feel if that information was the main story of a newspaper or the evening television news story one year from now.
- Since many websites require registration, do not provide more information than is absolutely necessary (oftentimes the fields that are required are marked by an asterisk). In this case, less is better.
- Do a monthly Google search on your own name (and any aliases). Check not only the ‘Web’ portion of the search, but also the ‘Images’ portion.

simply do a Google search and click on the word ‘cached’ in the results to see previous pages of a website.

More and more college admission offices are now checking an applicant’s online presence as part of the admissions process. More employers are requesting permission of perspective employees to visit their social networking profiles. What students do today online may have an impact on their futures. The graphic above includes some steps students can take to make certain that their online presence is one they can be proud of. While some of these strategies can be used by upper elementary students themselves, others should be shared and supported by educators and parents/guardians.

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# Cyberbullying – The New Age of Harassment



Remember, there is NO such thing as a “Delete” button online. PERIOD.

Cyberbullying and its resulting damage to a student’s learning and social and emotional well-being is not a risk any educator is willing to take. Take action now. Learn more about the changes you can make in your classroom, speak with colleagues, bring up these discussions with your administrators, and always, always keep the well-being of your students in mind.

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# Glossary

## ACRONYMS AND TERMS

### **Social and emotional development and learning (SEDL)**

Social and emotional competence is the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one’s life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development (Elias et al, 1997).

SEDL begins at home and is further facilitated through seven approaches in different combinations determined locally:

- Continual outreach to and inclusion of families and the surrounding community;
  - Attention to school climate and to relationships among and between students and adults;
  - Age-appropriate skill acquisition through character education, social-emotional learning and standards-based instruction;
  - After school, out-of-school, extra curricular, service learning programs and mentoring;
  - Alignment of district and school support personnel, policies, and practices — in special and general education — to assist all students;
  - Cross-systems collaboration with community-based child and family services for students in greater need; and
  - Appropriate ongoing development of professional and support staff and partners.
- Source: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/sedl/SEDLguidelines.pdf>

### **Affective skills**

The affective domain includes the manner in which we deal with things emotionally, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasms, motivations, and attitudes.

### **Bullycide**

A suicide caused as the result of depression from bullying.

### **Cyberbullying**

The act of harassing someone online by sending or posting insulting, derogatory or mean messages, usually anonymously.

### **Empathy**

The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

### **IVDU**

Yachad/NJCD’s Individualized Vocational Development Unit (IVDU) Schools, located in Brooklyn, New York, offer Jewish students with special needs (ages 5 to 21) a comprehensive educational environment.

**Kinesthetic learning**

Also known as tactile learning; a learning style in which learning takes place by the student carrying out a physical activity, rather than listening to a lecture or watching a demonstration.

**Living Values Educational Program (LVEP)**

A way of conceptualizing education that promotes the development of values-based learning communities and places the search for meaning and purpose at the heart of education.

**Mindfulness**

A mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.

**Payot**

The Hebrew word for sidelocks or sidecurls worn by some men and boys in the Orthodox Jewish community.

**Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)**

A systems approach to establishing the social culture and behavioral supports needed for all children in a school to achieve both social and academic success.

**Psychopathology**

The scientific study of mental disorders.

**Sacrum**

A triangular bone in the lower back formed from fused vertebrae and situated between the two hipbones of the pelvis.

**Sciatica**

Pain affecting the back, hip, and outer side of the leg, caused by compression of a spinal nerve root in the lower back, often owing to degeneration of an intervertebral disk.

**Stressor**

A stimulus that causes stress.

**Upstander**

Someone who defends or stands up for a cause or belief.

**Yachad**

The National Jewish Council for Disabilities is a global organization dedicated to addressing the needs of all Jewish individuals with disabilities.

# Resources

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON PROMOTING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

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### *Union Resources*

#### **New York State United Teachers**

<http://www.nysut.org/news/2012/september/see-a-bully--stop-a-bully--online-resources>

#### **See a Bully, Stop a Bully: Online Resources provided by NYSUT Social Justice and Labor Center**

This comprehensive listing provides information about community, parent, teacher, and student resources on bullying. These include, but are not limited to, links to articles and organizations which work to prevent and address the impact of bullying and cyberbullying both in and out of schools.

#### **NYSUT Education and Learning Trust Professional Development**

<http://www.nysut.org/elt>

NYSUT's Education & Learning Trust offers several professional development opportunities on the topic of Promoting Social-Emotional Development and Physical Well-Being. The full course listing is available at the ELT website.

#### **Site-based and/or Online Courses:**

Building Communication and Teamwork in Schools

Bullying: Preventing the Problem

Cyber Bullying: The New Age of Teaching Students to be Peacemakers

#### **CD course:**

Traumatized Child: The Effects of Stress, Trauma & Violence on Student Learning

#### **Seminar:**

Conflict Management

#### **NYSUT 24/7 Let's Go!**

<http://locals.nysut.org/247/>

This resource was created by NYSUT health care professionals. It offers a useful guide for parents and encourages children statewide to lead healthy lifestyles by educating them about nutrition and exercise. Used by schools and health providers, the program has been endorsed by the American Cancer Society.

#### **American Federation of Teachers**

<http://www.aft.org/yourwork/tools4teachers/bullying/climate.cfm>

The AFT provides extensive information on school climate including resources for special populations and students with disabilities, and culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

### **National Education Association**

*<http://www.nea.org/home/neabullyfree.html>*

Resources on bullying include the Bullying Prevention Toolkit and “The Bully Free: It Starts with Me Campaign” and several newsletters geared to support staff professionals.

### *New York State Education Department*

#### **Social and Emotional Development and Learning**

*<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/sedl/>*

New York State Education Department publishes the Social and Emotional Development and Learning (SEDL) Guidelines. The site includes links to counties across the state working with bullying prevention, school outreach, and standards-based interventions.

### *Other resources for Social and Emotional Learning*

#### **The Bully Project**

*<http://www.thebullyproject.com/>*

The BULLY Project is a social action campaign that was inspired by the award-winning film BULLY. They offer research-based practices developed in conjunction with Harvard’s Making Caring Common Initiative to help schools create a caring community and to prevent bullying. The Bully project also offers resources including a screening guide for the film and other tools for educators and parents. “The power of our work lies in the participation of individuals like you and the remarkable list of partners we’ve gathered who collectively work to create safe, caring, and respectful schools and communities. Our goal is to reach 10 million kids or more, causing a tipping point that ends bullying in America.”

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## Resources

### **CARE for Teachers: The Garrison Institute**

<https://www.garrisoninstitute.org/contemplation-and-education/care-for-teachers>

The Garrison Institute sponsors CARE for Teachers (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education); a program that offers symposia, trainings, retreats, and research on contemplative practices in education. In addition, their website houses a bibliography of research-based practices related to teaching meditation and other methods to cultivate mindfulness.

### **Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)**

<http://casel.org/>

CASEL is a non-profit organization founded by Daniel Goleman, a leading author on social and emotional intelligence (EQ), and several of his colleagues. CASEL “. . . works to advance the science and evidence-based practice of social and emotional learning.” CASEL collaborates with some districts and acts as a clearinghouse for resources in states across the country.

See also:

<http://danielgoleman.info/topics/emotional-intelligence/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ne73FF1yFyc>

### **Herstory Writers Workshop**

<http://www.herstorywriters.org/>

The mission of Herstory is “To offer women tools that transform their individual voices and experiences into literary works of art leading to personal and societal change.” Herstory offers writing workshops and also produces published materials for teachers that include:

*Paper Stranger/Shaping Stories in Community*, by Erika Duncan: Herstory’s manual for teachers, healers and activists, provides an introduction to Herstory’s empathy-based approach to memoir writing. Readings and reflections are interwoven with a step-by-step compendium of exercises and tools.

*Passing Along the Dare to Care: A Mini-Memoir Course for Younger Writers*, by Erika Duncan. This collection of readings and exercises — based on what causes a “Stranger/Reader” to care — fosters dialogues across differences, diversity studies and a sense of community, as well as enhanced listening, reading and narrative skills.

### **The Inner Resilience Program**

<http://www.innerresilience-tidescenter.org/>

The program was founded in response to the impact of September 11 on students in New York City public schools. They offer a core program on stress reduction, relaxation, and creating caring classroom communities, as well as residential retreats and professional workshops on topics like conflict resolution, anger management, and talking to children in a climate of uncertainty.

**Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility: The 4 R's Program  
(Reading, Writing, Respect and Resolution)**

*<http://www.morningsidecenter.org/4rs-program>*

Offers a grade specific curriculum for social and emotional learning that focuses on building community, understanding and handling feelings, listening, assertiveness, problem-solving, dealing well with diversity, and cooperation.

**Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center**

*[www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)*

Teaching Tolerance “is dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations and supporting equitable school experiences for our nation’s children” and offers free curricular resources for teachers and schools including a subscription to the quarterly publication *Teaching Tolerance*, resources to support “Mix it Up Day” events, instructional posters, and DVD’s including *Bullied: A student, a school and a case that made history*, a documentary that presents one man’s experience with being bullied.

*Books and Articles*

**Creative Conflict Resolution**

by William Kriedler (1984)

A classic reference for anyone interested in creating a positive classroom community. Chapters focus on resolving conflicts peacefully, improving communication skills, handling anger and other emotions, and being a peacemaker.

**Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ**

by Daniel Goleman (2005)

A landmark book first published in 1995 that brought emotional intelligence to national attention. Goleman helped to redefine intelligence by demystifying the meaning of IQ and broadening the discussion to include other factors crucial to academic and personal success.

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## Resources

### **Mindful Teaching and Teaching Mindfulness**

by Deborah Schoenberlein ( 2009)

A handbook on mindfulness techniques for the classroom and individual practice. Describes numerous activities that include intention setting, breathing, focusing attention and meditation.

### **Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators**

by Maurice J. Elias, Joseph E. Zins and Roger P. Weissberg (1997)

Presents current research on social and emotional learning and offers useful implementation guidelines for educators.

### **Social and Emotional Learning: What is it? How can we use it to help our children?**

by Robin Stern, Ph.D.

*[http://www.aboutourkids.org/articles/social\\_emotional\\_learning\\_what\\_it\\_how\\_can\\_we\\_use\\_it\\_help\\_our\\_children](http://www.aboutourkids.org/articles/social_emotional_learning_what_it_how_can_we_use_it_help_our_children)*

### **Emotion in Education: An Interview with Maurice Elias (author of Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators)**

*<http://www.learningace.com/doc/6430130/d20f7d77b6d89a97d9d184c6a794f293/emotion-in-education-an-interview-with-maurice-elias>*

### **Stand Up!**

by Lisa Roth M.D., Marsha Levitin, & Karen Siris EdD (2012)

A moving story about a boy who observes bullying and decides to take a stand.

# Critical Thinking and Problem Solving for the 21st Century Learner

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The 21st century continues to pose new challenges for today's students who are graduating into a world of unprecedented change. In a society that is moving rapidly, driven by global communications, with a workplace that changes regularly, our future citizens have to be prepared beyond the three R's. Success in the 21st century requires multiple forms of literacy and communication, critical and creative thinking, and problem solving. This theme is designed to investigate ways in which learning that is authentic, collaborative, and hands on can capture the essence of real world tasks and prepare students for a global society defined by fast communications, ongoing change, and increasing diversity.

**Examples of topic areas include:**

- STEM Education
- Critical Thinking
- Inquiry-Based Learning
- Career and Technical Education
- Problem- or Project-Based Learning
- Teaching Critical Thinking and Problem Solving with Special Populations
- Multiple Literacies (civic, environmental, global awareness)

# Critical Thinking and Problem Solving for the 21st Century Learner

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## EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

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- Grade and Content Area:** Author(s) can describe practices in any grades (P-12) and affiliated with any content area. For example, a fourth-grade teacher and special education teacher may address their approaches as a teaching team; a high school social studies teacher may co-author a manuscript with the school psychologist, a kindergarten teacher in partnership with a university professor may discuss their approaches.
- Audience:** Teachers, school-related professionals, pupil personnel services providers, union leaders, parents, administrators, higher education faculty, researchers, legislators, and policymakers.
- Deadline for Proposals:** June 9, 2014.
- Rights:** Acceptance of a proposal is not a guarantee of publication. Publication decisions are made by the Editorial Board. NYSUT retains the right to edit articles. The author will have the right to review changes and if not acceptable to both parties, the article will not be included in *Educator's Voice*. NYSUT may also retain the article for use on the NYSUT website ([www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org)) or for future publication in *NYSUT United*.
- Article Length:** The required article length is flexible. Please submit approximately 2,000 – 3,000 words (or 7-9 double-spaced pages plus references).
- Writing Style:** Authors are encouraged to write in a direct style designed to be helpful to both practitioners and to others committed to strengthening education. Education terms (i.e., jargon, acronyms) should be defined for a broad audience. For articles with multiple authors, use one voice consistently.
- Manuscript:** Authors must follow American Psychological Association (APA) 6th edition style with in-text citations and references at the end of the article. Do not use footnotes. Please paginate the manuscript and include the lead author's name in the header.
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CALL FOR ARTICLE PROPOSALS  
FOR EDUCATOR'S VOICE, VOL. VIII

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# Critical Thinking and Problem Solving for the 21st Century Learner

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## CONTENT GUIDELINES

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Please reference each of the following in your proposal and return to NYSUT by the June 9, 2014 deadline:

- Relevance to the theme of Learning in the 21st Century
- The context for the reader; describe the setting and student population (e.g., class approaches, whole school approaches).
- Description of your approaches; include specifics of the practice or strategy used in your classroom(s). Include relevant artifacts if available.
- The research base that supports the practice, including relevant citations and their connection to your classroom practice; links to Common Core or other standards.
- Evidence of success that indicates the practice achieved its goal(s). Describe student outcomes and evaluation criteria, or metrics.
- How you involved parents and caregivers as partners in your work.
- How does your practice address the needs of diverse populations? (e.g., students with disabilities, English language learners, other students with unique learning needs)

Our optional online submission form is available at:

*<http://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources/sites/educators-voice/call-for-proposals>*

# Critical Thinking and Problem Solving for the 21st Century Learner

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Name of Author(s) \_\_\_\_\_

If multiple authors, please list all names, and identify one author as primary contact person \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Article working title \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please check all the categories of affiliation with NYSUT that apply to the primary author/contact person:**

1. I am an active teacher member of the following local \_\_\_\_\_

2. I am an active SRP member of the following local \_\_\_\_\_

3. I am an active higher education member of the following local/chapter \_\_\_\_\_

4. I am an instructor of the following NYSUT Education & Learning Trust course \_\_\_\_\_

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5. I am a member of the following NYSUT Subject Area Committee \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please provide a statement/outline describing how you plan to address each specific “Content Guideline” and any additional information that you intend to incorporate in your manuscript. Also, please provide:**

Current position of author(s), including district, grade(s) and content area: \_\_\_\_\_

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Primary author’s name, address and phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

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Alternate phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary author’s email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Summer contact information, if different: \_\_\_\_\_

**Information can be submitted electronically by June 9, 2014, to:**

*edvoice@nysutmail.org*

**Or mail to:**

NYSUT Research & Educational Services

Attn: *Educator’s Voice*

800 Troy-Schenectady Road

Latham, NY 12110

**Deadlines for Volume VIII:**

June 9, 2014      Proposal submission deadline

July 7, 2014      NYSUT responds to proposal

Aug. 29, 2014    Completed article submission

April 2015        Publication





# NYSUT Education & Learning Trust

The Education & Learning Trust is NYSUT's primary way of delivering professional development to its members. ELT offers courses for undergraduate, graduate and in-service credit, partnership programs that lead to master's degrees and teaching certificates, and seminars as well professional development programs for teachers and school-related professionals.

## Examples of what ELT offers on the topic of Promoting Social-Emotional Development and Physical Well-Being include:

### *Site-based and/or online courses:*

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- Building Positive Connections with Diverse Families and Communities
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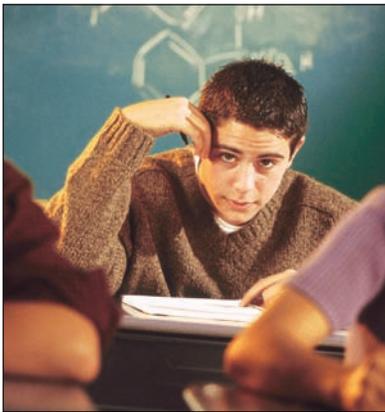
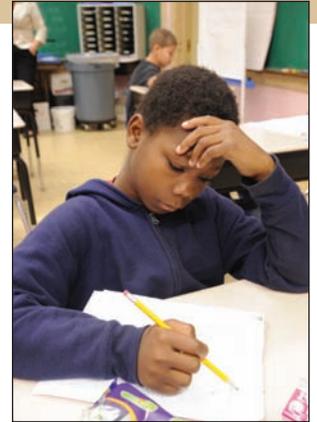
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