
THE JOURNEY TO A PEACEFUL SCHOOL



by

Hetty van Gorp

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Dear Colleagues:

The aim of this workshop is to present practical, easy-to-implement strategies designed to create a culture of peace in your classrooms and schools. The approach will be proactive and optimistic. The philosophical framework that forms the basis of this workshop is rooted in the belief that the only effective, long-term means to reduce discipline problems and improve the atmosphere of schools is to implement school-wide, proactive programs, policies and initiatives.

When I kissed my two sons good-bye in the morning as they left for school, my greatest concern was for their safety and well-being. I hoped that they would come home at the end of the school day, happy and eager to return to the classroom the following day. I worried far more about their emotional and psychological health and happiness than about what they were learning. Over the years, I have talked with many parents who share these concerns.

It is my belief that all children have a fundamental right to learn in a safe and peaceful environment. Regrettably, we cannot guarantee that this will always be the case. In schools and communities around the world, there seems to be an alarming increase in the number of incidents of aggression, bullying and other forms of violence.

Over the past decade, I have dedicated myself to supporting schools that have declared a commitment to creating and maintaining a safe and caring school environment for their students.

Sadly, this commitment has its roots in a personal tragedy. In early 1991, Ben, my older son, died following an act of aggression by another student who had been bullying him. Ben was 14 years old and in grade nine.

I decided to do something to make a difference in the lives of my own students. In addition to math, science and other subjects we deem to be important, I introduced lessons designed to help my students "live well together." These are lessons in cooperation, listening with empathy, communicating more effectively, expressing rather than exposing anger, appreciating differences and resolving conflict peacefully.

Now, over a decade later, as I work with teachers, parents and students in many parts of the world, I continue to be hopeful that the students in our care will grow up to become responsible and compassionate citizens and that they will make a better world for all of us.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Howard Gump". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned at the bottom left of the page.

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My Beliefs

I consider myself to be a practical, optimistic person. I truly believe that **all** schools can create an atmosphere of cooperation and respect. However, it does not happen overnight or simply because we wish for it. It takes time, commitment, consistency and, most importantly, a common vision.

Creating such an atmosphere has far more to do with attitude than it does with resources. From Belfast to Belgrade, I have had the good fortune of working with educators who have dramatically transformed the atmosphere within their schools. Many of these schools operate without adequate materials and resources, yet this does not prevent them from achieving their vision of a safe and caring school.

My personal motto is:

Do what you can, where you are with what you have.

Living with this motto in mind, we can stay optimistic and focused on what can be achieved. I believe that **any** school can become a place where people want to be. It is not an impossible dream!

Your participation in this workshop reflects your interest in fostering a classroom and school culture of peace. This workshop will be proactive in approach and will demonstrate that making a significant change within a school has far more to do with attitude than with financial resources.

In some schools, the “get tough” approach is taken in dealing with discipline problems. From security cameras to guards, the overall tone becomes one of law and order. Unfortunately, this is not usually a successful means by which to create lasting change. Discipline in these situations is imposed from above and from the outside. It is only when we foster true inner discipline that we begin to see a long-term change in the atmosphere of our classrooms and schools.

Although there is currently a plethora of resources aimed at reducing discipline problems and enhancing school atmosphere available, there is no substitute for enthusiasm and commitment.

A school may have every available anti-bullying book, video and poster. However, if there is not a school-wide commitment to tackling this problem, these resources will not make much of a difference.

Introduction

American essayist Roger Rosenblatt captured the essence of the need for passion when one is inspired to create something lasting and vital:

The best in art and life
comes from a center
something urgent and powerful –
an ideal or emotion
that insists on its being.
from that insistence
a shape emerges
and creates structure out of passion.
If you begin with a structure
you have to make up the passion
and that's very hard to do.

Hopefully you are here because you have chosen to be here. My goal is to inspire you and provide you with some practical strategies and ideas to help you become the catalyst for change when you return to your school.



Embarking on the Journey

It is good to have an end to journey towards
but it is the journey that matters in the end.

Ursula LeGuin

My first trip to Serbia was a new adventure. I will admit I did not know exactly where Serbia is situated. I knew vaguely in what region to look but I had to search through an atlas to find its precise location.

Next, I had to do some research. Would Serbia be cold in November? Could I use my laptop Internet service? What would the hotel offer in the way of amenities? What currency should I bring? There were many questions for which I needed to find answers.

My next task was to research the best route and means by which to travel. Could I fly directly to my destination? Did I need to start at a major city? I needed to make a plan based on the answers to these questions.

Then I had to prepare and pack. I had to find out what professional materials I might need and then what type of clothing would be appropriate.

I also had to think about contingency plans. What would I do if I missed a flight? What if no one met me at the airport? What if no one at the hotel spoke English?

All in all, it was quite a process. The journey was an exciting and interesting experience and once there, the work and social events were fulfilling and enriching. I made good use of a map that I had acquired and carefully recorded directions and landmarks of note.

Why am I writing about a trip to Serbia? When one is about to embark upon a journey, there is a lot of preparation that needs to be done in advance. From choosing a destination to making travel arrangements and packing what you will need including a map or directions, it is a process that requires some thought and planning. The journey itself takes time and the final destination is not always exactly as we had imagined it to be.

Introduction

Setting about to change the atmosphere of a classroom or school is analogous to making a journey. We need to think about the following questions:

Where do we want to be?

Where are we now?

Where are we going?

What will we need?

What do we do when...?

How do we measure success?

As Ursula LeGuin says “it is the journey that matters in the end”; this is true of this journey of transformation. It **is** the journey that will change the atmosphere in your school. A simple task such as clearly articulating your school vision will start the transformation process.

Sadly, in many schools teachers and administrators are so overwhelmed with day-to-day administrative tasks, dealing with misbehavior and conflict and coping with ever-decreasing support that the idea of strategically plotting out a journey to transform the atmosphere of the school seems like a daunting task.

One of the principal goals of this workshop is to make the planning seem effortless and absolutely essential in order to significantly reduce discipline problems.

Transformation takes time. There is no set formula, recipe or cookie-cutter approach. Each school’s journey is unique. In some schools, a major change in the school atmosphere occurs quickly; in others it may take several years.

The good news is that once this transformation does occur, there is no looking back. The positive atmosphere that evolves will serve to sustain the momentum that has been generated. Parents, students, teachers and the school administrative team will all enjoy the benefits of this change. Teachers will have more time to teach and administrators will have the luxury of devoting more time being proactive.

In this resource handbook, you will find some essentials to pack for the journey.

A COVENANT FOR HONOURING CHILDREN

by Raffi¹

**We find these joys to be self evident:
That all children are created whole, endowed with innate
intelligence, with dignity and wonder, worthy of respect.**

**The embodiment of life, liberty and happiness,
children are original blessings,
here to learn their own song.**

**Every girl and boy is entitled
to love, to dream and belong to a loving "village."
And to pursue a life of purpose.**

**We affirm our duty
to nourish and nurture the young,
to honour their caring ideals as the heart of being human.**

**To recognize the early years as the foundation of life,
and to cherish the contribution of young children
to human evolution.**

**We commit ourselves to peaceful ways
and vow to keep from harm or neglect
these, our most vulnerable citizens.**

**As guardians of their prosperity
we honour the bountiful Earth
whose diversity sustains us.**

**Thus we pledge our love
for generations to come.**

¹ - <http://www.raffinews.com/ABOUT/advocacy.html>

Section One: Where Do We Want to Be?



Introduction

When I was principal of an elementary school several years ago, we were mandated to develop a three-year, site-based school plan. We were given clear and detailed directions to follow and it took months before we even started to put some of our ideas on paper. By the end of this rigidly prescribed process we had lost our enthusiasm and we were discouraged.

Now, I look back upon this experience and realize that part of the problem was that we were involved in someone else's process. We did not start with a desire or a passion. We were told what we had to do, how to do it and we were given a limited time in which to accomplish it.

Educators who have a desire to make a substantial change in the atmosphere of their school should have the freedom to set their own course for this journey. Of course, having a toolbox of ideas, strategies, resources and guides may make the journey easier. This workshop is simply one of those tools. When you leave here at the end of the day, you will have the freedom to decide which, if any, of the ideas and suggestions presented will work in your context. What you will take away with you is a framework for your planning and decision process.

A culture of peace will be achieved when the citizens of the world understand global problems; have the skills to resolve conflict constructively; know and live by international standards of human rights, gender and racial equality; appreciate cultural diversity; and respect the integrity of the earth. Such learning cannot be achieved without intentional, sustained and systematic education for peace.

Hague Appeal for Peace, 2000

Section One: Where Do We Want to Be?

Develop a Vision

I have a favorite activity that I have conducted with educators, parents and students in many parts of the world. Entitled "Imagine," it will provide a beginning point to help arrive at a common vision.

The results are usually quite a revelation. The outcome is a logical next step to articulation of your school vision.

Imagine

Imagine that you are a member of the staff of Shangra La School. Its reputation is so positive that visitors come from far and near to see for themselves what makes your school so unique.

Your school principal is inundated with requests from parents seeking special permission to enroll their children in your school.

Recently Barbara Walters interviewed your principal.

A feature article is being written about your school for TIME Magazine. When the reporter comes to Shangra La School, what will she see...hear...feel?

What are the characteristics that make Shangra La so unique?

Section One: Where Do We Want to Be?

In simple phrases or words, please record your thoughts:

[illegible]

Section One: Where Do We Want to Be?

Now that you have put your thoughts about Shangra La School on paper, here are two questions for you to answer for yourself:

- 1. When you were describing Shangra La School, were you describing your own school?**
- 2. If not...why not? (What stands in the way of creating a Shangra La type atmosphere?)**

It has been my experience that the overwhelming majority of responses are related to attitude, priorities and values rather than anything that can be bought. If this is the conclusion of your group it will certainly create a positive and optimistic tone for further discussions.

Respectful communication, friendly conversations, student work on display, recognition and celebration of achievements, smiles and laughter, students helping one another, proactive discipline strategies... none of the characteristics of Shangra La can be ordered through a catalogue!

**Don't worry that children never listen to you.
Worry that they are always watching you.**

Robert Fulgham

If you plan to conduct "Imagine" with your colleagues, I suggest that you divide the staff into small groups. Give each group chart paper and a marker to record its responses. Once the groups are finished, ask a representative from each group to share its ideas with the larger group.

This will be an illuminating moment as your colleagues realize that what they have listed is achievable even in regions and countries where the local school is a room with nothing but chairs in it.

Next, identify the recurring themes or ideas. For instance, if the word respect comes up in each of the charts, obviously respect is important to the majority of staff members.

Repeat the "Imagine" activity with parents and students. You may be pleasantly surprised with the results. From the responses, you will have enough data to begin drafting a vision statement.

Section One: Where Do We Want to Be?

Stone Soup

Here is another activity you can use in the process of developing a vision for your school.

(You will need to provide one vegetable shape for each participant. You will also need a pot!)

One way to help students and staff members appreciate that everyone can contribute to creating a respectful and cooperative school atmosphere is by conducting the following activity. It will demonstrate that collectively, all the “ingredients” for a safe and caring school are already present.

Read the following story to staff... students...

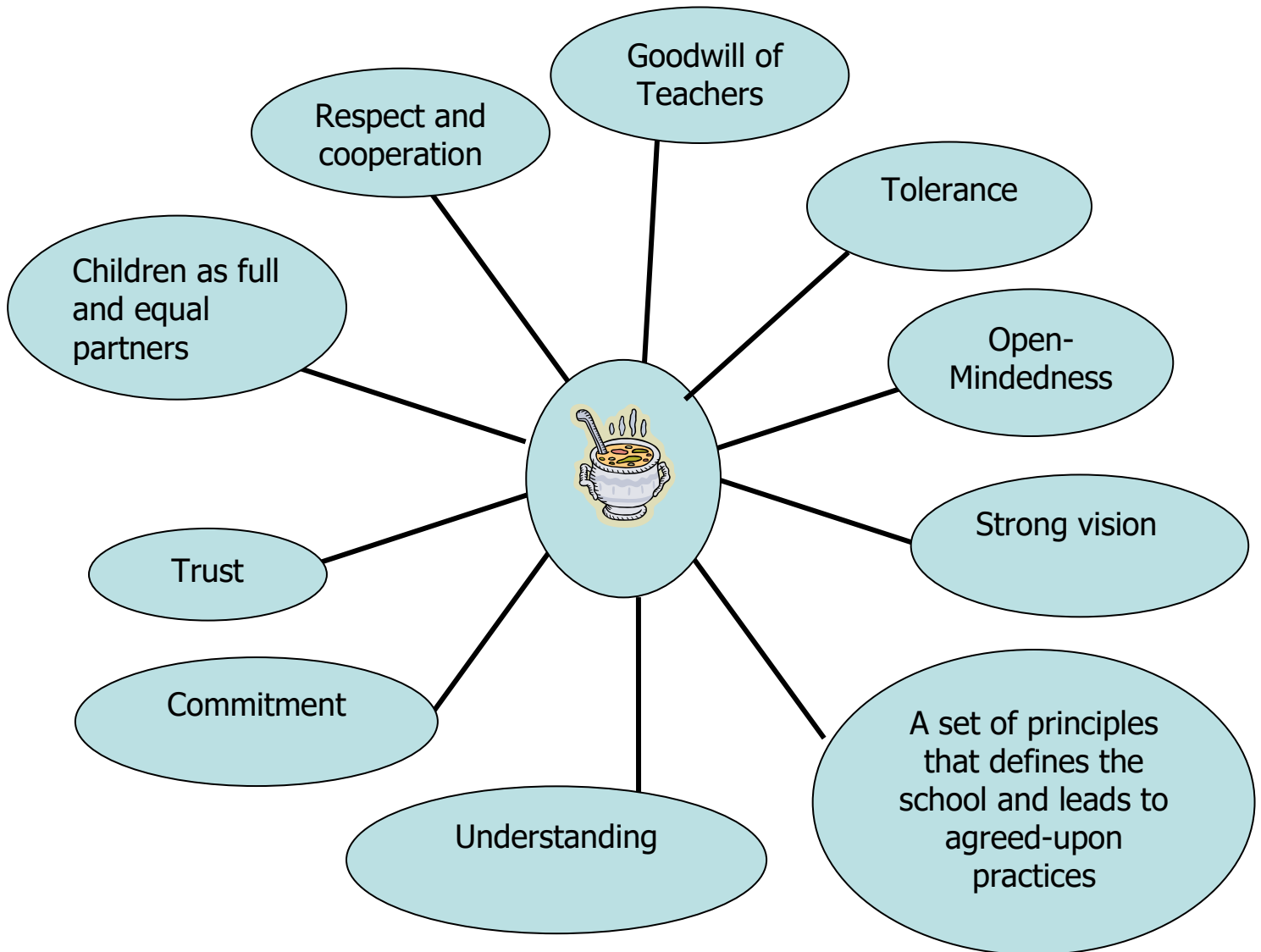
Stone Soup

A hungry and homeless traveler went from door to door in a village looking for food. Again and again he was turned down until finally he met one villager who offered him a pot and some water. The traveler gratefully accepted the water and pot and announced that he was going to make stone soup. After lighting a fire, several villagers gathered around, curious about what he was doing. The traveler placed his “magic stone” in the boiling water and announced that he was making stone soup. The traveler explained that although the soup would be tasty, it could be improved if he added an onion or a potato. One by one, the villagers added ingredients to the pot until it had become a delicious soup, enough to feed the entire village.

As you come to the part about the villagers contributing vegetables, pass out pre-cut vegetable shapes. Then ask each participant to write on the paper shape one thing that, to him or her, is essential in creating a positive school atmosphere. Carry the pot around the room and gather up the “vegetables”.

As you pull them out one by one read each aloud and later make a display for all to see and enjoy.

Stone Soup: One Example



(Responses from teachers in Serbia.)

Section One: Where Do We Want to Be?

Articulate Your Vision

I make a habit of doing an informal appraisal of each school I visit. Not an assessment of how many computers are available or whether the gymnasium has adequate equipment but rather an assessment of the school atmosphere.

One of the things I usually look for is a vision statement. Just as I feel reassured to know that the pilot of my airplane has a good knowledge of how to reach our destination, a school should have a clearly expressed statement of its foremost values and priorities.

A vision statement looks to the future and describes an ideal to be achieved. The following examples of school vision statements speak volumes about the schools' priorities:

We envision a school that is a safe and caring place where all are welcomed and valued.

We will create a school where tolerance exists and non-violence is stressed and problem solving along with peaceful activities are encouraged.

We will create a safe world where respect dominates and where rules are sensible.

Our vision is to give students an appreciation for learning, to have a positive influence on their lives, to teach the basic skills for living in our world and to instill positive values.

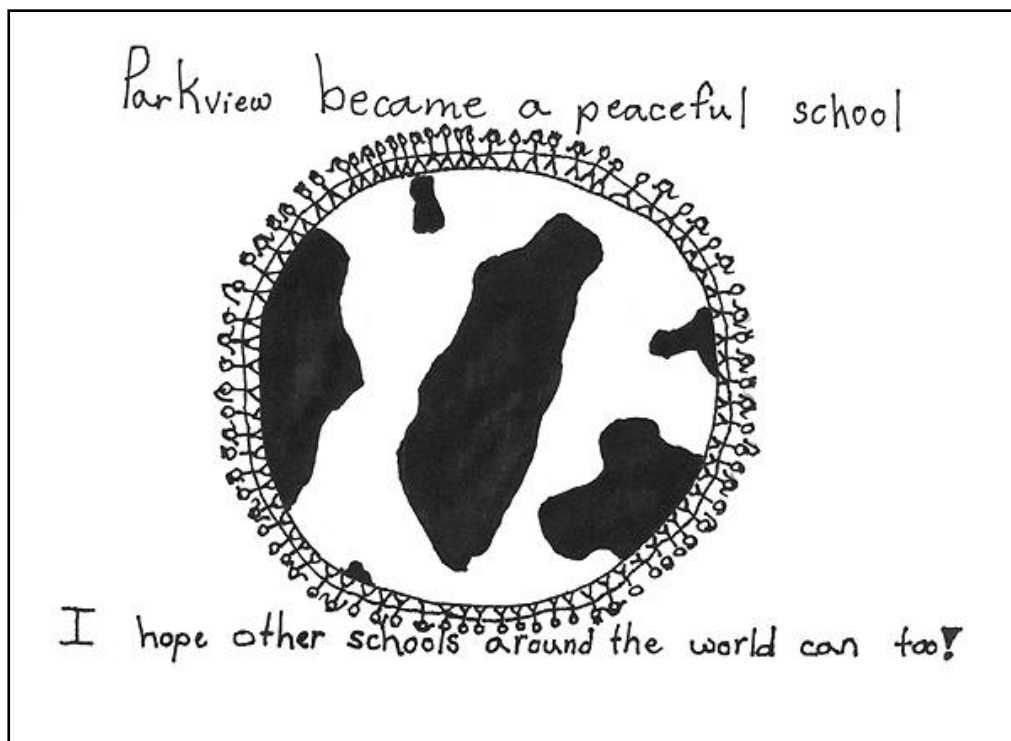
A school vision statement may begin with:

- We envision a school that is...
- Our school will be known for...
- We will encourage the...
- We will be a school of...
- Our school will instill...
- We will clearly communicate...

Section One: Where Do We Want to Be?

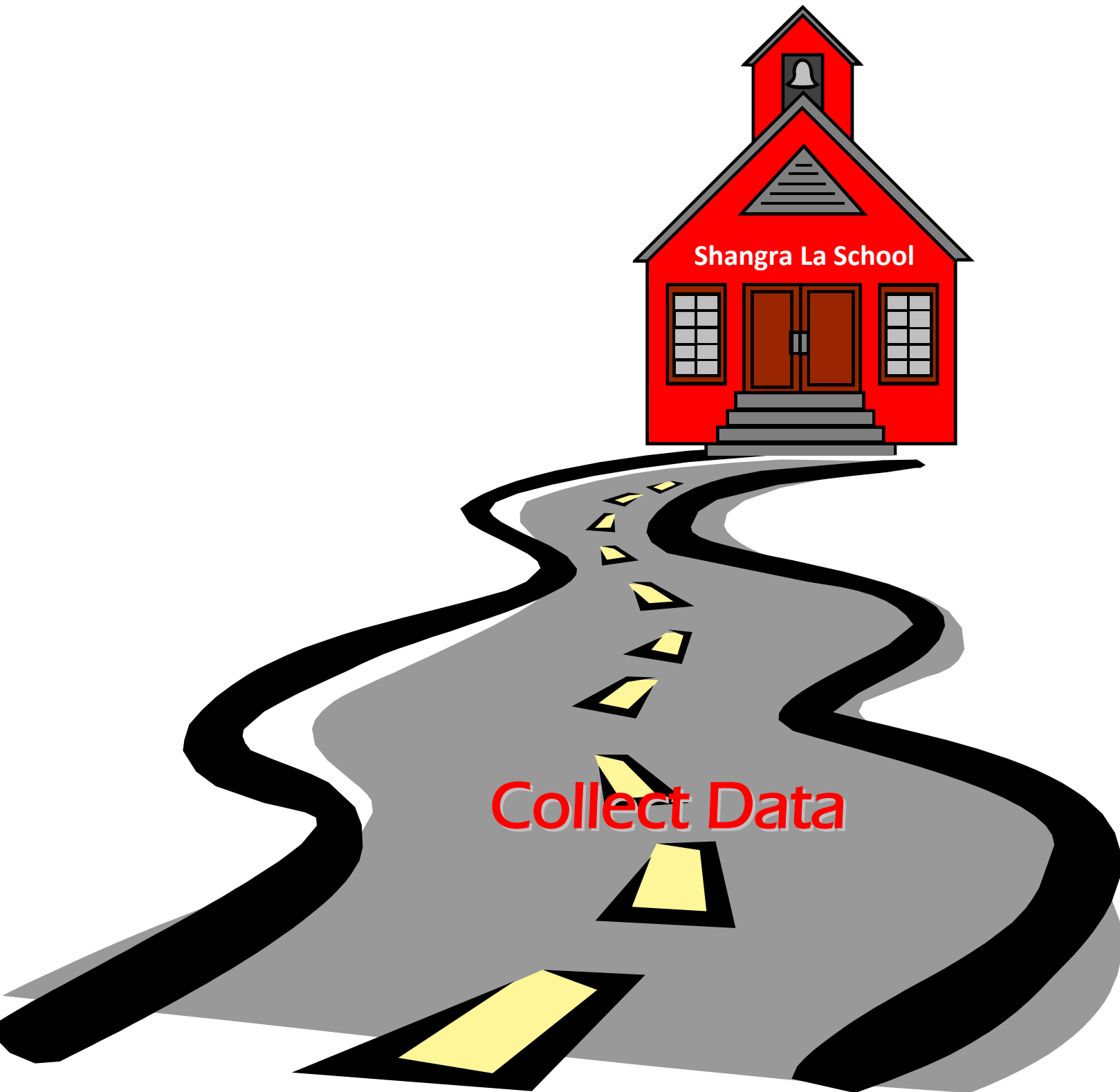
The vision statement is usually one to three sentences in length. It should be concise in concept and easily learned and remembered by all.

Your question at this point may be: How do we articulate our school vision? Begin by using the words you drafted in the Shangra La activity. Then try to combine, into a few sentences, those which best express what you would like your school to be known for. Next you should “test” your vision statement on friends and family to ensure that it is clear, easily understood and attainable. An impossible vision will be an impediment to progress.



by Samantha Radley, Grade 4, Parkview Public School, Komoka, Ontario

Section Two: Where Are We Now?



Introduction

Schools today are different from those in the “good old days.” In this section, when we examine the question: “Where we are now?” we will be looking at the atmosphere of the school, not the academic standing. Academically, we know what we want and how to get there. Each year we develop new curricula and evaluation strategies. Our textbooks and guides are in a constant state of change.

Where many schools struggle is in finding ways to adjust to changing family and societal structures and values. When we discuss the need to teach our youth to “live well together” it is, in part, in response to the disturbing changes in our society.

It may be helpful to bear in mind the following statistics when entering into a discussion of where we are now.²

- The average youth in Canada watches twenty five hours of television per week and plays computer games an additional seven hours per week.
- 54% of youth have a TV in their bedrooms.
- 88% of television time is unsupervised.
- Time per week that parents spend in meaningful conversation with their children: 38.5 minutes
- Number of violent acts seen on TV by age 18: 200,000

We do not need studies and statistics to identify the impact this lifestyle will have on many of our youth. In our schools, it is important to be mindful of the lives of our students outside of the safety of the school walls.

Parents are sending us the best kids they’ve got. They
are not keeping the good ones at home.

Larry Lezotte

² - Parents Television Council www.parentstv.org and TV Turnoff Network www.tvturnoff.org

Collecting Data

Now that you know where you would like to be, you will need to make an assessment of where you are. There are many and varied ways in which to make an assessment of the current atmosphere of your school. You can conduct surveys, develop questionnaires or even ask an independent, outside expert for assistance.

In the pages that follow, I will offer a few ideas to help answer the question:
Where are we now?

- Three Key Questions
- What Helpful Resources Do We Have?
- A Sample Checklist to Determine the School Atmosphere
- Gather Data Through Surveys

Three Key Questions

1. What are we currently doing to create an atmosphere of cooperation and respect in our school?
2. What else could we be doing to create such an atmosphere?
3. What are the barriers to implementation of these ideas?

What Helpful Resources Do We Have?

In addition to responding to the above questions, make an inventory of all of the resources that are currently in your school. If your school is a typical one, teachers have books and videos in their classrooms, the library has professional material tucked away in an obscure corner and the principal's office contains a wealth of books, binders and kits.

As well, teachers often have knowledge of motivating speakers, parents who are willing to make presentations and local businesses that have made donations and are otherwise involved in promoting a school of they are proud.

Tap into all of these resources! Make an inventory of what is already available in your school that will enhance its atmosphere.

Each staff member should complete an inventory of the resources in her/his classroom and recommend others.



Section Two: Where Are We Now?

Resources

Name: _____

Professional Books

Videos

Commercial Programs

Speakers/Workshop Leaders

Other

A Sample Checklist to Determine the School Atmosphere

1. Would an outsider get the impression that this is a safe and caring school?
2. Does the school have a clear vision?
3. Does the school have a written discipline policy?
4. Are parents and students made aware of its content?
5. Is discipline consistent?
6. Are discipline issues recorded?
7. Are parents made aware of discipline problems?
8. How are conflicts resolved?
9. Are students recognized for positive behavior?
10. Do posters reflect an appreciation of diversity?
11. Is the entrance of the school welcoming?
12. Is student work displayed?
13. Are visitors made to feel welcome?
14. Do staff members demonstrate respect for students?
15. Do students demonstrate respect for staff?
16. Is the administrative staff visible?
17. Is there a variety of extra-curricular activities available for students?
18. Are students encouraged to engage in community service projects?
19. Do students look busy and happy?
20. Would you want your own children to attend this school?
21. Are you happy here?

Gather Data through Surveys

Survey students, staff and parents to gather data regarding their feelings and beliefs about the discipline concerns and the atmosphere of your school. There are many surveys available in books and on-line. Some schools develop their own surveys. The following questions may be helpful if you choose to do so.

For Students

- Do you feel safe in school?
- Do you enjoy coming to school?
- Do you feel comfortable reporting problems to your teacher?
- Have you witnessed violence in our school?
- Have you been the victim of violence in our school?
- Do you feel safe on the playground?

For Teachers

- Do you feel that our school provides a caring and safe environment for students?
- Are you concerned about the number of discipline problems in your classroom?
- Are parents generally supportive?
- Are your colleagues supportive?
- Are behavior expectations clear?
- Is there consistency in responding to misbehavior?

For Parents

- Does your child feel safe in school?
- Do you understand the school's discipline policy?
- Does your child learn conflict prevention and resolution strategies?
- Is your child's school a caring school?
- Do you feel welcome at your child's school?
- Do you have opportunities to be involved at your child's school?

By devising questions that require "yes" or "no" responses, collating and graphing the results is easy.

Assessment Toolkit for Bullying, Harassment and Peer Relations at School.

With funding from the National Crime Prevention Centre, the Canadian Public Health Association has developed an **Assessment Toolkit for Bullying, Harassment and Peer Relations at School.**

This comprehensive resource contains:

- Safe School Surveys for students; teachers and school staff; parents and administrators
- Tracking forms
- Excel data entry files
- Consent forms
- Instructions for survey administration

This excellent resource is available at:

http://www.cpha.ca/antibullying/english/backinfo/Assessment_Toolkit.pdf

Section Three: Where Are We Going?



Section Three: Where Are We Going?

Introduction

You now have a vision and an awareness of the current status of your school. To use the journey metaphor – you know the destination and have an awareness of the roadblocks, detours and shortcuts. Now you need a plan or a roadmap.

There are innumerable ways of devising a plan. The best approach is to keep the process simple and straightforward and make the plan clear and achievable.

One mistake that we often make is to be overly ambitious and try to change everything all at once. A more effective way of proceeding is to focus on a few key goals each year. If we are struggling with a major problem, perhaps focusing on developing a solution for it would be enough for one year.

When I became principal of an elementary school, I soon recognized that play fighting was a major source of conflict, teacher frustration and parent annoyance. For years, the staff had been trying to eliminate it, but to no avail. We discussed the problem at a staff meeting and decided that the elimination of play fighting would be a discipline goal for the year.

Together with students, we decided on a definition of play fighting and appropriate consequences. We also took the time and effort to teach our students alternatives to play fighting. We taught them to play marbles, skipping games and other active outdoor games and activities.

Throughout the school year we were vigilant, consistent and fair in dealing with incidents of play fighting. We agreed on language that we would all use and we followed our own guidelines with consistency.

The day that I realized that we had made progress occurred late in the autumn. A new girl had arrived at our school. One day she was sent in to see me because she had been play fighting on the playground. As she sat waiting for me to finish a phone call, two of her classmates walked by and asked why she was sitting outside my office. She explained that she was “in trouble” for play fighting.

The response of one of these third graders was quite revealing. “Well... you know... Ms. van Gorp is going to explain to you that play fighting is unacceptable in our school.”

I smiled as I sent her on her way knowing that we had indeed made great progress.

Section Three: Where Are We Going?

Make a Plan

Once you collect the results of the assessment tool(s) you decide to use, you will begin to see a few major themes emerge. Just as we decided to focus on play fighting, you may find that the majority of respondents to the assessment tools cite inappropriate language as one of the major roadblocks to creating a respectful school atmosphere. Select a reasonable number of target behaviors that you wish to work on for the year. Remember to keep it simple and manageable.

The following questions may be helpful in getting started:

1. Who are the key potential leaders for an initiative to enhance the atmosphere of your school?
2. Who makes up the support base for such an initiative? Consider staff, students, parents, board and district personnel, police liaison officers, health care workers and others in the school community.
3. Will there be “resisters” to the concept or plan or its implementation? Anticipate the basis of such resistance and how you might deal with it.
4. What events or discussions of the past can be framed as starting points from which to move forward?

Section Three: Where Are We Going?

Set Goals

You may find it helpful to use a template to describe your goal(s). Use one template for each goal.

Year _____

School Goal 1

What will this look like when we get where we want to be? (Results)

What actions will help us achieve the desired results?

What evidence will describe our progress? (Measurable outcomes)

Sample Discipline Policies

Some School Districts mandate that all schools within their jurisdiction must have a discipline policy. Some have a District-wide Discipline Policy and schools are encouraged to model their rules in the spirit of the overall policy. It is a good thing when the policy of your District is philosophically in line with that of your school.

A discipline policy can take many forms. I have seen some that are one page long and others that are voluminous. Some are strict and restrictive and others are proactive and flexible.

If we agree that discipline is fundamentally about developing self-control and fostering a respectful and cooperative behavior, then this belief should be reflected in the discipline policy.

A discipline policy that consists basically of a list of things one cannot do and another list of what will happen to you if you do these things, imposes a serious limit on using good judgment after taking into account any mitigating factors. A student who strikes a classmate in a premeditated and malicious manner should be treated differently from a student who strikes a classmate in frustration after being bullied.

In the following pages, you will find two school discipline policies and excerpts from a District-wide “Safe, Secure and Healthy Schools Policy.” I believe that they speak for themselves.



Section Three: Where Are We Going?

Terence Bay Elementary School Discipline Policy “A Way of Being”

Mission Statement

It is our mission to provide a peaceful, stimulating, safe community where the joy of learning is celebrated and shared by all. All who enter are treated with respect, valued for their uniqueness, celebrated for their accomplishments, guided towards their potential, prepared to meet the challenges of the future.

Introduction

It is our goal to maximize the potential of each individual in a positive, constructive manner. The inviting atmosphere within our school encourages involvement and support from the community, fostering responsible individuals with a strong sense of values toward self, others and the environment. The warm, caring relationships between students and staff ensure a respect for each other and a love of learning. Encouragement and praise are used daily to help each school member achieve the highest standards in all that they do. The courteous, cooperative manner which is encouraged in all aspects of school life have become a “Way of Being” in Terence Bay, allowing each individual’s voice to be heard, ultimately enhancing the learning that takes place.

Our Discipline Beliefs

In Terence Bay We Believe...

Respect is a reflection of a value system where individuals express dignity, honesty, self-esteem and consideration for self, others and the environment that we all share.

Rules are a commonly agreed upon set of expectations which provide an environment which is peaceful and respectful to all.

Punishments are behaviors towards others with the purpose of controlling, belittling or causing pain for wrongdoings. In Terence Bay School we do not value, practice or condone the use of punishment.

Consistency is the act of keeping to the same common understanding, while applying the established code of behavior.

Consequences are the logical result of behaviors.

Section Three: Where Are We Going?

Discipline, which is developed throughout life, enables one to govern one's behavior in all situations.

Responsible behavior is a way of acting in a committed, mature, trustworthy fashion, which reflects awareness of expectations and the consequences associated with one's actions.

Proactive Measures

We in Terence Bay believe and have found that student behavior problems will be infrequent, as individuals know daily that they are loved, respected and aware of expectations. We celebrate success daily, report on positive accomplishments and use effective and affective praise. Also, involvement of the children in establishing classroom behavior guidelines based on self-esteem and mutual respect is an essential element. Thus, limited time and effort should be needed in corrective action.

Our expectations of behavior are that we are courteous, considerate, respectful, thoughtful, responsible and respectful of school guidelines in place in our classrooms, school and playground areas. Most members of the school community at all times assume responsibility for actions and show appropriate behavior and healthy, positive attitudes.

We are consistently encouraging behaviors and ways of being that:

- Increase the potential for students to achieve in school;
- Promote good will and harmony among all members of the school community;
- Increase the potential for the student to be an active, contributing member of society;
- Foster a peaceful, inviting environment.

Our Terence Bay community has pro-actively valued, respected and celebrated all members through:

- Positive greetings to all who visit
- Joint newsletters featuring children's work
- Workshops
- Communicating expectations to parents
- 1-2-3- Magic
- Home and School Association
- Peer helper training
- Code of Behavior – posted, reviewed, updated
- Monthly self-esteem focus

Section Three: Where Are We Going?

- Safety promotion and procedures
- “Second Step”
- Positive language and procedures
- Celebrity lunches
- Supporting each other consistently
- Valuing others – seniors as guests
- Students as patrollers
- Responsibilities for children
- Co-op discipline workshop
- Peace tables
- Peer mediation
- Peaceful objectives
- Welcoming atmosphere
- Prominent displays of children’s work
- Many books created by children in library
- Calendars and cards promoting children’s work



Students in Serbia contribute ideas for developing a school discipline policy.

Bel Ayr Elementary School

Discipline Policy

Mission Statement

Bel Ayr Elementary School is an involved, caring community dedicated to developing the full potential of all students academically, socially and emotionally by providing dynamic and diverse educational opportunities in a safe, nurturing and positive environment.

Philosophy of Discipline

Discipline is an educational process that develops and promotes the growth of students' self-control, encourages and reinforces responsible behavior. Discipline involves reasonable rules, logical consequences and consistent application of these rules and consequences.

Beliefs

1. Discipline encourages positive choices, cooperation and proper ownership of problems.
2. Discipline offers the opportunity to grow in responsibility, providing students with logical consequences for their mistakes.
3. Discipline is a shared responsibility involving students, teachers, parents, guardians and community.
4. Discipline must be fair, equitable and yet flexible without undermining the credibility of the policy.

Student Expectations and Responsibilities

It is expected that:

1. **Students will be safe at Bel Ayr and when traveling to and from school.**
It is the student's responsibility not to tease, threaten or physically harm anyone (adults and peers) at school or en route to and from school.
2. **A quality education will be provided for the students at Bel Ayr free from bias, prejudice and intolerance.**

Section Three: Where Are We Going?

Students have the responsibility to pay attention to instruction, work cooperatively, complete assignments and follow established classroom guidelines.

3. Students will be treated with respect and courtesy by peers and adults.

Students have the responsibility to treat all adults and peers with respect and courtesy, remembering not to name-call, be verbally abusive or use inappropriate language.

4. Students will be able to express their point of view in an appropriate place and time.

Students have the responsibility not to talk, interrupt, shout or make loud noises when others are speaking and/or working.

5. Students will have a school environment free from litter, graffiti and defaced school property.

Students have the responsibility to respect school property by not littering or defacing property.

Code of Behavior

Appropriate Behaviors:

Prepared for class (homework completed, materials ready, etc.)

- Respect all staff, guests, fellow students and the school
- Demonstrate "I Care" language
- Practice "Peacemaking" skills
- Promote a spirit of cooperation and excellence
- Respect individual classroom and school rules
- Walk quietly in halls and classrooms

Appropriate Behaviors May Lead to Any of These Consequences:

- Smile or handshake
- Positive comment, verbal or written
- Glad note or positive phone call home
- An atmosphere that promotes self-esteem
- Appropriate role modeling

Inappropriate Behaviors:

Section Three: Where Are We Going?

- Disruption in class
- Saucy, inappropriate remarks
- Profane language
- Bullying, name calling, pushing or rough play
- Defacement of school or personal property
- Racial slurs (racist behavior)

Inappropriate Behaviors May Lead to Any of These Consequences:

- Mediation (by peers, teacher or principal)
- Consultation with parents
- Time out
- Detention
- Warning letter
- Suspension (following proper procedures)
- Clean, repair and/or replace damaged property

A Parent's Code of Ethics

I will establish a direct and personal contact with my child's school by visiting it and getting first-hand knowledge of its teaching activities and facilities.

I will demonstrate constructive attitudes towards school and its programs by supporting and cooperating with the teaching staff and the school board to the fullest extent.

I will make no criticism of the school without ensuring that I have accurate and first-hand information.

I will encourage a positive attitude on the part of my child and will refrain from criticism of the teachers or school in her/his presence.

I will expect nothing for myself or for my child that is contrary to the interests of the entire school.

I will accept my share of the responsibility for the partnership between home and school in the education of my child.

I will cooperate with the school in developing and protecting the health and character of children.

Safe, Secure and Healthy Schools Policy³

General Principles

- It is the right of all students and staff to learn, teach, work and interact in a safe, secure and healthy environment free from any form of violence, intimidation, threat, abuse, mistreatment or confirmed environmental issue.
- The Board is committed to supporting each school's efforts to create and sustain a safe, secure and healthy environment for learning and teaching.
- Notwithstanding the responsibility of the Board and Staff, it is expected that parents, guardians and students will share responsibility for creating schools that are safe, secure and healthy environments for learning and teaching.

Safe Schools

- Every reasonable effort will be made to protect staff and students from intimidation of any kind, inappropriate social pressure, physical violence or threat.
- Schools will ensure proper collection, tracking and reporting of student data pertaining to incidents of violence, physical threat, acts of racism or sexual misconduct.
- Schools will develop a School Code of Behaviour/Conduct consistent with the Provincial Discipline Policy established by the Minister. It will reflect a proactive and sustained approach toward student discipline. Number and duration of suspensions will be reported monthly.
- Students and staff will learn and practice methods to resolve conflicts in a peaceful and respectful manner.

Secure Schools

- Principals will make every reasonable effort to create and maintain a supportive relationship with appropriate community agencies for the purpose of addressing student needs relating to secure learning environments.

³ - Excerpts from the Halifax Regional School Board "Safe, Secure and Healthy Schools Policy"

Section Four: What Will We Need?



Section Four: What Will We Need?

Introduction

It takes a village to raise a child.

African proverb

In addition to a sense of optimism, a collaborative approach and consistency, there is also a need for ideas and strategies in order to move forward in a positive and cohesive manner.

In order to help students become more caring and respectful of others we need to teach and model the kind of behavior we desire. It will not happen by magic nor will it transpire simply because we have stated it as a goal.

Years ago when I advocated the need to teach and model ways of living well together, every now and then someone would raise the question of whether this was really the role of schools. Over the past decade I have developed my own theory as to why we do need to teach these attitudes, skills and knowledge.

In years gone by, the proverbial village existed for most children. We had concentric circles of responsible adults who helped us develop values, respectful behavior and empathy for others. In my own neighborhood, Sam, the corner grocer knew all six children in my family by name and he also knew when we were expected to be home for bedtime. He did not hesitate to send us on our way if necessary. There were senior citizens on our street who used to engage us in conversation. We and our neighbors attended church and we spent as much time in the homes of our neighbors as in our own home.

When my own boys were young, none of these positive influences existed in our neighborhood. Corner grocers no longer exist, senior citizens tend to avoid engaging in conversations with youth, especially teens. Where I live, churches are mostly empty and neighbors mind their own business. The village has all but disappeared. Schools are it! For most children and youth, school is the one remaining stable influence in their lives.

Perhaps that is reason enough to change the priorities of what we teach in our schools. In addition to teaching the subjects some deem to be essential to the full education of our youth, we also need to teach our youth to live well together and to resolve conflict peacefully.

Section Four: What Will We Need?

Marian Wright Edelman's words are a testimony to the status of many of North America's children.

Never have we exposed children so early and relentlessly to cultural messages glamorizing violence, sex, possessions, alcohol and tobacco with so few mediating influences from responsible adults. Never have we experienced such a numbing and reckless reliance on violence to solve problems, feel powerful, or be entertained. Never have so many children been permitted to rely on guns and gangs rather than parents, neighbors and religious congregations and schools for protection and guidance. Never have we pushed so many children on to the tumultuous sea of life without the life vests of nurturing families and communities, caring schools, challenged minds, job prospects and hope.

Creating a Positive Atmosphere: A Proactive Approach

If we wish to create a positive climate in our classrooms and schools we need to find ways of incorporating lessons in cooperation, respect, effective communication, appreciation of diversity, and conflict resolution into the curriculum of the school.

Schools that have declared a commitment to accomplishing this goal have creatively developed a number of ways in which to achieve it. Some teach these lessons explicitly just as we teach math and science. In some schools, assemblies focus on these life lessons. In other schools these lessons are infused into the standard curriculum.

How it is done is not as important as that it is done!

In the following pages, I will offer a variety of suggestions for ways in which to teach your students to work and play together in an atmosphere of mutual cooperation and respect. The ideas are adapted from some of the schools I have had the privilege of visiting over the past decade.

The following section is divided into two parts. The first offers suggested classroom lessons and the second describes school-wide initiatives that are simple, and require little or no financial resources. In my work with schools in dire economic circumstances, I have learned that it is paramount to suggest ideas that can be achieved without spending much money.

Classroom Lessons

There are many and varied programs, manuals and kits currently available commercially that will help develop cooperation and respect and reduce discipline problems. Since each school is unique, the programs used for creating a positive school atmosphere should be tailored to the context of the school community.

These lessons may be incorporated into already-existing curriculum areas, if appropriate. Another option is to introduce some of the strategies in the lessons as opportunities present themselves.

Whatever the approach, eventually the concepts and strategies that are inherent in these lessons will become part of daily life in the classroom and eventually the entire school.

There is an old saying:

Tell me and I'll forget.
Show me and I'll remember.
Involve me and I'll understand.

Students involved in a hands-on, exploratory approach through role-plays, music, drama and art seem to respond more actively, and as a result, they tend to remember better. In contrast, when people, both young and old, sit through too many lecture-style lessons, the messages are often soon forgotten.

School-Wide Initiatives

School-wide initiatives to promote cooperation and respect usually result in unexpected benefits to the entire school community. The involvement of parents and community members is crucial. When parents and community members spend time in our schools, they begin to understand and develop empathy for the many and varied challenges schools face.

In 2000, a film entitled *Waging Peace* aired on national television in Canada. This film documented the serious challenges faced in a troubled middle school in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. This school suffered from a very negative reputation in the community and it was regarded as a school to avoid.

After *Waging Peace* aired on television, people from across the country wrote letters of support, sent gifts and donations and parents became involved on a level greater than ever before. The school atmosphere started to change and the results were evident almost immediately. Several years later, it is an entirely different school.

Some of the key elements that contributed to the transformation of this school are:

- strong, visionary administrative leadership
- consistently applied consequences
- fair treatment of all students
- more extra-curricular activities
- introduction of peer mediation
- enhanced student leadership
- greater parent involvement
- professional development for staff

School-Wide Themes

Section Four: What Will We Need?

When all teachers in all classrooms including the gym, music room, art room, hallways and office area are focused on a particular theme or concept, the effect can be powerful and long-lasting. Many teachers develop classroom lessons around monthly themes. From apples to space, teachers come up with innovative ways to ensure that students are immersed in an academic topic or concept.

Why not use this vehicle for promoting the concepts of respect and cooperation? If the entire school looks and sounds like respect, students are more likely to internalize the significance of showing respect to others.

Based on your school's vision and goals, try to come up with a list of themes that would enhance the atmosphere of your school. If possible, tie the themes into special days or celebrations. For example, in December, to encourage students to think about others and promote community outreach projects, you may wish to declare that month as "Good Neighbors" month.

Here are some ideas:

September: Getting to Know You

October: Hands are for Helping

November: The Mediation Message

December: Good Neighbors

January: New Beginnings

February: Reach Out and Be a Friend

March: Together We Are Better

April: Make Every Day Earth Day

May: We Celebrate Our Differences

June: Reflections

Assemblies

Holding school-wide assemblies is an excellent way to disseminate messages that need to be heard by everyone in the school. If you are revealing a new policy about playground behavior or making a change in a policy or behavior expectations, then an assembly is an appropriate vehicle to do so. Don't forget to invite family members!

Assemblies build a sense of community and afford students an opportunity to practice being cooperative and respectful. If at first, your school assembly is unruly and noisy and disorderly, do not despair. Continue holding them on a regular basis and if you need to have a few assemblies just for the sake of practicing "assembly behavior" do it.

In my visits to schools, I find myself a guest at many assemblies. The countless innovative ideas and activities I have witnessed at these events are often aimed at enhancing the school atmosphere. I will describe a few of my favorites.

- **School Slide Show**

Take digital photos of students demonstrating kindness or cooperation. From these images create a Power Point presentation to show at an assembly. Enhance the presentation with music, John Lennon's song, "Imagine" for example.

- **Celebrate Positive Behavior**

Set aside a time during the assembly to recognize good behavior. Some schools pass out "Good News Ballots" or other such certificates showing students that their positive behavior is noticed and appreciated. In some schools, local business owners donate small prizes or treats and some even come in person to pass them out.

- **Share Talents**

Invite students to share stories or poetry. If you have decided to implement monthly themes, encourage students to focus their writing on the theme of the month.

Another idea is to set aside some time during the assembly for students to demonstrate their talents.

- **School Pledge**

Ask students to create a school pledge or oath. Start each assembly by repeating the pledge. One school I visited recited the following oath at each assembly.

Section Four: What Will We Need?

Additional School-Wide Ideas

- Announce a thought for the week every Monday.
- Hang a large piece of mural paper on the wall in a corridor. Ask students to create an ABC of friendly words.
- Make paper bricks and invite students to write an ending for the sentence: “A safe and caring school is...” try to fill an entire wall in a corridor with the paper bricks.
- Make a school peace quilt.
- Designate and celebrate special days and/or weeks – for example:
 - Gossip Free Day (3rd Friday in October)
 - Manners Matter Week
 - Gratitude Day
 - International Day of Peace (3rd Tuesday in September)
- In the library, set aside a special section of books that promote positive behavior.
- Organize a monthly display of artwork that depicts specified themes such as cooperation, sharing, understanding, etc.
- Ask classes to write short drama presentations that demonstrate making good choices. Present one at each assembly.

Friendship Chain - Each teacher can do this activity with his or her class and then all the links can be joined together. Ask the children how they can show kindness to others. Record their responses on the board.

(Examples: Introduce yourself to someone you do not know. Do something to help your teacher.) Then, tell them that you are going to make a “Friendship Chain,” and on each link you will print one idea for expressing friendship.

Over the following weeks, read a different link each day (over the school public address system, if you have one.) Ask students to make an effort to carry out the idea before the end of the day.

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Helping Hands Tree - Choose one of the children's good deeds to illustrate how the tree will be used. Ask the child to trace his or her hand on a piece of colored paper and cut it out. Then ask the child to write on the hand what he or she did, attach a piece of ribbon or yarn and hang the hand on the tree.

Leave a supply of materials near the tree and encourage children to make a Helping Hand whenever they have done a kind deed for someone.

As a variation, ask children to record acts of kindness they witness being carried out by their classmates.

**We have the right to be treated fairly,
with respect and trust.
We have the responsibility to respect our
peers and the staff and guests of our
school.**

**We have a right to a safe learning
environment, with participation for all.
We have the responsibility to maintain
our self-control and be responsible
for our actions.**

**We have the right to celebrate
our own cultures.
We have the responsibility to respect**

the cultures of others.

Section Four: What Will We Need?

Extra-Curricular Activities

Busy students are usually happy students. It has been my experience that most misbehavior and conflict occurs when students are bored or not occupied in a productive manner. There are several solutions to this problem.

Extra-Curricular Clubs

Enlisting the support of parent volunteers to run extra-curricular clubs is an excellent way to make them feel productively engaged in their children's school. In one of my former schools, we ran these clubs at lunchtime with very positive results.

Before you begin, I recommend that you develop a survey to send home to families. On the survey ask questions about willingness, availability and special interests and/or talents. Don't forget to include extended family members. I have found that many grandparents are quite happy to help out.

Once you have collected the responses, you can schedule the clubs based on availability of parent volunteers and then ask students to sign up for their club of choice. Some of the clubs we offered in our school were drawing, board games, dance, puppetry, quilting, making a newspaper and bicycle repair.

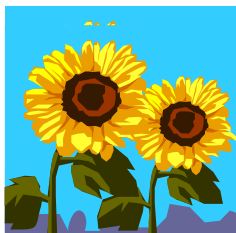
Playground Activity Leaders

Solicit student volunteers from the higher grades in your school. Ask the physical education teacher or another interested staff member to teach these students a variety of games and activities.

Then schedule these playground activity leaders to coordinate and monitor playground games. Perhaps they might introduce a new game or activity each week. It always surprises me how few active games most children know!



One School's Initiative: Sunflower Garden Program



The *Sunflower Garden Program* was developed by teachers Neilena Corra and Debby White at John MacNeil Elementary School in Nova Scotia, Canada. The program recognizes children who perform good deeds and use kind language – both examples of positive behavior – in the class room, on the school grounds and within the community. The good deeds are recorded on “sunflowers” – made with bright yellow construction paper – and displayed in the main hallways of the school. The program has had a profound impact on the overall school environment.

The sunflower was chosen for the following reasons:

- It represents strength and confidence
- It is highly visible
- It stands erect and proud
- It aims high with its head toward the sun
- Its colors represent all races
- It represents the sun's warming and growth
- Its seeds are plentiful and strong

On the playground, “*Sun Catchers*” (students in grade five and six) are watchful observers who record positive behaviors in the Sunflower Garden Book. The “*Sun Catchers*” are easy to recognize in their bright yellow hats.

The community is also encouraged to contact the school to tell of good deeds observed within the community.

An important aspect of this program involves monthly themes. Each grade level is assigned a month and each month one grade's artwork is displayed on the *Giving Tree*, a white birch that stands in the school foyer.

Here is a sample of monthly themes:

October: Junior elementary classes were matched with senior classes to make sunflowers out of beads. Photos of the students were glued into the centre of these flowers.

Section Four: What Will We Need?

- November: Mirror shapes reflected students' thoughts about friendship.
- February: Heart bracelets were made by the students and worn on Valentine's Day. These bracelets promoted a discussion on love of friends and family. Students were encouraged to use the opening statement, "I love it when ..." and to end the statement with a positive thought. After Valentine's Day, the bracelets were hung on the tree for the remainder of the month.
- March: The focus was on Wisdom Pouches. These are small bags made of green cotton and tied with ribbons. Inside each pouch, teachers placed a typewritten passage that contained words of wisdom. These pouches were hung on the Giving Tree. At the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, a student selected a pouch and read the message found inside over the public address system.
- April: Ribbon awards indicated ways in which students could help "Mother Earth." On Earth Day (April 22) students gathered in the foyer to read their messages to other classes.
- May: Baskets containing promises for carrying out good deeds for mothers were hung on the Giving Tree.
- June: This was seed planting month. All students were given milk cartons in which to plant their sunflower seeds. As well, seeds were planted around the school. In September, giant sunflowers greeted the children when they returned to school.



Section Five: What Do We Do When...?



Section Five: What Do We Do When...?

Introduction

We can spend all of our days teaching and modeling cooperative, respectful and caring behavior but we will still be faced with challenging behavior and conflict. What do we do then?

In this section we will look at several strategies for dealing with these challenges in a manner that leaves the dignity of all intact and transforms the problem behavior into a learning situation.

If you set the right example you won't need to worry about the rules.

In a school that has decided to take a proactive approach to reducing discipline problems, a good place to start is to come to a common understanding of what **discipline** means.

In the past, I used to hear the words discipline and punishment used synonymously. Currently, there is much discussion about the difference between discipline and punishment and, as a result, there is an increased awareness about the distinction.



Discipline versus Punishment

According to the New Oxford Dictionary:

Discipline is:
the practice of training people to obey rules or
a code of behavior.

Punishment is:
the infliction or imposition of a penalty for an
offence.

Another Comparison:

Discipline

Discipline is based on logical consequences.

Discipline opens options for the individual who can choose different behavior.

Discipline can be a teaching strategy. It emphasizes the development of more acceptable behavior.

Discipline usually results in a behavior change that is more acceptable and responsible.

Discipline develops capacity for self-evaluation of behavior.

Punishment

Punishment is often unrelated to the offending behavior.

Punishment close options for the punished.

Punishment is intended to control behavior.

Punishment may increase subversiveness or at best, produce compliance.

Punishment is imposed by an authority.

A Proactive Approach to Discipline

One of my favorite books is Teacher and Child by Dr. Haim Ginott. I find Dr. Ginott's thoughts about punishment and discipline particularly evocative.

Misbehavior and punishment are not opposites that cancel each other; on the contrary, they breed and reinforce each other. Punishment does not deter misconduct. It merely makes the offended more cautious in committing his crime, more adroit in concealing his traces, more skilful in escaping detection. When a child is punished, he resolves to be more careful, not more honest and responsible...

I am sure that many of us can recollect the times when we were punished. The punishment I received as a child inflicted great pain – both physical and emotional. It created resentment and bitterness. For me, this experience certainly confirms Dr. Ginott's viewpoint about the effects of punishment.

Delivering a punishment is simple, efficient and takes little imagination. In school, it often takes the form of a detention or suspension. The problem is, however, that it seldom makes a long-term change in an individual's behavior.

As Dr. Ginott goes on to say:

No child says to himself while he is being punished, "I am going to improve. I am going to be a better person – more responsible, generous and loving."

My favorite quote from Teacher and Child is:

The essence of discipline is finding effective alternatives to punishment.

Let us examine a practical application of this principle.

Alternatives to Punishment: A Practical Example

The Snowball Story

It was my first administrative position. Being mindful of my “newness” both in the school and as a vice-principal, I was doing my best to understand why policies had been developed and how they were being implemented.

At our first staff meeting, I learned that the school had a “one-size-fits-all” policy for responding to misbehavior. With pride, someone explained that this efficient time-out system was the umbrella under which all misbehavior was handled. From minor to fairly major offences, the offender was sent to the time-out room for a twenty-minute period on the day following the offence after eating lunch. There was a trail of paper work to be completed and teachers took turns being on duty in the time-out room.

As winter intensified, the principal and I found ourselves spending an inordinate amount of time “dealing with” snowball-throwing offences. According to school procedure, these offenders were sent to the time-out room to sit for twenty minutes. Yet, day after snowy day, the line-up of offenders trailed down the hallway... waiting to be processed.

For those of you who have snow in the winter, you will know that making and throwing snowballs is something that kids do. It’s fun and also a natural kid-like behavior. In and of itself it is not harmful. However, on a playground, students can get hurt and that is usually the reason behind the “no snowball throwing” policy.

I found myself becoming increasingly frustrated with the ineffectiveness of having to spend recess periods and lunch hours writing up time-out referrals – mostly to no avail.

I was ready to take a risk and at our February staff meeting I broached the subject of snowball throwing and the ineffectiveness of the system we had in place to counteract this misbehavior. I asked if anyone had a suggestion to alleviate this situation.

After a period of reflective thought, one teacher came up with a brilliant idea – and indeed, one that changed the school’s overall approach to discipline.

She suggested that we acquire several restaurant-size tin cans, punch a hole in the bottom through which we would hang a strong string. The cans would then be hung by string from tree branches on the periphery of the play area. We all agreed that this was a wonderful idea and immediately set it into practice.

Before tying the cans to trees, we called all of our students into the gymnasium. “We have changed our minds about snowballs,” we announced. “From now on, you have our

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permission to make and throw snowballs. However, you may only throw them at these cans. Now here are our safety rules.”

The problem was solved! We no longer had to spend each snowy day dealing with offenders. The students were thrilled, no one got injured and they were improving their eye-hand motor skills.

This was a major turning point for us. From this time forward, we did our best to come up with effective alternatives to punishment for chronically recurring misbehavior.

It took more time, required greater creativity and imagination but the results were positive and long-term.



Develop alternatives to punishment for the following:

Chronic lateness

Section Five: What Do We Do When...?

Graffiti on the washroom walls

Talking during class

Missing homework assignments

Other

The Emotional Bank Account

In his book, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey uses an *Emotional Bank Account* as a metaphor that describes the amount of trust and the feeling of safeness that has been built up in a relationship.

Section Five: What Do We Do When...?

If I make deposits into your *Emotional Bank Account* through showing or expressing kindness, courtesy, honesty and keeping my commitments, I build up a reserve. Your trust towards me becomes higher and communication between us becomes easy and effective.

But, if I have a habit of showing discourtesy, disrespect, overreacting, ignoring you, betraying your trust, eventually my bank account becomes overdrawn. The trust level gets low and I have to be very careful of everything I say.

An effective way to avoid potential discipline problems is to be proactive with students who challenge us on a daily basis. In most schools, there is a fairly small percentage of students who take up an excessive amount of our time.

In the same school where we solved the snowball problem, we also approached this challenge in the spirit of finding effective alternatives to punishment. Using Stephen Covey's model of the *Emotional Bank Account*, we created a plan to provide extra support to those students.

Early in the school year, each teacher identified three or four students who needed extra attention, care and support. Many of these students suffered from emotional problems, some of a severe nature. At a staff meeting, we compiled a master list and then each of us "adopted" three to four of these students, none of whom were in our class.

The idea was that we would go out of our way to make deposits in their *Emotional Bank Account*. This might mean greeting them at the bus stop, asking for their help with a bulletin board or simply asking a question such as, "How was your soccer game last evening?"

In this manner, we would develop a relationship of trust with these students and from time to time, we would have to call upon this trust.

Every day of our lives we make deposits in the memory banks of our children.

Charles Swindoll

Resolving Conflict

There is an ever-growing menu of structures and strategies that, when properly planned and implemented can make a world of difference in the amount of conflict that teachers and administrators will need to address. In fact, having worked in schools with effective Peer Mediation programs for approximately fifteen years, I would be reluctant to consider being a school administrator in a school without a Peer Mediation program,

As a principal, I could go for days without having to intervene in any capacity in student conflict. All staff members were trained and comfortable with making referrals. Even the school secretary attended the training and made referrals on a regular basis.

Peer Mediation was the problem solving method of choice in our school. It is by no means the only one! I suggest that you research these and other approaches to student centered conflict resolution and choose the method best suited to your own unique environment.

From the justice community we have borrowed and adapted the model of Restorative Justice which now encompasses several differently named models of dialogue aimed at offering the offender to take responsibility for his/her actions and to understand that he/she is being given an opportunity to make restitution for the offence.

We can learn from the First Nations people the advantages of **Talking Circles**. **Safe School Ambassadors®** are of great service in preventing potential conflict and **Peer Mediators** provide the school with a cadre of leaders who model positive problem solving. **Class Meetings** are an excellent vehicle for airing grievances in a respectful manner and the **Family Group Conference** is a first-rate means by which we can include families in sorting out difficulties.

In the pages that follow, I will briefly describe these programs and/or strategies as I have personally seen them work most successfully in schools throughout the world.

Talking Circles

In a Talking Circle, students learn to listen to one another and to respect the views of others. A topic, problem or issue should be the focus of each circle and comments are addressed to the topic at hand. Students give their own opinion and do not make comments about what someone else has said and the leader of the group facilitates in a non-judgemental manner.

In my own classroom, the person speaking held a talking stick. Students quickly learned that only the person holding the stick could speak and were enormously respectful of this process. Anyone is free to say "I pass," if he/she does not wish to speak.

Section Five: What Do We Do When...?

In an average classroom of 30 students, it is recommended that two circles be made - an outer and an inner circle. Students in the inner circle speak and those in the outer circle listen. Students take turns being in the inner circle.

Safe School Ambassadors©

I recently learned about the Safe School Ambassador training through a friend and colleague, Rick Lewis. Rick is a consultant with the Safe School Center of Palm Beach County, Florida. I had the privilege of observing Rick as he conducted a training session for a group of students in Serbia.

The Safe School Ambassador program was conceived and developed by *Community Matters* in California. It is an excellent intermediary step that students can use to intervene in situations of potential conflict. The description of the program as found on the Community Matters website explains the program succinctly:

What is Safe School Ambassadors?

Imagine a cadre of committed trained students who find hot spots and cool them off, who teach tolerance and model respect, who keep the school safe from the inside out.

They notice: isolated students, bullying, tension between groups

They act: reach out, intervene, negotiate

They support: refer, follow up, monitor

Students representing all parts of the student population receive training in critical skills like observation, communication, deflection, distraction, negotiation and referral.

Safe School Ambassadors is an ideal means to cut down on office referrals, mediations and will prevent potentially serious conflict.

For further information, please see www.community-matters.org

Peer Mediation

Section Five: What Do We Do When...?

The purpose of Peer Mediation is to help students understand conflict, deal with it in a positive way, develop good problem solving skills and accept responsibility for resolving their own conflicts.

Peer Mediation is a process in which a trained group of students help their peers resolve conflict. Peer Mediation is a voluntary process in which the disputants decide on their own solutions to the problem. It is a process that works on the concept of fairness rather than power and therefore the disputants feel that the solutions are fair.

Peer Mediation gives students an opportunity to resolve their differences in a neutral setting without adult authorities being involved. It is a viable alternative to adult involvement, adult decision-making, fighting, detention or suspension.

There are many advantages to establishing a Peer Mediation program. It:

- resolves peer disputes
- increases student participation
- develops leadership skills
- builds self-esteem
- improves communication skills
- promotes a sense of community among students

Peer Mediators are selected from the student population. They may be selected by peers, teachers or they may be volunteers. Students selected to be Peer Mediators will attend a training session and receive support and guidance throughout the year by the coordinator of the program.

Peer Mediators do **NOT** get involved in issues concerning violence, drugs, weapons or abuse.

Class Meetings

Class meetings foster the democratic process, a respect for differing opinions, and build a caring and safe classroom community.

The principal purpose of class meetings is to solve problems. Most models start with a round of compliments before delving into problem solving. There is a continuum of models of class meeting formats. Some are formal and highly structured and others are informal. Of course, you will need to choose the model that works best for you and your class.

Some suggestions:

Section Five: What Do We Do When...?

- Keep the meetings regularly scheduled. Some classes conduct a meeting every Friday afternoon and others schedule them mid-week. It's up to you when to arrange them but keep the time fairly standard.
- Use a circle formation.
- After some coaching invite students to facilitate the meetings.
- Ask students to submit (in writing) their problems for discussion at meetings. The problems are usually inter or intra-personal in nature. Other problems may be related to class rules or expectations.

Family Group Conferencing

I think of the Family Group Conference as a hybrid model that is somewhere between the Talking Circle and the more formal Restorative Justice model. The unique aspect of Family Group Conferencing is the wide range of stakeholders who participate. To best illustrate this approach, I will describe a real-life example.

On a sunny afternoon, two young students decided, quite innocently, to play in the park rather than return to school. Needless to say, once the school authorities realized that the girls were not at home, emergency measures were immediately enacted. Police were involved and the parents of the girls were in a state of panic and fear.

Eventually, the girls wandered home, unaware of the distress they had caused. The school authorities along with the parents and police decided on a Family Group Conference to help the girls understand the extremely serious nature of their offence.

In addition to the above-mentioned participants, a representative from the local chapter of Child Find and the staff members who were out searching the neighbourhood attended the Group Conference. At the session, everyone was invited to state how the behaviour of the girls had affected them.

This is where I came in. I was attending one of the school's Town Hall Meetings on a Friday afternoon. The theme of this particular assembly was a showcase of drama and dance. At the end, two young girls took the microphone and gave a presentation about the Child Find organization and the process that takes place once a child is reported missing.

When I commented to the principal later that this final presentation seemed to be out of sync with the others, she explained the entire story of the missing girls and the subsequent Family Conference in which the girls agreed to research Child Find and make a presentation to the entire school.

Defusing Potential Conflict

Dr. Ginott's "Frightening Conclusion"

The following quote is one that I have nearly memorized and recall on an almost daily basis. I have seen it on pinned to staff room bulletin boards and cited in numerous resource guides and other professional educator materials.

There is a good reason for this. Dr. Ginott's much cited statement about the power that we, as teachers possess, is both frightening and accurate.

I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my daily mood that makes the weather.

As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal.

In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.

Dr. Haim Ginott
Teacher and Child

On the other hand, we also have tremendous power in turning discipline challenges into learning situations. From tone of voice to the language we use when correcting a student, we do indeed have an enormous influence on the outcome.

A good maxim is:

Never engage in a power struggle with a student.

As difficult as this may be at times, there is nothing to be gained from engaging in a power struggle with a student. Not only will we compromise the dignity of all involved, but the outcome will definitely be one in which both parties lose.

Building Positive Student – Teacher Relationships

The following phrases are effective when encouraging students to express themselves.

Statements and Questions to Aid Self-Expression

Section Five: What Do We Do When...?

How are you feeling?

What would make you feel better?

What would you like to have happen?

Which one would you pick?

People's feelings count here.

There are lots of different ways to solve problems.

Statements and Questions to Aid Social Competence

How do you think he/ she is feeling?

That's one idea! Let's get another!

What would you like him/her to say if he/ she wanted to _____?(i.e. Borrow your pencil, join the game, play with them, etc.)

What do you do if _____". (i.e. You make a mistake, you want to ask somebody a question, you have to interrupt a conversation, etc.)

What can you do to show somebody that you want to be his/her friend?

Do friends ever get angry with one another? How do you make up with a friend?

What can you say or do if your friend looks _____?(sad, mad, etc.)

We care about each other in here.

We notice things about each other in our room.

Section Five: What Do We Do When...?

Phrases for Providing Correction without Threat

In our family (or class), we (or people) _____.

Examples: In our family, people listen to each other.
In our family, people's feelings count.

When people _____, it makes it hard for me to _____.

Examples: When people are yelling, it makes it hard for me to listen to what each person is saying.
When people are arguing in the back seat, it makes it hard for me to concentrate on my driving.

It matters to me that _____.

Examples: It matters to me that everyone gets a turn.
It matters to me that nobody gets hurt.
It matters to me that people feel respected in this house.
It matters to me that people learn good manners.

_____ is one way of _____ (getting what you want). Can you think of a different way?

Examples: Yelling at your brother is one way of getting his attention. Can you think of a different way?
Slamming doors is one way of showing me that you're angry. Can you think of a different way?

Something drastic must have happened that made you _____. Do you want to tell me about it? or Is there a situation I can help with?

Examples: Something serious must have happened that made you scream at your friend. Is there a situation I can help with?
Something drastic must have happened that made you not finish your chores. Want to tell me about it?

Section Five: What Do We Do When...?

I like it a lot better when people say (or do) _____ when they need something from me.

Examples: I like it a lot better when people wait until I'm off the phone to say something to me.
I like it a lot better when people say "Excuse me, it's important" if they have to interrupt me when I'm on the phone.

_____ has to get done by _____. What's your plan for getting it done?

Examples: This room has to get straightened up before our company arrives. What's your plan for getting it done?
This garbage has to go out before trash time tomorrow. What's your plan for getting it done?
Your project has to be turned in next Tuesday. What's your plan for getting it done?

Building an "Empathy Bridge"

The **"Empathy Bridge Technique"** has three parts:

1. Validate the underlying feelings or motivation behind the behavior.
2. Find something OK about the person's intent.
3. Identify the issue or problem the behavior is presenting.

Example:

"So you're saying you pushed him because he cut you in line, right? I can understand that...nobody likes to be disrespected. You have the right to speak up for yourself.

Here's the issue. Whenever anybody lays hands on somebody else, even if nobody gets hurt, the rule says I have to put a stop to it because in our school, we attack problems, not people. How could you have made your point without pushing?"

Section Five: What Do We Do When...?

Using “Persuasion Power” to Solve Problems

1. **If the other person is getting more and more worked up, interrupt negativity by paraphrasing the person's complaint.**

What you're bringing up is very important. I want to make sure I got it straight. You said _____, right?

2. **Attempt to discern and validate the underlying interest.**

Interest = what s/he really wants

Position = the best method s/he can think of at the moment for meeting the underlying interest

From what you've said so far, I'm getting the message that you are very concerned about _____. I can certainly appreciate that.

3. **Attempt to find some point of agreement on the level of interest, even if your position is much different.**

I agree that _____ is very important. *or* We're both interested in _____.

4. **Explain your plan for addressing the interest. Ask for any additions he/she would make to the plan.**

I'm thinking that _____ could resolve this situation, *or* I intend to _____. Do you have any other ideas about what might work?

5. **Open the door for further dialogue/evaluation.**

I hope this action will take care of the situation, but time will tell. I value your feedback. Keep me informed about what you are seeing. If Plan A doesn't work, we'll have to try something else.

Section Five: What Do We Do When...?

Short “Persuasion Power” Interventions

Teacher to Student

1. Do you know what the rule is about _____? Are you willing to do it? Great!
2. You know that if someone was doing that to *you*, I would make *her* stop.
3. I’m not trying to ruin your fun. You’ll have plenty of time to do that later on.
4. I don’t want you to get into trouble.
5. If you make yourself pay attention now, it’ll make your homework a lot easier and quicker.
6. My job is to make our classroom a good place for everybody. That means protecting everyone’s rights. I might be protecting yours, next time.
7. You’ll make up your own mind about what you’re going to do next, but I hope you decided to _____ (cooperate in some way) because I want you to have _____ (benefit.)
8. You’re going to do _____ if you really want to, but you could also decide to _____. I hope you really think about what is best for you.
9. I’m pointing out this problem to you this time, but if I make a mistake that I don’t recognize, I hope you’ll point it out to me.
10. Is that really helping you?
11. There is a solution to this that will help us both. Let’s find it.
12. I want this to turn out well, but I can’t _____ (stop talking, get in your seat, get to work, calm down, do your homework, etc.) for you. What happens next is up to you.
13. Here’s what I’m willing to do. What are you willing to do?
14. I’m not going to _____ you (scream at you, accuse you, blame you, etc.) and I’d like you to do the same for me.
15. Pretend you’re me. What do you think I’m going to say next?

Section Five: What Do We Do When...?

16. I'm glad you're having fun! I'd just like you to postpone it until later.
17. Compliment the skill used in the off-task action, then re-direct e.g. You can really draw! I'll get you to help some other people during art time. But now it's math time.
18. It's OK to _____, it's not OK to _____.

(Pages 96 to 102 printed with permission of author, Rick Lewis.)

Bullying: A School-Wide Approach to a School-Wide Problem

In 2002, I attended a conference on bullying. Over 500 people arrived on the opening day to hear Dr. Dan Olweus speak. (Only 250 had officially registered!) Dr. Olweus, from Norway, is considered to be the world's leading expert on bullying. Many attendees were hoping for answers or solutions to this insidious and harmful problem.

Not surprisingly, Dr. Olweus made it quite clear that the only way to reduce seriously bullying is to create a school atmosphere in which it is considered to be unacceptable by everyone.

Quick fix, piecemeal approaches will not work. Bullying is a systemic problem and therefore the only effective way of dealing with it must be in a systemic manner. In a school-wide approach to bullying, the focus is not on the bully or the victim but on creating a school atmosphere of respect, cooperation and support. We need to include all students, staff, administrators, parents, community members, law enforcement officials and anyone else who may be able to help.

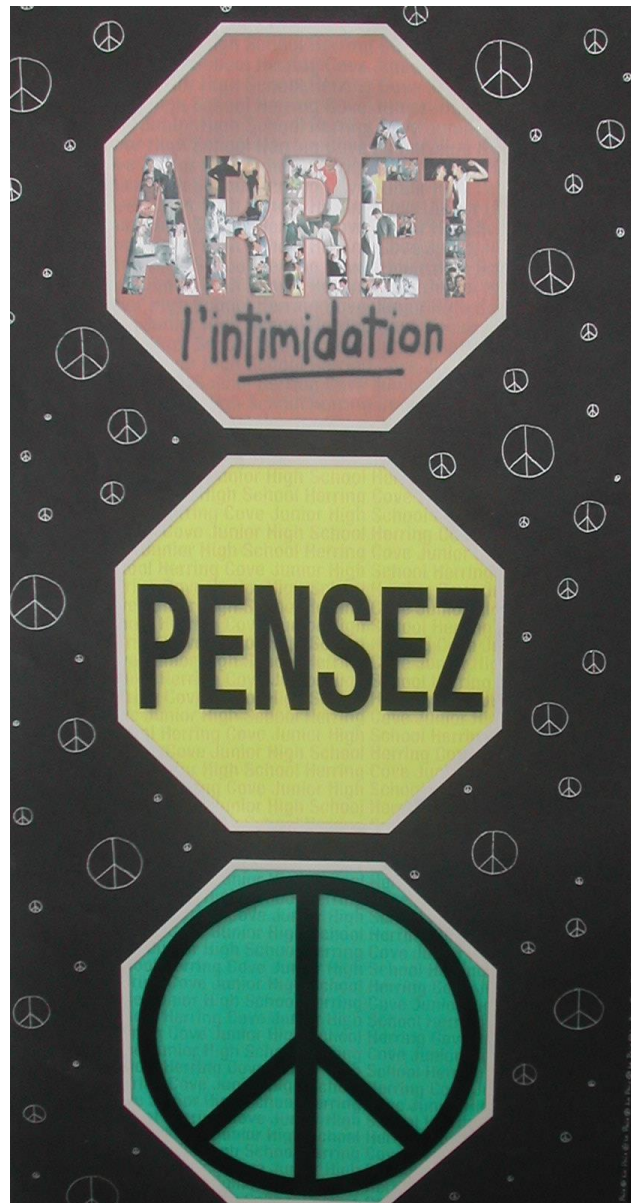
For example, in some areas, two of our local police officers have established a **Bully Hotline**. They carry cell phones and one of them is available 24 hours a day to receive calls from victims, bullies and/or youth who are willing to report bullying they have witnessed or know about.

Of late, we have been inundated by reports of bullying in the media. There are countless books, pamphlets, brochures, posters, videos and programs available to teachers.

In isolation, none of these will do much to erode this ever-increasing and universal problem. Hanging a bully-free poster on the walls of your school in the hopes that it will stop bullying is akin to hanging a poster of Einstein on your bedroom wall at night hoping that you will wake up brilliant. It just doesn't work!

Section Five: What Do We Do When...?

Enlist the support of the entire school community. Make your school a place where bullying and other forms of violence are considered to be unacceptable by all!



Anti – Bullying poster created by Emily Cairns a Grade 8 student at Herring Cove Junior High in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Bully Free Schools: First Steps

- Develop base-line data that will give some quantitative information on levels of bullying.
- Assemble a bullying prevention coordinating committee (and include students).
- Gather information about 'best practice' models. Plan in-service opportunities to share and discuss prevention initiatives.
- Consider the approach that best fits the current culture of the school.
- Engage students in all aspects of bully prevention/intervention.
- Coordinate parent/caregiver meetings that allow a discussion of the issues.
- Explore the perceptions that staff, pupils and parents have on bullying.
- Use special staff meetings to raise awareness and knowledge of the issue.
- Designate a teacher(s) as key resource and provide opportunities for training.
- Develop/train reliable peers, aids, senior volunteers to prevent/identify bullying behavior.
- Utilize a "train the trainer" model.
- Develop clear procedures must be followed when a case of bullying is discovered.
- Establish a protocol for notifying parents.
- Involve parents and students in the development of codes of conduct.
- Involve the bus drivers, volunteers, monitors, maintenance, office and cafeteria staff.
- Establish a confidential reporting system that allows students to report victimization.
- Develop strategies to reward students for positive, inclusive behavior.
- Ensure the peer group is aware and invite their help and support.
- Develop initiatives that reinforce positive behavior ("Caught You Caring").
- Avoid at all costs the focusing on the shortcomings of the victim(s).
- Immediate intervention is crucial. Bring any bullying to an immediate end.
- Engage volunteers and older children in all areas of the school yard.
- Ensure the victim has access to a bully free/safe environment at all times.

Section Five: What Do We Do When...?

- Provide support for the victim(s).
- Devote discrete time to the victim yet not in a way that reinforces “teacher's pet” perception.

(from a handout given at “Fear and Loathing” - a conference on bullying held in Ottawa, Canada in May, 2002)





Section Six:



How Do We Measure
Success?



Section Six: How Do We Measure Success?

Introduction

When a school begins adopting new policies and practices aimed at reducing discipline problems, it seems to make good sense to keep track of progress. To see a reduction in the number of incidents as the years go by is a gratifying experience.

There are other advantages of keeping close track of progress. Parents are always interested in hearing good news and eventually, as discipline problems decrease, the overall atmosphere of the school will improve dramatically.

In the pages that follow, you will find a few samples of reporting mechanisms. These are simply examples. As with all such documents, you may wish to develop your own.

As you make progress and reach goals, it is vital to share these successes with everyone in the school community. When students, staff and parents begin to see positive changes, the feedback will be encouraging and will ultimately sustain the momentum that has been generated.

There are many and varied ways to share your school's successes with the community:

- ✓ Create bulletin board displays to showcase events, achievements, awards, etc.
- ✓ Designate a section of the school newsletter to sharing good news.
- ✓ Include a "Congratulations to..." segment in the morning announcements.
- ✓ Invite parents and other family and community members in to participate in events and celebrations as often as possible.
- ✓ Call the media when something deserves celebrating.

Section Six: How Do We Measure Success?

Keeping Records

At Annapolis East Elementary School (AEES) in Nova Scotia, staff members have been diligently tracking and recording incidents of violence since 1996. Violence at AEES is defined as **“any mean word, look, act or sign that hurts a person’s body, feelings or things.”**

Under this fairly broad umbrella, students at AEES understand that for each and every act of violence, there will be a consequence. The consequences are not administered with a “one-size-fits-all” approach but rather taking into account the context, prior history and any special and /or extenuating circumstances.

As a result of a determined and comprehensive program to promote a respectful and positive school climate, incidents of violence at AEES decrease by 50% each year.

Students and staff take every opportunity to celebrate their achievements and parents are regularly informed of progress and achievements in reducing violence at AEES.

Year after year, charts and graphs such as the one below, are displayed on the corridor walls for all to see.



Heather Harris, Principal of AEES

Section Six: How Do We Measure Success?

VIOLENCE REPORT FORM ANNAPOLIS EAST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

_____ Intentional

_____ Accidental
(Kept in teacher file)

STUDENT'S NAME _____ **CLASS** _____

VICTIM'S NAME _____ **CLASS** _____

Number of previous offences/reports 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(please circle)

TYPE OF OFFENCE (please check or circle)

SOCIAL

VERBAL

PHYSICAL

(people)

PHYSICAL

(physical)

stealing

lying

fighting

deface/damage
school property

ignoring cries
for help

threatening

putting others
in danger

damage property
of others

illegal possession

obscene language

spitting

possession of
dangerous object

rude noises

encouraging others
to act violently

VISUAL

sarcastic remarks

won't leave
person alone

talking back

punching/hitting

clothing (rude/

inappropriate

refusal to
follow
instructions

rudely

kicking

discriminating)

put downs

pushing

rude, mean,
hurtful looks

racial remarks

biting

rude, mean

teasing

throwing objects

hurtful gestures

name calling

tripping

LOCATION : _____

DETAILS OF INCIDENT:

WITNESS (ES): _____

TEACHER/SUPERVISOR: _____ **DATE:** _____

Section Six: How Do We Measure Success?

INCIDENT AND INTERVENTION FORM

Student Name: _____

CUT HERE TO PRESERVE CONFIDENTIALITY

©Dr. John LeBlanc

SCHOOL

NAME

INCIDENT DATE ____

TIME ____ AM/PM

WITNESSED EVENT? YES/NO

GRADE _____

SUPERVISING TEACHER _____

MALE/FEMALE

INCIDENT

(Please check all that apply and at least one from "Incident Type," "Nature" and "Recipient"). Check "prohibited article" only if relevant.

Incident Type

Physical

- ☐ Violation of "hands off" rule ☐ Fighting
☐ Property damage ☐ Throwing objects
☐ Pushing / Shoving ☐ Other:

Verbal

- ☐ Impolite/rude ☐ Profanity
☐ Name-calling/insults ☐ Other:

Non-Verbal

- ☐ Refusal to follow instructions ☐
 Gestures
☐ Inappropriate Noises ☐ Other:
☐ Body language (posturing, stares)

Nature

- ☐ Impulsive act ☐
 Defiance/opposition
☐ Racial Harassment ☐ Sexual
 Harassment
☐ Bullying (ongoing victimization)
☐ Other:

Recipient

- ☐ Adult/supervisor ☐ Student
☐ School Property ☐ Other:

Comments:

Prohibited Article (if Relevant)

Weapon _____
 Other _____

LOCATION

- ☐ Classroom ☐ Playground ☐ Lunchroom ☐ Hallway ☐ Other

INTERVENTION by TEACHER *(please check all that apply)*

- ☐ Peer Mediation Intervention ☐ Warning
☐ Verbal intervention/Reprimand ☐ Time-Out/Time-Away
☐ Private discussion/Conference ☐ Removal from class
☐ Social Contract/Behaviour plan ☐ Withdrawal/Loss of Privileges
☐ Referral to Student Support Team ☐ Contact with Parents
☐ "Shadowing" Yard Duty Teacher
☐ Detention (Before school/After school/Noon)
☐ Good deed/Community service/Extra duties
☐ Restitution (Clean Up/Repair/ Pay for)

Comments:

INTERVENTION by OFFICE

- ☐ Letter to parents ☐ Phone call to parents
☐ In-school suspension ☐ Out-of-school suspension
☐ Counselling. Time spent (min) ____ or short/med./long

Comments:

Student Windsor ID #: _____

Recipient Student ID #: (if applicable) _____

Section Six: How Do We Measure Success?

PARENTS/GUARDIANS

☐ We have sent this form home for your information; however you may contact the school for more information if you wish.

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN: _____

DATE: _____

☐ Please contact the school about this incident *(comments on reverse if you wish)*

Counseling Record

Student's Name: _____ Phone: _____ Grade: _____

Date: _____ Referred by: _____

Reason for Referral:

What can you do to prevent this from happening again?

Record of Counselling

Date: _____ Reason: _____

Date: _____ Reason: _____

Date: _____ Reason: _____

Student's Signature: _____

Teacher's Signature: _____

Parent's Signature: _____

(Please sign and return within two days)

Parent's Comments:

Section Six: How Do We Measure Success?

Conclusion

When a school embarks upon a journey to create a school atmosphere of cooperation, respect and support, discipline problems **will be** significantly reduced. This is a journey that may take several years. In fact, it may be a journey that never ends.

Based on my personal experience as a school teacher and administrator, I have found that the momentum created when embarked on this journey will sustain the enthusiasm of the school community to continue seeking innovative ways to enhance the school atmosphere further. In the end, the school becomes a place where people want to be.

Our students are adept at navigating the Internet where they can access facts and figures instantly. They can read, write and solve mathematical problems with ease. In addition to educating the minds of our youth, I believe that we also need to educate their hearts.

Our children are not born into a world of their own making. If they have, indeed, become more disrespectful and uncooperative in recent years, then perhaps this is our legacy to them. In our schools, we have an opportunity to provide our students with the attitudes, knowledge and skills to learn to live well together and to become caring and compassionate citizens of the world.

Bon voyage!

Children's Peace Treaty

**We the children of the world
declare peace on the future.**

We want a planet free of war and weapons.

**We want an end to disease,
death and destruction.**

**Hatred and hunger and homelessness
make no sense to us.**

We want them done away with.

**Our earth gives food enough for all –
We will share it.**

**Our skies give us rainbows everywhere –
We will keep them clear.**

**We want to laugh together, play together,
work together, learn from each other,
explore and improve life for everyone.**

We are for peace, now and forever, for all.

written by school children in Northern Ireland



Peaceful Schools International

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www.peacefulschoolsinternational.org

Purpose

Creating a culture of peace is more than ensuring the absence of violence; it is about guaranteeing that schools are positive and rewarding environments for students to flourish. **Peaceful Schools International** (PSI) teaches students to “live well together” to achieve a culture of peace at school. The mission of PSI is to provide support to schools that have declared a commitment to creating and maintaining a culture of peace. Our vision is to build a global network of peaceful schools. Our goals are to act as a clearinghouse for innovative ideas and programs, encourage student-centered conflict resolution strategies, reduce punitive discipline measures, to facilitate networking among peaceful schools, and to promote understanding and appreciation of diversity.

Background

PSI is a Canadian charitable organization established by Hetty van Gorp after the death of her elder son Ben as the result of a bullying incident at his school. In the intervening years, as an elementary teacher and principal, she carried out her resolve to devote time and energy towards making schools safer and more peaceful places for students. In 2001, based on her experiences with schools across Canada and overseas, and in response to requests from schools world wide for support, training and resources, she founded Peaceful Schools International. PSI is located at Cornwallis Park.

Educators around the world are recognizing the need to teach peace. In schools that have declared a commitment to creating and maintaining a culture of peace, staff, students, and community members collectively define a common vision and then work diligently to achieve it. Within these schools a dramatic transformation can take place if there is a common will and effort. Achieving this kind of change has far more to do with attitude than resources.

There are many schools around the world that are working to create a safe and caring environment with little or no support. Often teachers reinvent programs and strategies that have been used successfully elsewhere. There is a need for a clearinghouse for

these ideas, programs, and strategies as well as a system of support for schools that are struggling on their own. Peaceful Schools International addresses this need.

Membership in PSI is voluntary. As our history books sadly demonstrate, mandating or imposing peace is not an effective means by which to achieve it. PSI is founded on the belief that each school's journey to creating a culture of peace is unique. Consequently, PSI is non-prescriptive in nature. Each school must be given the freedom to set its own course based on its vision and timetable.

PSI currently has over seventy member schools throughout Canada, the United States, Northern Ireland, Serbia, and Russia with others in several countries in various stages of discussion and preparation for membership.

Membership

Schools can apply for membership at any time. There is a membership application form available online at www.peacefulschoolsinternational.org. There is a **one time** membership fee of \$150.00. Once the application has been received, a registration package will be mailed to the school contact person. This package will contain the latest copy of *Peace Talks International*, the PSI newsletter; *Peace Talks Jr.* the PSI newsletter for youth; membership questionnaires; a copy of the PSI School Membership Guide and a copy of The Peaceful School: Models that Work by Hetty van Gurp.

Schools are encouraged to meet the following criteria:

- A collaborative approach to school based decision making
- Curricular and/or extracurricular peace education initiatives
- Student and community centred conflict resolution strategies such as peer mediation
- Teaching methods that stress participation, cooperation, problem solving, and respect for differences
- Community service projects
- Opportunities for professional development for all staff focused on creating a positive school climate

Programs and Services

Peaceful Schools: Everybody's Responsibility is the general title of an on going series of PSI publications aimed at the wide distribution of educational principles and practices prevalent in various areas of the world. The first volume in the series, *Peaceful Schools: Everybody's Responsibility – Belfast 2003* features the proceedings of a two day workshop held in that city in late January of 2003. The second volume, *Seeds of Peace: Peace Education in Serbia* offers peace education guidelines and incorporates significant

aspects of Serbian educational policy and activities from Serbian teachers that have proven to be effective. This book is available in both English and Serbian.

Peace@School is a joint effort by PSI, the National Film Board of Canada, Mount St. Vincent University and the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre. The project is designed to make schools and the wider community more peaceful and safer places. The *Peace@School* toolkit is designed to help educators achieve this goal. Available in 2004, the kit will include a DVD of the films *Waging Peace* and *Learning Peace* as well as a viewing/resource guide for each. *Waging Peace* chronicles the transformation of Caledonia Junior High in Dartmouth, NS from a place of chaos to a place of relative peace. *Learning Peace* showcases Annapolis East Elementary which has incorporated peace education into the school curriculum. The film follows members of the school community for a year and illustrates that while maintaining peace is hard work, it is well worth the effort.

Way to Peace Summer Camp teaches participants how to connect communities; where participants and staff leave not just with memories and new friends, but with stronger leadership and mediation skills. The idea behind *Way to Peace* is that the PSI approach to education can be used in many settings to empower individuals to live in peace. The camp is held annually in August and features trips to local historical attractions, mediation workshops, and various other activities. In 2003, 12 Serbian campers as well as 16 students from different parts of Canada attended the *Way to Peace* camp.

For additional information please see our website

www.peacefulschoolsinternational.org

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Notes





Notes

