
CHANGING WAYS / *Building Skills*

Vol 11, #2

Transforming conflict & promoting positive school climate in Maine schools

Fall 2007

Opening Remarks *By Barbara Blazej*

For this issue of the newsletter, my Opening Remarks will be short and sweet! Instead of my usual longer piece, I'm devoting several pages to an exciting conference that we're co-sponsoring November 28-30 in Portland: "Transforming Discipline: Building Community through Restorative Practices." You can read more about this event on page 2, which also includes details on how to register. We hope many of you will join us at this conference to learn about restorative practices, restorative discipline and school climate change from some of the most experienced practitioners in the field. The Maine Law & Civics Education (MLCE) website (<http://mainelaw.usm.maine.edu/mlce>) will be updated regularly between now and the conference with the names and topics of the various presenters. You will also find written pieces in this newsletter from the four conference keynote speakers: Belinda Hopkins, Christopher Hey, Bill Sower and Judy Mullet. (And all attendees of the full conference will receive a complimentary copy of the book Judy co-authored—*The Little Book of Restorative Discipline for Schools*.)

I also want to highlight a survey we're including on pages 5 and 6 and encourage you to take a few minutes to complete it and return it to us. My colleague Pam Anderson at MLCE (University of Southern Maine) and I hope to gather a lot of useful data from this survey to guide us in moving forward on issues of youth violence prevention, school safety and school climate change. And as you'll read on the top of the survey, we even have a few gifts to offer four of you who send in a completed form before the December 10 deadline! We know you're all very busy as the school year gets underway, and we deeply appreciate your help in providing us with this important information. If we can assist you further in this area, you can let us know that on your survey form.

Short and sweet, just as I promised! Enjoy the rest of the newsletter, please send us your surveys, and we look forward to seeing you in Portland in November. Have a great fall and winter!

Supporting Students Who Are Transgender

By Lisa Erhardt, M.Ed., NCC, and Matthew Small, M.Ed., Board Eligible NCC

As our culture continues to discuss gender more openly, students are now questioning their own gender identities at younger ages than we might expect. When one's gender identity does not completely align with his or her birth sex, one falls within the scope of the broader umbrella term "transgender." Adults who identify as transgender often recall early childhood thoughts that their bodies did not match how they felt on the inside as boys or girls. Today in our schools, children are exhibiting gender nonconformity in the classroom, sometimes as early as kindergarten. As educators, we must educate ourselves about transgender issues.

GLSEN's 2005 National School Climate Survey found that 89.5% of students who are transgender report feeling unsafe in schools because of their gender expression (see www.glsen.org). Teachers, counselors, administrators and families often struggle with how best to meet students' needs in such cases. Oftentimes silence—-one of the most dangerous responses—-prevails because we don't feel equipped to respond. Fortunately, the law is clear about the rights of students who are transgender in our state. The Maine Human Rights Act requires school personnel to provide equal educational opportunity to students of all gender identities, including those who are

transgender. Because this addition to state law is relatively new, the resources for our schools are limited. We hope this short list of suggested strategies will help guide you toward creating a safe, nurturing environment in your school for all students, including those who are transgender.

continued on page 7

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Contents

Opening Remarks	1
Students - Transgender	1
Conference Flier	2
Restorative Discipline	3
School Climate Survey	5
Upcoming Events	8

Peace Studies Program, University of Maine
 Maine Law & Civics Education, University of Maine Law School
 The Restorative Justice Project of the Midcoast
 Present

Transforming Discipline:

Building Community Through Restorative Practices

November 28-30, 2007

**Sheraton Hotel
 363 Maine Mall Rd.
 South Portland, Maine**

**Keynote Speaker:
 Belinda Hopkins, Ph.D.
 Just Schools Author
 Pioneering restorative
 practices in UK & beyond!**

To Register:

Online Registration:
mainelaw.usm.maine.edu/mlce
 Phone: 207-780-5951 (Registration Line)
 E-mail: conferences@usm.maine.edu

FMI: Pam Anderson, 207-780-4991
pamelaa@usm.maine.edu

Barb Blazej, 207-581-2625
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rjpmidcoast@yahoo.com

Financial support provided by the
 Maine Injury Prevention Program,
 Maine Department of Health and
 Human Services



Join us for Maine's first comprehensive look at Restorative Justice in K-12 schools! This 2 1/2 day conference will introduce educators to restorative practices in school discipline and school climate change.

Restorative rather than punitive approaches deal more effectively with student misbehavior by encouraging students to take responsibility for their actions and find ways to "make things right" with those they have harmed. Restorative discipline empowers students to be accountable for their actions in a school environment that is caring and responsive.

Restorative practices are proving successful in schools across the country and in Maine. Within a whole school approach, these practices build caring school communities that support students, staff and administrators in feeling connected and respected, which enhances learning outcomes. Restorative practices create safe schools where all members of the community are accountable for their actions, resolve conflicts, create positive relationships, and build an inclusive, respectful school culture.

Schedule at a Glance:

- Wednesday:
 - 4 pm Registration
 - 7 pm Keynote
 - 9 pm Reception
- Thursday:
 - 8 am Registration
 - 9 am—5 pm Workshops
- Friday:
 - 9 am—3 pm Workshops

Registration Fees:

- \$225 full conference
- \$125 Thursday only
- \$50 Wednesday eve only
- Teams of 4 or more:
 \$20 off per person

Some Thoughts on Restorative Discipline and Practices from “Transforming Discipline” Conference Speakers

**Belinda Hopkins, Transforming Conflict/National Centre for Restorative Justice
in Youth Settings, Berkshire, UK**

Keynote Presenter, Wednesday, November 28, 7:00 p.m.

“Being proactive: A Restorative Approach to building community, trust and mutual respect — Some key ideas”

We all need to feel that we belong — connectedness is a key factor in our sense of well being. We care about those we feel connected to and we value their good esteem. These social bonds build community and safety because they are based on mutual empathy, care, consideration and respect. This is the environment needed in school for effective teaching and learning to take place.

When disconnection happens through conflict ways need to be sought as soon as possible to create re-connection. A disconnected person will feel excluded from empathy, care, consideration and respect, and is less likely then to display these with others. A disconnected person is an alienated person. An alienated person feels threatened and in turn poses a threat. Conflicts disconnect people. Punitive responses to conflict disconnect even more.

To feel connected we need to work WITH people rather than impose our ideas or will ON them. People need to be able to express their views and feelings and have them taken into account. They need to be allowed to take responsibility for their choices and also be accountable for the impact of these choices. If we fail to do this we fall into the trap of ‘rescuing’ and doing things FOR others, which is disrespectful and disempowering.

Schools build a sense of belonging and community in many ways — the most important of which is the way every member of the school community speaks to each other on a day-to-day basis. Adults need to model respectful, caring language with each other and with the young people. In addition all sorts of activities, programmes and projects can further this sense of connection, trust and respect and develop emotional literacy and the ability to make, maintain and, when necessary, repair relationships:

- . Regular Circle Time
- . Emotional literacy programmes
- . Pastoral, Social and Health Education (PHSE) programmes and Citizenship curriculum
- . School Councils
- . Peer mentoring
- . Peer mediation
- . Playground Buddies
- A ‘Restorative Pedagogy’ that builds emotional and social skills through the delivery of the curriculum.

Judy Mullet, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, VA

Keynote Presenter, Thursday, November 29, 9:00 a.m.

(Note: This piece is from Judy Mullet’s and Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz’s book, *The Little Book of Restorative Discipline for Schools*, used with permission.)

A peaceable school is defined by its practices, those day-to-day actions that build positive relationships and caring communities. Brennan Manning notes that there are no neutral actions: in every moment we either drain life or give it. Therefore, the choices children make are either life-draining or life-enhancing actions. In order to develop the self-discipline to choose well, students must understand the effects of their actions on others, as well as the many choices of behavior available to them.

Thoughts on Restorative Discipline, continued from page 3

Restorative discipline provides a framework to support learning communities by modeling and encouraging responsible behavior and discouraging harmful behavior. Schools that view conflict as a teachable moment and an opportunity for growth intentionally design environments and processes that value relationship-building and community-building. The process begins with examining the models used not only for children but for adults: the teachers, administrators, and staff persons. If children do not see these processes practiced among adults and within the procedures they experience, they will not believe in the value of transforming conflict.

Restorative discipline:

- recognizes the purposes of misbehavior
- addresses the needs of those harmed
- works to put right the harm
- aims to improve the future
- seeks to heal
- uses collaborative processes.

Christopher Hey, Souderton Area High School, Souderton, PA
Panel Presenter, Friday, November 30, 9:00 a.m.

At Souderton Area School District (SASD) we pride ourselves in our strength of community. It is this “connectedness” that makes Souderton such a vital and special place. While we know we have a good thing going, we also share a vision for brightening our future. The administration at SASD feels a special responsibility to build a lasting culture that esteems achievement and community spirit.

We are delighted to report that the implementation of the Restorative Practices (RP) model has had a profound impact on student behavior and school climate at the District’s secondary schools. The high school is a case in point. Not only has the number of behavioral office referrals there decreased, but teachers are reporting a stronger sense of classroom community and school spirit is on the rise. The school administrators have also employed restorative conferences for serious disciplinary matters. These conferences have helped mitigate conflicts between students, restore damage to reputation (and property), and even ensure a positive, incident-free graduation ceremony. Our commitment to this restorative approach manifests itself in the ways the administration and faculty manage student misbehavior and conflict. These approaches signal our clear intent to work *with* students, rather than do things *to* them.

At SASD, we’re working hard to cultivate supportive, restorative school climates rather than punitive ones. Training in RP has enabled us to view incidents of misbehavior and conflict as opportunities for learning, rather than merely as obligations to punish. By building positive relationships and community, we also increase the likelihood that students and staff will treat one another with respect and dignity. By helping students see how their actions affect others, including teachers and community members, we help them see those individuals as fellow human beings, rather than as authoritarian adults. With this emphasis, we believe that our school system is evolving into a truly restorative community, and we are committed to achieving this transformation.

Bill Sower, Safe Successful Schools, LLC, Ann Arbor, MI
Panel Presenter, Friday, November 30, 9:00 a.m.

The approach known as Restorative Practices can be a key element in school reform. It allows educators to:

- ◆ promote real accountability in disciplinary interventions
- ◆ create safer classrooms and hallways
- ◆ produce a more respectful learning climate.

In a school climate where students treat each other hurtfully, with “put downs” and bullying, and where there is much defiance of authority, fights often break out and people get hurt. Kids can’t learn and teachers give up. Restorative

continued on page 7

Statewide School Climate Survey Fall 2007

Greetings! The following survey will give us important baseline data on what sorts of efforts are underway in Maine schools to improve school climate, as well as concerns and questions you might have in this area. We hope that many of you will complete this survey and return it to us by December 10, and if you would like us to assist you in some way, please be sure to include your name, address and telephone on the mailing label. As an “incentive” to complete and return the survey by December 10, we have four gifts to award in a random drawing after that date: Two copies of the book Just Schools: A Whole School Approach to Restorative Justice by Belinda Hopkins, and two copies of the video Beyond Zero Tolerance: Restorative Practices in Schools from the International Institute for Restorative Practices. We appreciate your help in gathering this information. Thank you!

1. Which of the following programs are active in your school? Please check all that apply and include grade levels in parentheses. Also, how effective are these programs in improving school climate? Please circle the appropriate number (your best guess).

<input type="checkbox"/> Civil Rights Team	()							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all									Very Much	
<input type="checkbox"/> Bullying Prevention	()							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all									Very Much	
<input type="checkbox"/> Peer Mediation	()							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all									Very Much	
<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Violence Prevention Program	()							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all									Very Much	
<input type="checkbox"/> Suicide Prevention	()							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all									Very Much	
<input type="checkbox"/> Restorative Discipline	()							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all									Very Much	
<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict Resolution Education	()							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all									Very Much	
<input type="checkbox"/> Class Meetings or Circles	()							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all									Very Much	
<input type="checkbox"/> Diversity Team	()							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all									Very Much	
<input type="checkbox"/> Responsive Classroom	()							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all									Very Much	

Over Please

___ **Staff conflict resolution process (other than labor grievance)**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not at all Very Much

___ **Other** _____ ()

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not at all Very Much

2. Please tell us about constraints, problems and successes with these programs.

3. Which programs would you like to see in your school that you don't currently have? Please refer to the list in #1.

4. What resources would you need to bring these programs to your school?

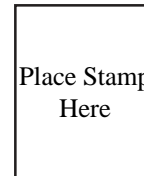
5. Any other comments, questions, concerns or requests related to school climate issues?

6. For a telephone or email consultation about any of these programs or school climate issues, contact:
Barb Blazej, 581-2625 or email barbara.blazej@umit.maine.edu (central/northern/downeast Maine schools)
Pam Anderson, 780-4991 or email pamelaa@usm.maine.edu (southern Maine schools).

Thank you!

Please fold this survey here, seal with tape, affix postage, and return to us by December 10.

Name _____
School _____
City _____
Zip _____
Tel. _____



**THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE
PEACE STUDIES PROGRAM
5725 EAST ANNEX, RM 211
ORONO, MAINE 04469**

Students who are Transgender, continued from page 1

Strategies for Supporting Students Who Are Transgender

1. Familiarize yourself with the vocabulary that is appropriate to use when referring to persons with gender identity concerns. Transgender is an umbrella term that may apply to people in a variety of different places with their gender identity. Cross-dressers, transvestites, hermaphrodites, etc., may or may not be appropriate terms to describe a person with gender identity concerns.
2. Talk with the student or the student's family about the correct pronoun to use when referring to the student. The pronoun should match the gender that the student is presenting as, not necessarily their anatomically assigned gender. Using "he" or "she" should also extend to roles the student may have, like son or daughter.
3. Accommodate for the student by providing gender-neutral restrooms and locker room access that makes sense for the student. A Section 504 plan can often help make these accommodations formal, and this plan will follow the student from grade to grade.
4. Be sure to give staff who have an educational need to know appropriate information about the student (which is best predetermined with parents and the student) to ensure the student is protected and not inappropriately questioned about things that may be sensitive.
5. Familiarize yourself with the laws and policies around bullying in the state and within your district. The State of Maine's anti-discrimination law does cover gender identity.
6. Seek out education about gender identity issues. Often understanding what it means is the best first step to helping support a student who may be struggling with a gender identity concern.
7. Recognize the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation. All people have a gender identity and a sexual orientation. Gender identity is how you see yourself, and sexual orientation identifies to whom you are attracted.
8. Remember to use person-first language. An example would be to say "the student who is transgender" as opposed to "the transgender student".
9. Understand that this is not a choice that a student is making, rather they are taking steps to live in the world as the person who they feel they are inside. Encouraging them to be the physical sex they were born as is not helpful, and can be harmful.

This list is by no means exhaustive. These strategies are gleaned from considerable research and school-based experience with transgender issues. We have found that proactive work with your faculty and staff is always the best approach to creating a school community where all students can be successful. Feel free to contact either one of us with questions.

Lisa Erhardt (lerhardt@asa-adams.u87.k12.me.us) is the school counselor and assistant principal at Asa Adams Elementary School in Orono, Maine. Matthew Small (mbs.counselor@gmail.com) is a career counselor for Emerson College in Boston and a consultant and trainer for EmbracingDiversity.com. Lisa and Matthew are alumni of the University of Maine's counselor education program.

Thoughts on Restorative Discipline, continued from page 4

Practices, like circles and conferences, give "voice" and power to the students who want to do the right thing, and they teach important conflict resolution skills. Schools that are implementing Restorative Practices are reducing their disciplinary referrals, cutting their reliance on suspensions, and creating safer school climates.

When students are functioning below grade level, Restorative Practices must also be combined with intensive and urgent remedial instruction, using the most research-validated teaching methods, like "Direct Instruction". Considering the dire life consequences for students who fail in school and the heavy cost to society, anything less is malpractice. Such an urgent approach can be thought of as "restorative instruction." I am especially interested in how to facilitate partnerships between struggling schools and their communities. The education of our children is our most important social responsibility; and when the school is overwhelmed, the community simply must step in to help. These partnerships can provide the human resources necessary to introduce important but time-consuming reform measures. For instance, this year I am coordinating a pilot project between the Retired Senior and Volunteer Program (RSVP) and an inner city school in Pontiac, Michigan. Older volunteers are being trained in Direct Instruction and Restorative Practices. They will be tutoring students and facilitating restorative discipline conferences and restorative "peacemaking circles."



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Orono, ME 04469-5725

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Upcoming Events - Fall 2007, Winter & Spring 2008

Transforming Discipline: Building Community through Restorative Practices Conference

November 28-30, 2007, Sheraton Hotel, South Portland
Keynote Speaker: Belinda Hopkins, author of Just Schools: A Whole School Approach to Restorative Justice
See page two for further details.

Mediation: Premises, Practices & Policies (PAX 451)

40-hour training in the Transformative Model, 3 UMaine credits
February 18-22, 2008 at the Fred Hutchinson Center in Belfast
Instructor: Will Galloway
For information, email ellen.woodhead@umit.maine.edu.
To register call 338-8000.

Bullying Prevention Training Institute

April 7-11, 2008, University of Southern Maine, Portland
Sponsored by Maine Law & Civics Education
Instructors: Chuck Saufier and Ansley Newton
Contact Pam Anderson, 780-4991, email: pamelaa@usm.maine.edu.

Biennial Statewide Youth Mediators' Conference

April 18, 2008 at the Augusta Armory
Sponsored by the Peer Mediation Association of Maine,
Peace Studies Program and Maine Law & Civics Education
To get on the mailing list for registration materials when they become available,
Contact Pam Anderson, 780-4991, email: pamelaa@usm.maine.edu, or
Barb Blazej, 581-2625, email: barbara.blazej@umit.maine.edu.

Changing Ways/Building Skills

(Vol 11, #2)

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