

LINKAGE

Alumni & Staff Newsletter

December, 2003

2003 ReEnergizer Conference



On Saturday, November 29 The eighth annual ReEnergizer Conference was held at Nichols College. It was the largest ReE, as well as the *loudest*, the *funnest* and the *learningest* conference held in New England this fall.

We had over 600 register. And while the big crowd made things a little difficult at the beginning – once we got rolling it was incredible. It seemed like everyone brought lots of friends and everyone was in the mood to have some fun.

We celebrated the region's Champions for Youth, and were featured with a special presentation of the newest version of "stop, look and listen."

This year over 30 collegians, over 20 advisers and principals and over 20 parents participated in the conference. We offered separate workshop sessions for all four groups. There were 84 schools represented, with attendees traveling from as far away as NY and DC to be with us.

Attendees left with the coveted Early Bird Applications and lots of specific information regarding the submission of portfolios for the Service and Development Medals.

The skillshops focused on risk and change and how those two forces impact on student activities.

The next big event on the SLTP Calendar is the DifferenceMaker Showcase (more on that later in this newsletter).

Positive Risk Taking



There are definitely two sides to risk taking behavior. There is glaring evidence of unhealthy, unnecessary and even unlawful risk taking all around us every day. This negative risk taking affects our very quality of life: drug abuse, violence, crime, and vandalism are only some of the problems. Most young people and most adults as well view risk taking behaviors as only negative in nature. There is a lack of understanding about risk taking as a positive activity.

One of the most important aspects of student activities is teaching positive risk taking behavior. Positive risk taking can be defined as productive attempts to reach more of our potential in many areas: better health and fitness, fulfilling relationships, academics, activity involvement, leadership, athletics, personal and professional growth. Positive risk taking is a process that involves attempting new challenges - - socially, intellectually and / or physically. Understanding the process involves exploring the opportunities,

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taking the positive risks, as well as dealing with success and failure.

The majority of the opportunities offered to young people in the school setting as positive risk taking are VERY HIGH RISK - athletic teams, school plays, student council, class office, band, honor roll - generally only the best are selected and the rest experience personal failure. The real deterrent to taking positive risks and becoming more than you can be IS THE FEAR OF FAILURE. It is an invisible barrier that fences people off from challenge, adventure and natural highs. It can impede learning as well as growth. In many cases taking a risk involves opening yourself up to a highly visible failure. That failure cannot be easily blamed on anyone else. This affects self confidence, self esteem and reputation. Personal failure is scary at any age!

Student leaders must recognize how risk affects their group and utilize all of their leadership skills to help minimize risk by increasing the rewards for taking positive risks.

At the ReE, the first Skillshop examined the dimensions of risk and the participants discussed the challenges as applied to their specific situations. While it was difficult to put ourselves in the shoes of others, seeing how even low risk activities could deter student involvement should create more aware student leaders.

Stop, look and listen



Connections, the SLTP theatrical troupe have taken our play "*Stop, look and listen*" on the road.

We are in the process of determining our available dates and performance possibilities. As you know SLTP is a non profit educational enterprise and all of our staff are volunteers. The student element of our staff attend colleges all over the country or are drawn from high schools scattered all over New England. As you can imagine then, bringing a cast together for one of the special "Connections" performances is an exercise in scheduling flexibility. Because we are taking advantage of the collegiate winter break to present the play, our performance schedule is limited.

"*stop, look and listen*" has been written by students for students and their teachers. The subject is bullying - emotional, social and of course physical bullying. The US Department of Education asserts that bullying affects only 16% of high school students. Reaction to that statistic fueled the production of the play. The goal of the play is awareness. This is not a Disney production with happy endings, nor is it a fire and brimstone preachy play casting evil doers to damnation. The play will promote discussion. What happens with that discussion will be up to your faculty and student leadership.

We provide a teacher packet for follow up discussion - but there are no solutions included.

We have presented the play at all of our leadership conferences last summer, at our annual ReEnergizer Conference, at the Rhode Island Association of Student Councils Conference, at

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Northbridge High School and at Coventry High School.

Specifically the play needs an auditorium, a relatively clear stage, a video projector (for the accompanying Power Point), a projection screen, and a podium with microphone.

Ideally the audience should not exceed 250 for any one sitting. We could present up to twice. We recommend a mixed audience of students, teachers and whenever possible parents.

As I mentioned we are a non profit. We have taken "*stop, look and listen*" on the road to help us to fund our program. Our federal ID number will be provided if your school contracts our production.

We have the following dates available at this time: Jan. 6, 8 and 9 - all mid morning.

If your school would like to arrange for a Connections presentation please contact Fitz via email -- SLTPlead@aol.com

Visit the SLTP Web Pages

All the new applications and information about the entire range of our program offerings for 2004 can be found at our newly refurbished web pages.

<http://www.sltp.info>

T-Shirt Ideas



Do you have a design floating around in your head for a tee-shirt that would be perfect for SLTP?

If you do – send it to us. If we select the design, you will earn four campership scholarships for your school and will receive a special citation at the DifferenceMaker Showcase Conference.

Send to:

Helen Fitzgerald, T-Shirt Designs
108 Observatory Way
Marshfield, MA 02050-4101

The DifferenceMaker Showcase

The *DifferenceMaker*

Showcase is a very special conference. We believe that service should not be a “have to.” Service should be a “get to.” Service is leadership in action. This conference is about expanding service opportunities, learning how to stage particular events and exploring the possibilities for service inside and outside of school.

Held on a Sunday afternoon at Nichols, we will bring together all manner of experts to present workshops and to showcase the opportunities to make differences.

So mark your calendar now – reserve the date. Bring your friends for a spectacular spring afternoon. It's **Sunday, March 28.**

Registration forms are available on line.