



True Points

A newsletter for the parents of student leaders

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Yelling by Dr. Jim Fitzgerald

Yelling is a common pitfall in many parent/teenager conflicts. My Dad who was a union organizer and who personally loved arguments and debates – never yelled. As a teenager who yelled a lot, I have to admit that his calmness frustrated the hell out of me. He explained to me that his responsibility to me was understanding that his words were already bigger, so yelling was out of the question. To be honest, I did not understand that until I was designing a course in conflict management.

Most times the scene goes like this: the teenager yells, the parent yells, and the exchange gets louder until someone walks out, leaving everyone feeling angry and helpless.

Michael Josephson, Val Peter, and Tom Dowd, in Parenting to Build Character in Your Teen (Boys Town Press) offer two quick steps to teach teenagers self-control and help your family resolve conflicts together:

Calming Down—Describe your teenager’s problem behavior to him or her, give clear instructions on what he or she needs to do to calm down, and then allow time for calming down. For example, “Matt, you’re yelling at me and pacing around the room. Take a few deep breaths and try to settle down.”

Follow-Up Teaching—Describe to your teenager

how he or she should behave next time. For example, “Instead of shouting, why don’t you ask me if you can sit on the porch until you’re ready to talk about it?” It’s also crucial to include an appropriate negative consequence so your teenager learns that yelling isn’t the way to get what he or she wants. Consequences help change behavior.

The key to teaching self-control is in delivery. Be sure to talk slowly and softly, and with empathy. Don’t get sidetracked with other issues, control your emotions, and include a “cool down” time for yourself.

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School Size by Dr. Dave Tapscott

Learning is most effective when it is REAL (Relational/Experiential/Applicable/Learner-driven). When students in a classroom have strong, personal and comfortable Relationships with each other, and when the teaching process is driven by Learners’ needs and interests, a lot more happens. The learning process is inviting and exciting. Many educators believe that small schools promote good relationships among learners and more responsiveness to their needs.

According to research over the past 20 years or so, students from smaller schools tend to be more academically productive, better behaved, more likely to participate in activities, and less likely to drop out of school. The US Department of Education reported in 1999 that the value of small schools was “confirmed with a clarity and a level of confidence rare in the annals of education research.”

For over thirty years, larger schools were thought to be

superior because they offered economy of scale savings and a more varied curriculum. But student achievement and other outcomes were not taken into account. In addition, some smaller schools have been able to operate with a comparable cost per student.

The trend towards creating smaller schools is growing. It is an opportunity to promote REAL learning.

On Wednesday, February 2nd at the Taunton Holiday Inn Conference Center (which is just off Rte 495 near both Rte 24 and Rte 95) CASA and SLTP will host "the Core - an Adviser Toolbox Workshop."

The conference is designed specifically for student activity advisers. The focus will be on practical skill building. The conference center was selected because of its central location to the greatest majority of our member schools. (it is within an hour and a half of most of RI and all of central and eastern MA). We chose the early Febru-

ary date because we could find no conflicts with other conferences or events.

This is a chance to get some (or all) of the activity advisers in your school out for some training and a motivational booster shot. **The registration fee is only \$15.** Typically conferences for teachers are generally 50 - 75 dollars --obviously we made this as economical as we could.

We plan to cover the nuts and bolts of organizing student activity programs with skillshops planned for "intentionality" and "actioneering." In addition we plan to have a theatrical presenta-

tion and a nationally recognized keynote speaker.

We have posted a descriptive website at the CASA webshell--
www.studentactivities.info/Advisers

This conference will be especially helpful to collegians who are interested in becoming teachers. It will also be helpful to town and church youth leaders as well as to all club advisers and athletic coaches.

For MA teachers it might be helpful to point out that PDPs will be available. Specific information can be found

at our website and on the following pdf files:

1. the registration form --
www.sltp.info/Advisers/TheCore.pdf
2. the informational flyer --
www.sltp.info/Advisers/CoreBrochure.pdf
3. an invitational letter --
www.sltp.info/Advisers/Coreletter.pdf

This is a conference that has been on our wish list for a few years now. Let's get the word out. Let's invite everyone we can!

Cheating and the truth

A recent study of 4,500 high school students suggests that cheating is a significant problem:

- 74% of respondents admit to at least one instance of serious cheating on a test.
- 72% admit to serious cheating on a writing assignment.
- More than 50% admit to plagiarism via Internet use.

- More than 80% do not see anything wrong with buying a term paper or assignment on line
- More than 60% believe it is okay to lie to their teachers
- More than 60% believe their teachers and administrators regularly lie to them

The Enron scandal, Martha Stewart, Kobe, Michael, Monica and going back a little

further to OJ have a much deeper effect than we take into account.

www.sltp.info

At our newly expanded and refurbished website, you'll find a whole section devoted to the parents of student leaders. The section includes resource pages, descriptions of the services we provide and hints to help support

student leadership.

All the new applications and information about the entire range of our program offerings for 2005 can be found there as well.

If you have any suggestions for

things to include— please do not hesitate to send those along to: info@sltp.info

“More than 60% believe their teachers and administrators lie to them.”

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, 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.

During the Leadership Training Conferences, each of the Breakaways examine the dimensions of risk and the participants discuss the challenges as applied to their specific situations back at school. While it is difficult to put ourselves in the shoes of others, seeing how even low risk activities could deter student involvement creates more aware student leaders.

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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. There will be separate

workshop tracks for teachers, parents and students.

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.

Additionally at the Showcase SLTP will award students for their participation in community service

and personal development. For information on these awards visit our website.

So mark your calendar now – reserve the date. Bring your friends for a spectacular spring afternoon. It's **Sunday, April 3.**

Registration forms are available online.

For 40 years lifestyle writers and news magazines have written volumes about "the generation gap" a term coined in the 60's. Hmmm, today we seem to be suffering from a "reality gap." Adults and the media have a definitive perception of young people and that perception is quite different from reality.

- **What adults perceive and the media portrays**
The number of teens who commit violent crimes is increasing. (over 60% in 3 national surveys)
- **The Reality**
Crimes committed by teens are at their lowest levels in 25 years.
- **What adults perceive and the media portrays**
Teen birth rates are increasing.
- **The Reality**
The birth rate for teens has decreased constantly and substantially every year since 1991.
- **What adults perceive and the media portrays**
Teens are smoking in ever increasing numbers.
- **The Reality**
The number of teens who smoke has dropped to its lowest rate since researchers began collecting the data in 1975.
- **What adults perceive and the media portrays**
Teens lack commitment and do not contribute to their community.
- **The Reality**
Teens contributed over 10 Million hours of service last year in New England alone!
- **What adults perceive and the media portrays**
Requiring community service for graduation or even car licenses is a good idea.
- **The Reality**
Although no funded study has yet been completed, no increase in service has been measured as a result of the requirement.
- **What adults perceive and the media portrays**
Teen drunk driving laws are lax, which results in more teens driving drunk.
- **The Reality**
Teen drunk driving standards are rigid, and the percentage of teens receiving punishment for DUI is triple the percentage for adults. Further the number of teen deaths via alcohol related car accidents remains relatively constant and is much lower than adults.
- **What adults perceive and the media portrays**
4 out of 10 kids live in one parent households and the number is increasing.
- **The Reality**
Only 25% of all children live in one parent household and that number has been flat since 1995.
- **What adults perceive and the media portrays**
Drug abuse among teens is on the rise.
- **The Reality**
Drug abuse among teens has been on the decline for the past several years – this is not a dismissal of the problem - if there were only 1 teen, it would be a problem - it is only to point out that the statistics indicate something contrary to what is perceived.
- **What adults perceive and the media portrays**
Teens have little or no values and are not family oriented.
- **The Reality**
According to the latest survey by the Horatio Alger Association (who do an annual survey called "the State of our Nation's Youth) - the greatest majority of teens get along with their parents extremely well; would rather spend extra time with their families; put family members at the top of their list of role models over athletes and celebrities.