

# True Points

a newsletter for the parents of student leaders

## student leadership

The Student Leadership Training Program

Leaders walk their talk.

Volume 1 Issue 4

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## From where I sit by Dr. Jim Fitzgerald



All across the US and especially here in New England, the realities of the budget cuts will devastate school programs for the coming year -- those are the facts. Pretending or praying that the politicians will face their responsibilities is not sensible. For the politicians, it is all about talking the talk -- that is sounding good with just the right "sound bite" like "leave no child behind or "making schools more accountable."

### Whatever ...

School after school next year will be without many teachers. School after school next year will settle for "good enough." Already hundreds are planning to eliminate or cut back activities. These

draconian measures are seen as the only means of solving the various budget shortfalls.

More than ever, student leaders need SLTP.

Why? Well, the positivity, the emersion in a "can do" atmosphere. The companionship and fellowship certainly come to mind as reasons. Knowing you are not alone. Knowing that others are facing the reality and NOT burying their head in the sand is vital, and these lessons can be carried back to their communities.

Let's not forget the skill training -- clubs and activities are VITAL to schools and communities - especially in negative times. Strong student leadership can provide activism and hope. We teach the skills to run meaningful pro-

grams.

The atmosphere in schools where cuts have taken place often turns very sour -- administrators retreat behind rules, teachers become more sarcastic, students feel more and more detached. In that environment vicious emotional, social and even physical bullying often fills the gap. Awareness is the only answer.

But mostly the reasons are for the kids themselves. SLTP provides enrichment and fulfillment. You know that is true, so do I. Sure it enhances and provides a very important line on their resume. Sure it provides them with an edge for college acceptance -- less than one per cent of the student population attends a leader-

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## Honoring differencemakers

The Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes is seeking nominations for its 2005 Awards.

The Barron Prize honors young people ages 8 to 18 who have made a sig-

nificant positive difference to people and our planet.

Each year, 10 national winners receive \$2,000 to support their service work or their higher education.

This year's

nomination deadline is APRIL 30.

For more information or to nominate, visit <http://www.barronprize.org>

## Can do kids

Let's face it. Kids often put off doing homework or chores. Procrastination can spark other bad habits and jeopardize kids' health and sleeping patterns. Here are some quick tips from "Raising Can-Do Kids"

(Better Homes and Gardens, www.bhg.com) by Lori Nudo that might inspire your pre-teens to get back on schedule:

- Create new habits. Set a

specific schedule or rules for homework time. Reinforcing rules may spark a positive routine in your preteen.

- Break it down. If your child is having trouble with what seems like an overwhelming task, break that task down into steps to encourage can-do discipline.
- Unschedule some things. Work through your child's schedule if he or

she is overwhelmed, and help reduce the number of after-school activities or chores.

## In the news ... Privacy?

Washington's Supreme Court has ruled that a mother violated her teenager's privacy by listening in on a phone conversation. Four years ago, Carmen Dixon put her daughter Lacey's call on speakerphone, overheard a friend give details of a purse-snatching, and then testified about it. But now the state court says Dixon's testimony shouldn't have been admitted because the right to privacy applies even to teenagers. "It's ridiculous! Kids have more rights than parents these days,"

says Dixon. "My daughter was out of control, and that was the only way I could get information and keep track of her. I did it all the time." Prosecutor Randall Gaylord, who urges parental involvement in kids' lives, says, "I'm concerned that a 14-year-old's right to privacy now trumps the parent's right to be a parent." Douglas Klunder, an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union, says, "I don't think the state should be in the posi-

tion of encouraging parents to act surreptitiously and eavesdrop on their children." Dixon says, "I just believe you have the right to know what your kids are doing and who they're doing it with." She says she'll stop monitoring her 15-year-old son's phone conversations "if it's illegal."

*Privacy is one of the primary areas of conflict between parent and teen.*

## Wanted: Parent Orientation Presenters

One of the most important services we provide for our campers is setting the tone for understanding with their parents. Our Parent Orientation Program which culminates in the SLTP Celebration every Saturday of camp is vital to our campers success. You

know how important it is for a parental support system to be in place. Each Saturday we endeavor to explain SLTP to the parents. The most effective presentations include staffers, alumni and parents of our alumni. The POPs are scheduled for

the following Saturdays—July 9, 16, 30 and August 6. Please, check your schedule and sign up for the Saturday of your choice. Then email your choice together with your full name and address to: jim@sltp.info

## Conference Profile–LTC

The LTC's are the heart and soul of SLTP. This is what our entire program is about -- a student leadership laboratory. Leadership is a set of skills which can be learned. For skills to be learned they must be practiced. Our LTC program provides that essential practice and much more.

There is nothing quite like the SLTP learning environment. The foundation of that environment is mutual respect and acceptance. The platform is learning how to make a difference.

Our students come from all over. Their backgrounds could not be more diverse - big schools , little

schools, suburbs, country and city. Yet through the great divide of ethnic, racial and social differences, there is commonality too - worries about college, about grades, about relationships, about fitting in, about life, and one very big one -- a desire to make things better.

LTC is about self discovery. It is about learning the "how's" and the "why's." It is an amazing week filled with fun and seriousness all mixed together. Friendships are made that will last a lifetime, and the memories are golden.

The LTC's are open to secondary school students to attend as often as they wish (the record is

four held by 6 different students). The majority of the students who attend belong to several different organizations (or want to); desire to become more organized; attend because a friend recommended it; and know that if they are given a chance they can contribute. LTC will enable that chance and that contribution.

This is the ground floor. The LTC's are the first level of comprehensive training, yet there is a lot more depth than most expect from such a fun program. And each of our four sessions are entirely different as all have entirely different teaching staffs.

## Summer Conferences

Registrations for all our summer conferences are underway in earnest! There are just over 15 weeks to go before our summer conferences kick off. All of the applications are available online as pdf files at [www.sltp.info](http://www.sltp.info)  
**OTS**

There is one session which is open to all forms of officer teams – from full cabi-

nets to co-captains – from clubs to classes to student government. (The team requirement is that there must be at least a pair of officers)

**July 1-2**

**LTC**

There are four sessions. Although there are just over 90 slots available at this point.

**July 5-9;**

**July 12-16;**

**July 26-30  
and Aug 2-6**

**ALC**

There are three sessions and approximately 32 slots available.

**July 13-16;  
July 27-30;  
and Aug 3-6**

**TLC**

There is only one session and there is 1 slot left.

**July 6-9**

**Adviser Certification**

There is only one session and there are 8 slots left.

**August 3-6**

## From where I sit *Continued from page 1*

ship program. And those points are seriously important for parents and other teachers to hear -- but the most important reason is the one every adviser can provide that is your personal commitment to make your school a better place.

Please help us to spread the word. Please let's not give up. Keep plugging, it IS worth it. Student activities are way more than fun and games. Student activities are not EXTRA, the role they play in every student's edu-

cation is vital.

With a full court press we can make a difference for a lot of kids. We can change the world. Please don't let your students put off the decision any longer. Please do not leave it up to others. Please do not worry about stepping on someone's toes. As Farley said, "It is up to us to make a difference. It is up to us to care."

Tomorrow is here, we can not put this off any longer.

## Day of Silence–April 13

The Day of Silence, a project of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) in collaboration with the United States Student Association (USSA), is a student-led day of action where those who support making anti-LGBT bias unacceptable in schools take a day-long vow of silence to recognize and protest the discrimination and harassment -- in effect, the silencing -- experienced

by LGBT students and their allies.

The Day of Silence is scheduled to take place on **April 13, 2005**.

The Day of Silence is an awesome opportunity to create more inclusive school environments and make some noise by being visibly silent. The Day of Silence has been taking place annually since 1996 and this year tens of thousands of students are ex-

pected to participate. Last year many of the SLTP member high schools and colleges participated. And already 25 of our member schools have tapped to indicate they are participating this year.

For more information about the Day of Silence visit:

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

## Why didn't anyone say anything? *By Jean VanBourgondien, SLTP Staff*

Recently in Red Lake, Minnesota, the most deadly school shooting since Columbine took place. This tragedy leaves many people asking questions and trying to find solutions. Some have even suggested that teachers should be able to carry guns in school. However, the solution can be found in the most obvious question, "If so many people noticed that things weren't right, WHY didn't anyone say anything?"

This reminded me of probably one of the most ironic (and most tragic) situations I ever was involved in. I was in the 6th grade when the Columbine shooting happened. The next day, a boy in my homeroom came in to school wearing a Marilyn Manson T-shirt. A girl in my homeroom, one of the most popular girls in my grade, was appalled, caused a scene and said something to the extent of "He's wearing a Marilyn Manson Shirt when just yesterday 2 boys who worshipped Marilyn Manson killed a bunch of people at their school." She then proceeded to instruct the rest of my homeroom to form a circle with our chairs, deliberately excluding this boy as punishment for his insensitivity and we all formed a circle a few yards away from where the boy was sitting. When my homeroom took the initiative to be so obviously hypocritical, cruel and to exclude we were in the 6th grade so we were probably about 11. This behavior had been taught to us; we had been taught to exclude and had been taught to accept it and to not stand up for what's right.

Largely, it had been taught by example, what solidified this knowledge were the teachers' response, or lack there of. I don't remember my homeroom teacher stepping in or saying anything. One of his students were being so blatantly bullied and disrespected by his peers and nothing was done. It is possible that he didn't intervene because of the sensitive nature of the subject - a school shooting. But wasn't the tragedy caused because people were being bullied and isolated and no one taking the initiative to step in?

Maybe if someone had stepped in or just taken the effort to comfort or befriend the boy in Minnesota it still would have happened, but maybe not. We all know how wonderful it feels when a teacher or student takes the time to reach out - we all also know what it feels like when no one does. I felt bad about excluding that boy that day, but I also wanted the popular girl to like me and feared falling out of her good graces. We need to do more than merely feel bad for a person, we need to act on that feeling & reach out. While we can't excuse school shootings, we can prevent them through knowing that Marilyn Manson (or whoever is the next celebrity who gets blamed) doesn't make a person murder anyone, it's a deep feeling of loneliness and bitterness caused by being bullied. If society is going to create the lonely

and the bitter, it needs to take responsibility and at least learn from the tragedy. Instead of finding a scapegoat, whether it be a 6th grader or a rockstar, people need to reflect on why something happened and what could be done to stop it from happening again.

Marilyn Manson was interviewed about the Columbine tragedy by Michael Moore, for his documentary "Bowling For Columbine." Moore asked Manson what he would have said to the two boys before the killings, he replied, "I wouldn't say a single word to them; I would listen to what they have to say, and that's what no one did."

The only way to end school shootings is to care; if people notice that things aren't right, they need to say something, say anything that could help.

Otherwise, it's going to happen again.

## Tech time with Adam by Adam Travis, SLTP Conference Director

### : Protecting your computer from Online Threats, part 3 – Updates and Firewalls.

One of the single most important things you can do to protect your computer is to keep the Operating System up to date. This advice applies equally to all computers—Mac, PC, and Linux. For Mac users, under Control Panels (OS 9) or System Preferences (OS 10), use the Software Update function to find and download updates. You can even set this up to check automatically, but be aware that many MacOS updates can be 30 MB or larger, which could take hours to download with a modem. For PC users, visit [windowsupdate.microsoft.com](http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com) or use Automatic Updates from the Control Panel. If you do not use the automatic settings, you should probably check for updates every 1 to 3 weeks.

Firewalls come in two main varieties, hardware and software. Both are useful and

both have advantages and disadvantages. If you connect to the internet through a high speed cable or DSL connection, you may already be using a router that has some firewall capabilities. That's a great first level of protection, but using a software firewall (sometimes called a personal firewall) will greatly add to your level of security. A good software firewall can prevent outside attackers from getting to your computer, and can prevent spyware/worms from sending information from inside your computer to the outside world. A simple firewall comes with Windows XP, which is easy to configure but only protects from outside attacks (Go to Windows Firewall in the Control Panel). McAfee and Norton have firewalls that work with their anti-virus software, but I don't find them to be user friendly at all. PC World (June 2004) liked the Trend Micro firewall that works with PC-cillin, but I found the

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best one to be ZoneAlarm Pro from ZoneLabs. There is also a free version of ZoneAlarm that is widely used and very popular, which can be downloaded from <http://www.zonelabs.com/>. For more information, see <http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/article/0,aid,115939,00.asp>

## Bullying Awareness Week

Six years ago, on April 20th, 1999, our nation's worst school shooting took place at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Thirteen students and a teacher were killed, and 23 other students were wounded. The two young attackers, who had been bullied by their schoolmates, also died.

We must learn from

this tragedy. We must join the organizations, school districts, teachers, and parents who have already spoken out against bullying.

We must do our best to make people understand the harm it can cause. In addition, we must show younger students, through actions as well as words, that their emotional and physical well-being is important to us.

SLTP's fight against bully-

ing in school must not, of course, be limited to one week a year. However, in remembrance of the Columbine shootings, and as a symbol of our year-round struggle against bullying, we invite you to do something and to join the national effort to raise awareness.

For more information visit:  
<http://www.bullypolice.org>

## Basic Dignity and Respect

In last month's issue of the alumni newsletter, the Ask the Doctor column answered a plea for help that has left me fairly disturbed.

Here's the question and response:

Dear Doctor SLTP,

All but two bathrooms (one male, one female) in our school are locked ALL day. AND the teachers do not even have keys to unlock the other bathrooms. When we have to go — we have to go clear across the building to the open bathrooms (where there is a teacher on duty) or go to the nurse.

What can we do?  
Doing the PP Dance in MA

*Dear Doing,*

*The lack of basic respect for human dignity scares and disgusts me. Locked bathrooms abound in New England. The excuse is always security. But your school has taken it to a new level removing the keys from the faculty and leaving all the doors locked!*

*Without a bathroom, washing one's hands becomes impossible, let alone all of the basic bathroom calls. Emergencies and embarrassment must abound — but then so must a lack of general health,*

*as your situation is anything but healthy!*

*Do some basic research on the health issues. Present the research to your principal. But you may need to take your case to the superintendent or school committee — plan this presentation to be as professional as possible. Be prepared for that presentation. You are going to need some support from parents and registered voters.*

*Good luck!*

Over the years I have seen lots and lots of approaches to cope with smoking, loitering and or destruction in school bathrooms. Those solutions have ranged from full time bathroom monitors to removing the doors to the corridor. The most common response is locking the bathrooms during class time.

I admit that I cringe with this compromise to human dignity, but generally only because some teachers revel in the power they enjoy to withhold the key.

Locking all of the bathrooms and keeping them locked is at best an infantile solution. Way back when I started teaching we had an incident where someone smoked a joint in the

boys locker room. The solution was to close the locker room permanently eliminating the possibility for showers after gym by the male population of a junior high school.

Gee, and to think that I thought that solution was infantile! This one takes the cake.

I called the high school in my town yesterday to find out the policy about bathrooms. As responsible adults in our communities we can do no less.

I know this seems to be a big fuss about nothing. But basic human respect is not nothing. Students place in the society of their school is underlined by these policies. It is also a health issue. While the custodial staff in most schools attempt to do a decent job cleaning the bathrooms, I have found that more than half of all schools do NOT have soap in their student bathrooms.

Restaurants and other public facilities have been closed for a lot less than what schools do every day.

## Invitational Learning

Our "business" is learning. Our products are knowledges, skills and self actualization. Businesses stay in business by understanding their markets, and developing their products to suit their consumers. The most successful businesses cater to their customers realizing that their customers will only buy their products when they see themselves enjoying, using and owning it. It should only make sense then that SLTP is learner driven.

Being learner driven is an easy thing to SAY (virtually every school says it), but not as easy to DO. Throughout our staff training we explore all of the dimensions of our invitational philosophy. Let's look at this through the mindset of a teacher. As teachers, we must first try to understand all of the "hows," "whys" and "whens" about learning. AND we need to know if our "whats" (which is leadership skills & knowledges) fit our "whos" (the campers).

Early on in staff training we provide a fairly succinct overview of how learning works. Check out the staff manual.

Now let's delve into the why.

What motivates people to learn? Curiosity is a common response. But curiosity is fickle, the motivation to learn that is driven by curiosity wears off as soon as the novelty of the lesson is gone. This paradox of learning vs. teaching is ignored by teacher driven programs / schools. In those environments, the entire responsibility for learning is placed on the learner. The educator educates, and if the learner learns - well, that's a good thing. If the learner doesn't learn, well **he / she** failed. Those who fall behind usually stay there.

Learner driven programs / schools focus on ENABLING the student to learn - every learning style, every teaching method is utilized, every avenue for learning is explored. No learning style is ignored or pre-supposed. The response-ability for learning

is shared by both teacher and learner. Because learners are involved in their learning, it becomes difficult for learners to fall behind.

SLTP is an experiential learning center. The very nature of experiential learning necessitates being learner driven. We aspire to be more than that. We aspire to be INVITATIONAL. Would you agree that absolutely everything at a hospital should be directed toward making people well? So shouldn't everything at a learning center be directed toward making people learn? It is our ambition to make every aspect of the SLTP *an invitation to learning*.

An invitation to learning, think of the image. Invitations come for parties, for weddings, for all sorts of events. Invitations are inclusive. Invitations are fun. Invitations are individual. We want SLTP to be in its entirety an invitation to learning. That means we must by word and deed incorporate an invitational spirit to EVERY aspect of SLTP.