

True Points

a newsletter for the parents of student leaders

January, 2006

Volume 2, Issue 3

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True points—what's with the name?

By George Briggs, Editor

As with everything we do within SLTP, the name of this newsletter, *True Points*, is purposeful.

At the close of every camp Dr Fitzgerald has the opportunity to speak to both the parents and the campers in between the slide shows and just before we celebrate some individual achievements.

As a motivational speaker Dr Fitzgerald likes to refer to himself as a word merchant and he describes what he does as painting word pictures.

During his talk with the parents and students, he asks the parents to shout out promises to each other. Promising to ask and promising to listen. He underscores the need for parents "to be there"

and to the students to trust that they will. He points out that in order for a student leader to be effective, parents have to know what is going on—without taking over.

Dr Fitzgerald has said many times that the relationship between a student leader and his parents is a "true point."

In his youth Dr. Fitzgerald was a mountain climber. Climbers and surfers have a fanciful lexicon. One common term they share is "true point." A true point is a point of reference, an unchanging immovable point of reference.

In both activities it is common to get all twisted around and not know up from down or where you are. Before exe-

cuting a tricky maneuver climbers and surfers take note of a true point so that if they become disoriented, when they find it they will know where they are.

Dr. Fitzgerald suggests that parental support become that constant point of reference for every student leader.

So when we launched this newsletter we chose that term, in part to carry forward Jim's metaphor, but in whole as a goal for the contents of this newsletter. That is we want to inform. We want to support. We want to be a point of reference for those who serve as true points to student leaders.

Newsletter Submissions

SLTP welcomes contributions to our newsletters from our alumni and friends.

Articles should be no longer than 200 words. Each article submitted for publication must address a topic of interest to student leadership. The article must include a bio of the author - name;

address; email address, phone; school; year in school; & SLTP graduation year.

Opinions must be clearly identifies as those of the author.

We reserve the right to edit for length, clarity and style. We also reserve the

right not to publish articles which do not meet the criteria established in our guidelines.

For additional information, please refer to the guidelines posted on sltp.info

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.

It’s time to make a difference

For the past 4 years in this issue of our newsletter, we have sent out a DifferenceMaker Alert to all of our alumni and staff. We have asked everyone to participate in the National Valentines for Soldiers campaign. We wondered how many valentines we could muster in such a short time. Simple math reasoned that the number could be very large.

The response was more than we could have dreamed. We heard from clubs, student councils, church youth groups, key clubs, elderly groups, dance teams, chorus, faculties, dorm floors, service groups ... and the list goes on and on. We received reports from over 130 groups ... from most of our member schools and beyond.

We thought wouldn't it be cool is everyone made 500 valentines each . Last year, the smallest number reported was 100. The largest was 7,000.

There were lots and lots of valentine making parties. At one school, in just under an hour they made over 1,100 valentines at lunch! Everyone reported having a lot of fun.

DifferenceMaking is like that, isn't it? I mean while you are doing it with your friends, you have lots of fun and share lots of smiles. And the end result of your efforts is a smile given and received. At this crucial time is there anything more desirable than putting a smile on the faces of the soldiers who are stepping into harm's way for all of us?

So how many did we make all together? Well, the unofficial total is the best I can do. But unofficially SLTP's outreach caused over 100,000 Valentines to be made in 2003 and about 101,000 in 2004 , and in 2005 about 96,000.

This past summer, we began making and collecting valentines and dozens of our member schools have been making them since September.

Now it's time to roll up your sleeves and do it again. Check out the article on page 3 in the Alumni Newsletter Linkage for the particulars on where to send the valentines.

Acceptance by Olivia Harris and Jim Fitzgerald, SLTP Staff

Currently the SLTP Staff are involved in a thorough examination of unconditional acceptance in an online discussion. Here are two excerpts from which was initiated by Olivia Harris (senior at the Commonwealth School and SLTP LT)

Olivia: *We read an article in the class my headmaster teaches to all seniors about ethics and the world about, among other things, the UNESCO statement that they support all cultures and the respect for their traditions.*

The author brought up that this would include the KKK and the Taliban and other cultures that threaten human freedom and life, and how really the UNESCO statement was propaganda that was not thought through.

My first reaction was that at camp, we say that we accept everyone and practice 24 hour mutual respect, but when the students exhibit mocking behavior, or parts of their personalities we see as not exactly incorrect, but hurtful, we are quick to correct them. This seemed at first like a contradiction, but thinking about it further I'm not so sure that it is. Because we do respect all people and their thoughts and opinions and accept them for who they are, as long as they do not force their opinions on other people and disrespect them in that way—we are enforcing our values, not correcting their personalities.

I know I'm not finished talking / thinking about this, but I thought it was worth throwing out into the staff and alumni world, because exploring these grey areas are what make SLTP so wonderful and also so impossible to describe.

Jim: *There is so much in this topic that it is hard to determine where to start -- I guess I will begin with the UN -- when a country is admitted into the UN, it agrees to abide by the rules of that body -- i.e., no starting wars, no crimes against humanity, etc.*

When a student registers with SLTP, he agrees to abide by the rules of SLTP.

These agreements are fundamental. Within the UN, failure to live up to the codes, results in sanctions and sometimes force. Within SLTP failure to live up to the codes results in correction.

*Leaving the connection alone now -- and looking at SLTP's "enforcement" of unconditional acceptance. What do we correct? We correct the action, not the person. We still accept and respect the person, we do **not** accept the action. Our acceptance is unconditional for every person. We do not measure. We do not check pedigree. We do not check bank accounts. We accept each person not matter what they look like, sound like or what they believe.*

We do not accept the actions of every person. We accept positive actions. We accept positive attitudes. We correct negative actions and we correct negative attitudes.

We are a training program. We ask that those who join us to train exhibit 24 mutual respect and acceptance, those who cannot do may be denied the privilege of admission as per the agreement when admitted.

We do not force anyone to come nor do we blanket invite all to come -- we invite all who are willing to agree to treat others with respect to join us.

Imagine if the little girls who are singing all the hate songs for the American Nazi Party were to come to camp. These two twelve year olds, have no problem singing about death to all Jews, Blacks and Mudbloods. Their everyday language is filled with the language of hate.

The corrections would begin

immediately. The first staffer who encountered their language of hate, would respond, "we don't do that here." The correction would be explained, and the message would be clear. Usually we are dealing with sarcasm and occasionally with a milder intolerance, so generally our corrective measures never escalate into reprimands.

Yet we know that extreme ideology is all around us today. I am reminded of the little girl who sat next to me on the plane last week who informed me that all non born again Christians were worthless. And she changed her seat when I explained that I was a Druid (reformed).

"We correct the action— not the person."

Those are extremes -- and while we accept those kids -- we cannot accept their ideas and their attitudes. Keep in mind that attitude is action.

All of the world's religions teach tolerance. The UN and many of the world's countries preach tolerance. Many right and left wing leaders agree on the notion that tolerance is weakness.

But as for us -- the line between black and white balances on actions not on people.

What's still available for the summer?

Registrations for all our summer conferences are underway in earnest! There are just over 24 weeks to go before our summer conferences kick off. All of the applications are available on line as pdf files at www.sltp.info

OTS

There is one session which is open to all forms of officer teams – from full cabinets to co-captains – from clubs to classes to student govern-

ment. (The team requirement is that there must be at least a pair of officers)

July 6-7

LTC

There are four sessions. Although there are just over 120 slots available at this point.

July 11-15;
July 18-22;
August 1-5
and Aug 8-12

ALC

There are four sessions and approximately 38 slots available.

July 12-15;
July 19-22;
August 2-5;
and Aug 9-12

TLC

There is only one session and there are 5 slots left.

July 12-15

Continued on page 6

The truth and nothing but the truth

More than 60% of recently surveyed high school students said they believed that teachers and administrators lie to them.

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

One casualty of the Enron scandal, Martha Stewart, Kobe, Michael, Monica, lots of na-

tional political figures and going back a little further to OJ has been the truth. And for certain this has had a much deeper effect than we take into account.

Recognizing Your Student Leaders—Portfolios

Service portfolios are a collection of artifacts and personal reflections that document your commitment to community service and personal development. Portfolios are an excellent conversation piece for college or graduate school interviews. They can also bring your resume to life for scholarship selection committees and other award programs. So with all of those

benefits in mind, here are some tips for making an award winning service portfolio:

- Organize your portfolio in a binder with a table of contents, page protectors and dividers
- Include letters of recommendation, certificates and notes of appreciation from organizations with whom

you have worked

- Write a brief summary of skills and lessons that you gained from each service experience
- Fill your portfolio with pictures (this means remembering to take photos during service projects)

Continued on page 5

Recognizing Champions

Each year at the ReEngerger and InterLead Conferences, SLTP strives to empower student leadership through our Champion for Youth Awards. SLTP wants to help student leaders recognize those members of their schools and communities who make a positive significant difference for young people.

SLTP has feted: advisers, teachers, principals, assistant principals, coaches—all kinds from skating to soccer, crossing guards, custodians, bus drivers, Youth Directors, Youth Ministers, little league coaches, SRO's, DARE officers, social

workers, guidance counselors, Booster Club Presidents, Band Directors, dance teachers, MassSTAR chairs, college activity directors and parents.

ALL SLTP alumni, their parents and staff are invited to nominate those deserving of this award. Nominations must include a typewritten rationale of 100-200 words

One of the best parts of this award is that it provides the opportunity for student leaders to catch others doing things right.

The awards are presented at the REE & the InterLead and include a letter from

our Communication Director, a press release, the Award certificate, plus differencemaking student camperships.

Alumni and Staff should send their nominations for the CYA to champions@sltp.info by March 3.

Nominations should include biographical data for the nominee as well as the rationale.

Deadline for nomination: March 3.

Portfolios continued from page 4

The deadline is February 15.

Portfolios are the best pathways to scholarships.

- Copy and insert news clippings that highlight your achievements or a project that you were involved in
- Describe the leadership roles you held during particular projects
- Document the time commitment involved in each service event, including the number of hours and duration (ie three hours a week from November to January)
- For a personal touch incorporate creativity and self-expression
- Remember to be sincere

and brief-- you want the portfolio to honestly speak for itself and spur additional questions

- Cap off the documentation with a list of your short and long term goals for service and leadership

SLTP will award its next service and personal development portfolio awards at the InterLead Conference at Nichols College during a special ceremony on April 2, 2006:

There are three levels of Awards based on time and level of commitment:

Bronze
Silver
Gold

To be eligible submit a copy of your service or personal development portfolio by:

February 15, 2005
to Jim Fitzgerald 108 Observatory Way Marshfield, MA 02050.

Join us !

Join us. Help SLTP to grow and thrive. Become part of the action. We need help getting the word out . What can you do? Here are some direct action suggestions:

1. Join the Presentation Teams at SLTP information tables at various conferences
2. Join the Welcome Wagon team for our summer conferences to

3. Join the Facilitation Teams for one or all of the Parent Orientation Programs at the closing of this summer's conferences.
4. Join the Fundraising Teams to seek out in-kind donations from local businesses.
5. Join the Phone Calling Teams

to call schools and secure information.

6. Join the Recruiting Teams to present to parent groups.
7. Join the Connections theatrical troupe to present or help stage on of our traveling productions.
8. Apply to join our staff.

The InterLead Conference—April 2

The *InterLead* is a very special conference. Among the strong beliefs we hold are two. First, we believe students ought to have a voice in the issues that surround them and second, we believe that service should not be a “have to,” service should be a “get to.” At the InterLead we plan to provide opportunities for both.

The Forum will enable student leaders to rub elbows with and to express their opinions to business and community leaders. The issue is violence and specifically the issue is violence against women. We will examine how it affects schools

and why it is a student leadership issue.

We will also explore service as leadership in action. The breakout sessions will explore expanding service opportunities, learning how to stage particular events and exploring the possibilities for service inside and outside of school.

Our attendance goal is 250 – just one carload. It’s only 15 bucks each and it includes lunch!

We’ll learn who won the Student Leader of the Year.

We’ll learn who won citations for Public Service.

We’ll learn who won

citations for Personal Development.

We’ll celebrate the Lifetime of Difference Award winners.

We’ll learn, we’ll listen, we’ll laugh, we’ll see old friends and make some new ones.

So mark your calendar now – because we are planning a parent and adviser track for this conference. It’s **Sunday, April 2nd**.

See page 8 for a registration form.

2006 SLTP Conferences

Where leaders learn HOW to make a difference!

- **InterLead—the Inter-State Student Leadership Forum**
April 2

- **Officer Training Seminar**
July 6 - 7

- **Leadership Training Conferences (4)**

July 11 - 15; July 18 - 22;
Aug 1 - 5; Aug 8 - 12

- **Advanced Leadership Conferences (4)**

July 12 - 15; July 19 - 22;
Aug 2 - 5; Aug 9 - 12

- **Leadership in Athletics**

July 27 - 28

- **Adviser Certification**
July 27 - 28

The Leadership Center
July 12 - 15

The ReEnergizer Conference
November 25, 2006

Available? Continued from page 4

Adviser Certification

There is only one session which is open to all teachers, coaches and collegians and there are 10 slots left.

July 27-28

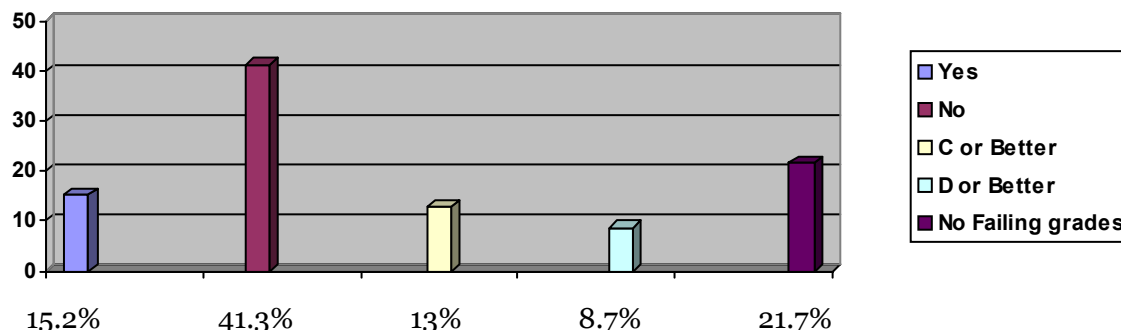
Leadership in Athletics

There is only one session which is open to secondary and collegiate athletes and their coaches and there are 24 slots left.

July 27-28

And the survey says . . .

This month's on-line survey asked: **Should participation in school activities depend on academic success?**



Yes by Robert Peolini, HS Physics teacher

Extra curricular activities are just that—EXTRA. When students become more interested in activities than school work, school work suffers.

Currently our school allows students with passing grades to participate in activities. Many students do just enough work to survive and no more.

Activities are all fun and games. It should a privilege open

only to successful students and even then the amount of activity should be reasonable. All too often the activities become so consuming as to interfere with a normal school day.

Today's academics require less distractions. With MCAS and NCLB (*ed note—MCAS is the test students must pass in Massachusetts to graduate & NCLB is the No Child Left*

Behind Act) there is no time left in the school day for fun and games.

Each year I bring to our faculty council a proposal to raise the required level of attainment for participation which I believe should be at a minimum a B average.

No, a thousand times NO! by Helen Fitzgerald, CASA Executive Director

No matter how many studies are published — and there have been dozens and dozens since I started teaching — some of my fellow “professionals” just don't get it.

Let me make it as clear as I can. Student activities are not “extra” nor are they “co-.” Student activities are part of every school's curriculum—as indispensable as math, English, science and whatever else the school offers.

Our obligation is to prepare students for life — for some that life includes college — for some it in-

cludes working in a trade — for some it includes working in a service industry. No matter what though, our obligation is to prepare our students for life.

The best news is that we do not have to invent new curriculum. We do not have to imagineer the means to teach life skills to our students. We have the vehicle in hand already. That vehicle is student activities. Through the clubs, activities and sports we CAN teach life skills.

So denying someone the opportunity to participate is tanta-

mount to denying them their rightful education. As teachers we should not be trying to uninvolve students, we should be trying to involve them.

Also keep in mind that every study of American education since the Eisenhower administration has pointed that as involvement in student activities rises, so do grades. The more involved a student is, the better they do academically. And the studies go further—the more activities a school offers, the better the entire school performs on National exams!

