

# True Points

a newsletter for the parents of student leaders

December, 2007

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## From where I sit By Dr. Jim Fitzgerald, SLTP Director



*“If I told you once, I told you a thousand times.”*

When I first started teaching I was lucky enough to work in a pilot program which combined the four main academic teachers into a team responsible for a cluster of students.

During this time, I learned a great deal about connectiveness and learning theory but I also learned a great deal about the personal side of teaching. I developed the understandings that I later put together to form the RELATIONAL element of my REAL theories.

You see, I was blessed to be working with a team of incredible teachers. Billy was the

science teacher and he had a gift for creativity. Ruth was the veteran, she taught us all how to be professionals. And finally there was an incredible math teacher named Maureen. Maureen was a very gifted facilitator.

I was absolutely amazed at her patience. She would work after school with the slowest kids going over and over math problems at the chalk board. One time after endless repetition, Maureen asked the student if she understood. With tears in her eyes and a crack in her voice, the student said no.

Maureen replied, “No problem, I’ll just repeat the steps until you do.” And so she did!

I marveled at her patience and later I told

her so. She replied with a thank you – but I persisted.

I wanted to know what kept her going and going like the energizer bunny repeating the same instructions step by step? It had to be both frustrating and boring. Most adults would give up. Most would say something like, “okay, why don’t you try this at home with your parents for a while and we’ll try again later.”

Maureen agreed that it was both frustrating and boring – but it was also a learning moment.

I agreed that the little girl had finally got it and her epiphany had to be rewarding. Maureen interrupted me – she

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## The ReEnergizer Conference—right time again

**By Mina Markarious, SLTP Staff**

Of the non-summer programming SLTP operates every year, the ReEnergizer is both the most and least representative of our general way of doing things. Unlike those programs, in which we have five full days to work with students, the ReEner-

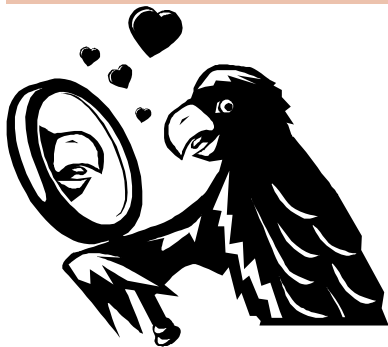
gizer is a mere four hours, though those hours are packed to the brim with learnings. Though it might not “feel” like our summer experiences, the ReE is very intensely tied to the program’s mission of empowering student leaders because it hits students

when they need it most.

Perhaps fittingly, Thanksgiving is a time of full plates for student leaders. Seniors are wrestling with college applications, classes are in full swing, student groups are begin-

*Continued on page 5*

# Teens and change



Adolescence is ALL about change—wholesale change.

## BIOLOGICAL CHANGES

- Their bodies are making the final transition from child to adult. Boys who mature late and girls who mature early often experience negative social and self-esteem consequences.
- Their bodies grow in spurts—hands, feet, nose growing first and that helps make them feel unattractive and clumsy.
- They reach sexual maturity sooner than in past generations—as young as 9. Their

heart, lungs and muscles are growing fast providing strength and endurance.

## COGNITIVE CHANGES

- A teenager's prefrontal cortex is rapidly developing producing a higher-level adult-thinking capability. Adolescents can now think in more categories, more abstractly, less egocentrically, more idealistically and with more organization to their thoughts. They are growing adept at using inference and logic—yet this new cognitive skill fuels the emotional /social side as it helps them to see and hear things that are not there.
- Their cognitive development makes them more adept forming arguments which helps to stir debates with their parents. Since they are also better at reasoning, they are more likely to question parental authority and rules because they can conceive of other possibilities.

- A teenager's limbic system where raw emotions are rooted is in overdrive. The levels for neurotransmitters such as serotonin drop, making teens more likely to act impulsively. They naturally crave greater and greater sensations in order to raise their serotonin levels and thus make themselves feel good.
- Adolescents can selectively attend to stimuli (often mistakenly called multitasking), which means they can divide their attention between several stimuli. That is why they enjoy studying while listening to music or watching TV.
- They have better short and long term memory capabilities, they are faster at processing information and they can implement organizational strategies or plans of action. This often exacerbates the conflict with parents or other adults as teens see these changes

Continued on page 3

## From where I sit continued from page 1

said of course it was those things – that is why we teach after all – the epiphanies – but the epiphany is the reward – there has to be something more than that to endure through the frustration. For Maureen, she chalked up every situation like that to a practical experience in patience. Each and every time she had to repeat the step by step process, it was an opportunity for her to practice patience.

That skill and her love of math made her the best math teacher I ever saw in action.

While I doubt I will ever be as patient as Maureen, every time I find myself in a teaching or

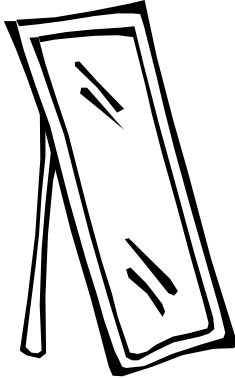
counseling situation where it is necessary to repeat this idea or that concept over and over again, I never get irritated. You see I am ready.

I know that if I have to tell you once, I'm ready to tell you a thousand times.

## Teens and change *continued from page 2*

as evidence they are smarter than the adults.

- Teenagers hold to their own personal fables seeing their experience as totally unique. They move through their day performing for an imaginary audience that is watching them and knows their thoughts. The result is that teens are highly self conscious. I call the condition being “self conspicuous.”
- There is a deep sense of invulnerability.
- Teens are forming their own sense of identity which includes their own set of **STRONGLY** held opinions.



Changes can be divide into 5 categories:

- **EMOTIONAL CHANGES** Includes the upheaval in their closest relationships—friends, family and especially parents. Childhood friendships often come crashing to an end during 6th, 7th or 8th grades and again in 11th and 12 grade. Parental relationships become dramatically different—sometimes worse, sometimes better.
- **BEHAVIORAL CHANGES** They want to decide things on their own—little things and big things. And when they are not involved in the decision—look out! They can accept and choose to accept the responsibility for their actions. They want credit for doing things right.
- **VALUES** Teens develop the principles and standards to guide their actions—taking pride in what they achieve.
- **IDENTITY** They strive to find their place. They want to belong to something. They want to find who they are.
- **SPIRITUAL** Teens spiritual beliefs mirror their cognitive devel-

opment. They become more abstract, principles and independent. They are very much interested and fascinated by spiritual and ideological issues.



### **SOCIAL EMOTIONAL CHANGES**

Teens experience a change in status as they are recognized by society as adults. The inconsistency and arbitrary nature of the age at which teens acquire the adult privileges (work permit, dating, driving, voting, etc) affixes a muting of the status. The age for each privilege varies from state to state and community to community. Schools do little or nothing to improve the confusion. Responsibility is a word most used as a bludgeon and the role of student activities is rarely credentialed. In general the Social / Emotional

## Get involved –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 meet and greet the parents dropping off their kids.
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.

# Truth and lies about teens

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.

## The ReEnergizer Continued from page 1

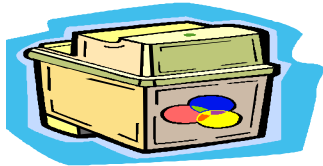
ning to experience tensions, even high school faculty start to feel the physical and emotional fatigue brought on by three months of hard work. It is the time student leaders are most needed to keep up the energy in a school, yet they too need someone to pick up their energy.

This is where the ReEnergizer comes in. The conference works in several ways to restore energy to student leaders. First, the ReEnergizer allows students to interact with half a thousand others who are facing the

same difficulties and to share ideas, and emotions with them. Second, the ReEnergizer literally helps add student energy. Make no mistake about it the ReEnergizer is an SLTP conference and as such comes with an enthusiastic and positive staff and a loud and productive atmosphere. Finally, the ReEnergizer helps to restore the confidence of student leaders. By holding two experiential workshops, and a powerful educational play, the ReEnergizer allows delegates to remember their toolbox of

skills for difficult times. Ultimately, the result is exactly what we intended: a “learningfull” pick me up for students who are best poised to empower student participation and leaders.

## Recycling



At the ReEnergizer we will once again be collecting toner cartridges from copiers and printers. SLTP has signed up to participate

with a national organization. They take care of postage, all we have to do is collect the cartridges and seal the box. Upon receipt of the box, the items are assessed for value and a check is cut to SLTP.

We did this at the ReE last year and the result was a 50 dollar contribution to SLTP.

Which is a real bonus for cleaning up the environment.

SO, if your school, home office or business has empty cartridges – don’t just chuck them in the trash, bring them along to the ReE.

## 2008 SLTP Conferences

Where leaders learn HOW to make a difference!

- **The ReEnergizer Conference**  
November 24
- **InterLead Leadership Forum**  
April 27
- **The Start Conference**  
June 8 & 9
- **Officer Training Seminar**  
July 1 - 2
- **Leadership Training Conferences (4)**  
July 8 - 12; July 15 - 19;  
July 22 - 26; July 29 - Aug 2
- **Advanced Leadership Conferences (4)**  
July 9 - 12; July 16 - 19;  
July 23 - 26; July 30 - Aug 2
- **The Leadership Center**  
July 9 - 12

We're on the Web!  
[www.sltp.info](http://www.sltp.info)  
**Information for Parents, Teachers, Students, Administrators Applications \***

## School size by Dr. Dave Tapscott, SLTP staff

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 respon-

siveness 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, lar-

ger 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.

## 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 identified 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](http://sltp.info)

## SLTP presents "why me?"

The newest theatrical presentation coming from SLTP is titled, "why me?" We are planning to premier one or two scenes at the SLTP Staff Family Luncheon. It is our hope to involve our families in the intentionality. We hope to foster an awareness of the seriousness of purpose in our curriculum. We are more than energizers and "polar bears."

At the Administrative Board Retreat we fleshed out a framework and recently Laura Murphy and Jim have been playing with all of the suggestions and ideas. The focus of this play is violence in schools.

Given all of the shootings that have happened over the past years- specifically the most recent in Virginia Tech, it is our responsibility to make a difference in our lives and our campers by writing and presenting this play.

Laura and Jim applied the framework created by the AB to the

story line created in "bang, bang, you're dead", the nationally acclaimed play by William Mastrogia-corno, which SLTP first brought to the east coast back in 1999.

For a while we considered offering that play again, but even with the considerable rewriting we did for it back in 2004, it is a muddled production. We do not want anything getting in the way of our message.

Violence and exclusion go hand in hand, and unlike the common response that there is nothing that can be done — we feel there is a great deal that can be done to prevent violence.

We want to make it personal and the feelings to be real. When we think of these situations we must think of confusion, we must think of loneliness, we must think of frustration. We see lots of victims and we see that the victims are upset

because they cannot fathom exactly what has happened. They just don't know.

But we've got to try. We owe it to our communities to make this difference.

This theatrical effort is being designed to maximize the participation of the audience — up to and including dialogue with the characters during the production—one of the student leaders will ask the audience what to do.

While Laura and Jim have provided a solid beginning — to be real, this play will require a lot of real dialogue and that is going to require a lot of effort from the student members of our staff.

The plan is to debut the play at the InterLead.

# Resume writing 101



Even though the applications are done, resume writing does not stop. Scholarships, grants, and eventually job applications and grad school beckons. Basically there are several places where SLTP belongs on a resume. See the following:

## Education

*ABC High School 2005 - 2008*

See attached transcript

*Nichols College 2007*

Organizational Behavior 3 credit hours Spring Semester

Transcript to be forwarded.

see also

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## Most significant leadership experiences

*Leadership Trainer Development Course, Student Leadership Training Program 2006, 2007, 2008*

The training course results in certification as a Leadership Trainer. Selection to the Course includes competition for one of only 15 available positions. Selection to staff requires completion of the rigorous 100 hour training course that teaches the essentials for leadership training - facilitation, debriefing, communication, presentation and group process.

*Leadership Trainer, SLTP 2006, 2007, 2008*

As a Leadership Trainer, responsible for . . .

*President, Cookie Cupcake Club 2006*

As president, responsible for community building, crisis management . . .

*Co-Chair Peer Leadership 2007*

As Co-Chair, responsible for . . .

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and also . . .

## Supplementary Education / Personal Development

*Student Leadership Training Program*

*Leadership Training Conference Session 1 2005*

Attended the five day experiential learning pro-

gram in July at Nichols College . .

*Advanced Leadership Conference Session 3 2005*

Accepted to attend the four day conference to further develop my leadership skills

*The Leadership Center 2007*

One of only eight students accepted to attend the intense four day program exploring modern leadership theory and practice.

*SLTP Staff Training Program*

*2006 to present*

Earned Leadership Trainer Certification 2006, 2007

*Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership Seminar 2006*

Selected to represent my high school by the faculty committee, attended the 2 day conference in June, 2006.

*Harvard Model Congress 2007*

Attended the four day conference in February of 2007, served as Chairperson of the House Ways and Means committee.

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and also

## Special Awards and Recognition

*Peter J. Baltren Leadership "Campership"*

Presented by the SLTP staff in recognition for achievement and level of participation Award includes scholarship to Advanced Leadership Conference.

*The Touchstone Award*

Presented by the SLTP Staff in recognition for achievement and application of skills. Award includes scholarship to The Leadership Center.

*Excellence Award for Collegiality*

Presented by the Administrative Board of SLTP in recognition for seeking to enhance personal learning by helping to secure the learning of other staff members.

*Public Service Gold Medal Award*

Presented by SLTP in recognition of the 100 hours of community service.

*Personal Development Gold Medal Award*

Presented by SLTP in recognition of the personal enrichment and learning necessary to achieve status as a Leadership Trainer

## Bullying & violence will not be wished away



Recently there has been a lot of talk in education circles, in the media and certainly from our politicians regarding har-

assment issues in schools.

To hear the talk one would think that the only harassment issue that exists in schools deals with sexual identity. While I applaud the new found awareness, I am appalled that this awareness is wearing blinders.

SLTP will remain focused on bullying and harassment of ALL students and staff. We see this as an issue of exclusion vs. inclusion. At the ReE we examined the students who are left out and left behind through our play “if not you who?” We believe that inclusion is the number one priority for ALL student leaders.

The US Department of Education reports that in 2001,

12 percent of students ages 12-18 reported someone at school used hate-related words against them. Further, the Department of Education reported that the nature of this hate speech varied—from words related to race, religion, political view, disability to sexual identity or orientation. 12 per cent reported it — clearly a sign of a very broad problem.

One of the best anti-bullying sites [www.bullypolice.org](http://www.bullypolice.org), reports that 90 percent of students felt being bullied caused social, emotional, or academic problems and that both bullies and their victims have problems later in life.

The facts about bullying and violence are staggering.

Each month, 250,000 plus students are physically attacked in schools! The American Association of School Psychologists estimates that over 1,000,000 high school students suffer through hate-related verbal abuse at school. Further 69 percent of high school students report that school officials including guidance counselors and administrators respond

poorly or not at all to reports of bullying.

Our schools must teach students and teachers to interact with civility and respect among and toward all persons regardless of status, or condition. Schools should and must model those expectation and teach guidelines which equip students with the skills to become positive citizens in the school.

Bullying is not just the issue of the month. Being the issue of the month is why it is a problem that continues to go unsolved.

It is time to stop talking a talk. It is time to walk the talk we have started with our plays—“if not you who?” and “stop, look and listen.”

When schools take action to include, things get better. When schools take action to disavow words that hurt, things get better.

There are too many kids who are left out and left behind. There are too many kids who are victimized at school. There is too much exclusion.

## The Jester and Pharley Phynd



The Jester has lost his jingle by David Saltzman is among our favorite stories.

Reading it at camp after the difference makers is one of the highlights for every CC and Director.

The Saltzman family has created an opportunity for

you to bring your favorite book to kids in the hospital suffering with cancer. It is called “the Reading To Give” Program. It is a read-a-thon to raise funds to bring copies of the Jester to those kids in the hospital.

The mission of the organization is as follows: To provide educational experiences that give every child a sense of hope, a feeling of self empowerment, a love of learn-

ing, the joy of laughter and a desire to live up to Pharley’s motto: It is up to us to make a difference. It is up to us to care.

We recommend and endorse this worthy cause. Visit: [www.thejester.org](http://www.thejester.org)

Remember, if you decide to sponsor a read-a-thon, please keep us posted. We want to honor your achievements.

## Think about it.

What are the biggest lessons you've learned in life? Did you learn by reading a book? By your favorite lecture? Or by doing something? We suspect it was through something you did, or something that happened to you.

It's the same with growth as a leader. When students directly help someone in need (*putting their words into action*), they grow as an individual and as a leader.

Act now to take a leap into effective leadership. Encourage student leaders to join us at one of the 11 summer conferences in 2008. And besides all the different weeks, there are four different levels of the experience...*all designed to boost individual student's skills and knowledges:*

Be sure to visit <http://www.sltp.info> frequently for updates.

We teach . . .

Leadership **ideals**

Leadership **skills**

Leadership **practices**

For more information or to download applications visit:

[http://  
www.sltp.info](http://www.sltp.info)

## Our Conferences

**The START Conference**

June 8 & 9

**Officer Training Seminar**

July 1,2

**Leadership Training Conferences**

July 8-12; 15-19; 22-26; 29– Aug 2

**Advanced Leadership Conference**

July 9-12; 16-19; 23-26; 30– Aug 2

**Adviser Certification Conference**

July 12-13

**The Leadership Center**

July 9-12

**The ReEnergizer**

November 29, 2008