

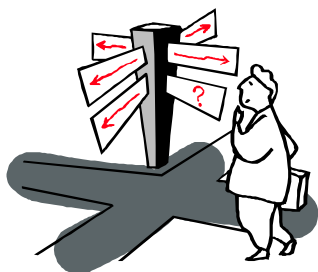
The DifferenceMaker

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student leadership The **S**tudent **L**eadership **T**raining **P**rogram

Leaders walk their talk.

A Newsletter for School Activity Advisers and Administrators



Cutting

by Dr. Jim Fitzgerald, SLTP Director

Not long ago in a galaxy far, far away. There was a student leadership program with a staff much like our own. The facilitator of that group had this story to share.

Rose is a sweet, quiet girl who usually dresses in jeans and a sweatshirt. When she first started attending our sessions she was determined to keep to herself. So whenever our group gathered in the living room, she found a way to be seated on the stairs or behind one of the poles. It was always a challenge to get her involved.

After she had been involved with the training for a little while, I deepened the bonding process with our group. I watched Rose as she sat riveted listening to the others as each began to reveal their struggles, but not Rose. I felt something was going on.

One evening during a long IM session while Rose was telling me nothing – I leapt to a conclusion (one based on a lot of observation and finally connected). I asked – “Are you in the cutting club?”

After what seemed to be an eternity, the screen responded, “Yeah.”

I was shocked, even though I thought I had made the right conclusion, I was still shocked. Over the next hour, she described the pain and the hopelessness she'd been feeling for the past year ever since her parents divorce.

15 years ago when I was a high school teacher, there was an occasional case of self-mutilation among teens. But up until that moment, that problem seemed far from infiltrating our leadership family. That was naive. Since then I have taken a survey of all of the leadership groups I work with in schools

across the country. I discovered that about 1 in 10 cut.

Rose and I chatted with her Mom. Mom and Rose sought out and attended counseling. Rose continued in our program and has not fallen back into the cutting trap.

Why tell this story? The easy answer is that silence is complicity. Cutters cut out of some deep personal motivation. Certainly it is depression driven, but it is not something that friendship alone can solve. Cutters need and seek professional help. Cutters want to be discovered and almost always share what they are doing with someone. If a friend shares such a tale with you – be a friend and get them the help they deserve.

Some typical signs to watch for:

- Girls ages 14-16 are most prone
- Most often it is the wrists or legs though some cut their chest, arms or breasts
- Many who cut wear bands of bracelets and large watches to conceal the scars – those who cut on their legs rarely wear shorts
- Cutters also suffer from depression and may be bulimic or anorexic

What to do?

Get help.

End the silence.

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Upcoming Conferences

- ◆ DifferenceMaker Showcase - April 3
- ◆ Officer Training Seminar - July 1-2
- ◆ Summer Conferences July and August

Reflection and Celebration = the Adviser's role

In Massachusetts alone there are approximately 280,000 students in high school.

Of those students, less than 2,000 participated in ANY form of leadership training (.007 %).

In those schools there are approximately 50,000 student leadership positions available, which were filled by approximately 18,000 students. (.06 %)

by Jen McGonagle, Teacher, River Valley Charter School

The most effective leaders are always looking for a way to improve. The most effective advisers are always seeking the means to increase their student skills. How do you take a great service project and make it even better? Include time for reflection, appreciation and celebration.

Students often say that they are involved with service for selfish reasons because volunteering can deliver such a large dose of personal growth and satisfaction. This mutual benefit is called reciprocity. The best service projects maximize benefits for everyone involved. Learning is one of the best results of service. Build in time for your students and adult volunteers to reflect and share the lessons they learned. This can be as simple as making time for a guided conversation. Journaling is another great way to keep track of personal learnings and understandings.

Volunteers by definition don't get paid, at least not with tangible rewards. Appreciation goes a long way towards making a volunteer feel valued. Make sure to thank people specifically and

immediately. Certificates, tokens of appreciation, letters to the editor and bulletin board displays are all ways to publicly thank volunteers.

A celebration ceremony can be an effective forum to say thank you. Successful celebrations raise spirits and heighten a sense of belonging. Throughout your festive ceremony or event highlight specific achievements and people. Celebrations can take on many forms such as slide shows, fun outings, ice cream socials, banquets or pep rallies. These are all memorable events that will help keep volunteers coming back for more.

Achievement without appreciation is hollow. Experience without thorough processing is shallow. Our role as teachers is to empower our students by providing them with the opportunity to find depth in their experiences and receive the justified praise for their service.

With planning and commitment you can turn a great service project into a spring board for learning, appreciation and celebration.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

--Margaret Mead

Service Portfolios

Service portfolios are a collections 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)
- 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)

Portfolios, continued from page 3

- 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 DifferenceMaker Showcase Conference at Nichols College during a special ceremony on April 3, 2005:

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.

"Everyone can be great because anyone can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't even have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve...You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

--Martin Luther King, Jr.

Youth Service on the rise

Community service is up among teens. Young people across the country who have heard over and over again that they are the future have decided to jumpstart their leadership by making a difference in their communities now.

According to UCLA/Higher Education Research Institute Annual Freshmen Survey done in 1999, youth service is up 12% over the last decade. Both the number of service learning programs at schools and the number of schools that make community service a graduation requirement are also increasing.

Here are some tips to ignite a fever of community service in your school or organization:

- Invite peers to join you in

projects. Lots of people just need a little nudge to get started.

- Seek out adult advisors that support student involvement.
- Create ways to appreciate volunteers publicly.
- Combat stereotypes that label teens as apathetic by sending local newspapers press releases about teens making differences.
- Initiate service learning courses at your school
- Celebrate and recognize voluntary service

The 200 SLTP Conference Schedule

at

*Nichols College in Dudley, Massachusetts
Where leaders learn HOW to make a difference!*

- *The ReEnergizer Conference - Saturday, November 27*
- *DifferenceMaker Showcase - April 3*
- *Officer Training Seminar - July 1-2*
- *LTC's July 5-9; July 12-16; July 26-30; Aug 2-6*
- *ALC's July 13-16; July 27-30; Aug 3-6*
- *TLC July 6-9*
- *Adviser Certification July 27-30*

We're on the Web!

www.sltp.info

Information for Parents, Teachers, Students, Administrators
Applications * Photos

Bring SLTP to your School and Community

Connections, the SLTP theatrical troupe have agreed to take “*stop, look and listen*” on the road for a limited engagement. Last year, the play was presented at the Rhode Island Association of Student Council’s Conference, Northbridge High, Coventry High, East Greenwich High and at the MassSTAR Citizenship Conference.

Several schools have expressed interest in hosting the play for a Friday night special event in their auditoriums. “*stop, look and listen*” is a highly interactive theatrical presentation which focuses on the reality of the social, emotional and physical bullying that exists in every high school.

The play is very

powerful and very moving, perhaps because it was written for students by students. It is all too real, and there are no Disney-esque answers provided. Those answers can only be found the hard way – by leaders rolling up their sleeves and going to work. The play is intended to enhance awareness and provide the opportunity for real discussion.

The Administrative Board have developed a packet of materials for the attending schools which include suggested activities and discussions to help implement the message.

If your school would like to arrange to host one of these Connections presentations please contact Jim Fitzgerald via email –

jim@sltp.info



*Together we can
make a difference.*

Recommended Web Resources - Bullying

The US Department of Education indicates that less than 10% of HS students are victims of bullying. SLTP’s surveys over the past two years confirm the US Secret Service findings that bullying is far more widespread. The effects of emotional and social bullying far outweigh the physical injuries suffered at the hands of the cartoon image of the typical bully.

Recently across our region there have been headline stories involving hazing and students planning retaliation for bullying.

Finding the role for student activities as part of the solution to violence or retaliation is vital.

The following “edulinks” are taken from our Web Resource pages
For more visit:

<http://www.sltp.info/resources>

[Bullying: Information for Parents and Teachers \(CAN\)](http://www.ifcc.on.ca/bully.htm)

<http://www.ifcc.on.ca/bully.htm>

[Focus: What Parents and Teachers Should Know](http://www.focusas.com/Bullying.html)

<http://www.focusas.com/Bullying.html>

[Bully Sandpit \(AUS\)](http://www.caper.com.au/Bullypit.htm)

<http://www.caper.com.au/Bullypit.htm>

[Bullying at School \(UK\)](http://www.scre.ac.uk/bully/)

<http://www.scre.ac.uk/bully/>

[Stop Bullying Now](http://www.stopbullyingnow.com)

<http://www.stopbullyingnow.com>

Our Bullying Resources page contains links to sites developed for parents and students as well. While most of the best available research is being done in Europe and Australia, since Columbine there has been a significant upswing in the amount of research being completed on bullying in the US.