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student leadership

The Student Leadership Training Program
A Newsletter for the Advisers of Student Activities

The DifferenceMaker

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 2 THE DIFFERENCEMAKER—AN ADVISER NEWSLETTER

From Where I Sit by Dr. Jim Fitzgerald SLTP Founder & Director



Through-
out history,
some very smart
people have
made some very
not-so-smart com-
ments about new ideas.

This telephone has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no use to us.

- Western Union internal memo, 1876
- Irving Fisher, professor of economics, Yale University, 1929

We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out.

- Decca Recording Company, rejecting the Beatles, 1962

Can't, sing,, can't act, too short, not much style, can dance a little.

- MGM memo attached to Fred Astaire's screen test, 1930

There is no good reason why anyone would want or need a computer in their home.

- Ken Olson, president and founder of Digital Equipment Corporation, 1977

And one of my favorites...

Everything that can be invented, has been invented.

- Charles Duell, US Office of Patents Commissioner,

1899

We may and we should laugh at these foolish statements that were uttered with such certainty, but those of us who labor in the complex world of education and student leadership training would do well to use words like these as reminders to keep our hearts and minds open to new ideas. The world of student activities needs leaders who understand the times, leaders willing to retool their thoughts about teaching and learning.

Today's youth are a special generation

Continued on page 4

What is it? A peek at what we do—Dorm Squad

You know the scene very well. After a couple hours of driving and a missed turn or two, a car arrives at Nichols College following the signs to Remillard Dormitory and upon pulling around back to the parking lot, the occupants of the car are treated to quite a site. In the parking lot there is a flurry of activity and a glorious hubbub of noise. The cars are being attacked by teens dressed as pirates and luggage is being

swept away to a gathering space near the door.

At this point the trepidation about attending is tangible. But before any argument can begin, the pirates are at the door asking for the luggage and reminding the teen inside to have their med forms in hand. A quieter, calmer voice from one of the pirates welcomes all of the occupants, gives another

Continued on page 3

The Reenergizer Conference—400 “Go M.A.D.”

On Saturday, November 26, the tenth annual ReEnergizer Conference was held at Nichols College. Delegates from 104 schools joined us to make it one of the largest conferences, as well as the **loudest**, the **funnest** and the **learningest** conferences held in New England this fall. The theme was “Go M.A.D.” and the acronym stood for Make A Difference.

We had over 400 register. Even with the big crowd, registration and Confluence went very smoothly. It seemed like everyone brought lots of friends and everyone was in the mood to have some fun.

We celebrated the region’s Champions for Youth with award packets and certificates. The CFY came from all over the region. Watching the students who nominated these community leaders as their Champion rose to go to the stage was wonderful.

The delegates were featured with a special presentation of our new play about inclusion “if not you—who?” This play confronts the issue of the students who are left out, left be-

hind and excluded on an everyday basis.

Early on we met the newest student members of SLTP’s Alumni Executive Board who will work in concert with our Administrative Team to continue to open the ways and means of networking student leaders.

Again this year we offered separate workshop sessions for all our groups—students, collegians, parents and advisers. There were 104 colleges, middle and high schools represented, with attendees traveling from as far away as NY to be with us.

Attendees left with the coveted Early Bird Applications as well as lots of specific information regarding the submission of portfolios for the Service and Development Medals.

The skillshops focused on Communication within groups and during projects those forces impact on student activities. Naturally the activities involved were pretty active, and who would have guessed that a haircut could be so funny?

The play focused on the left

behind, left out, ignored and excludes. It raised awareness about the everyday and ordinary things that happen in schools that are often very painful. The discussion and processing of the play seemed to involve nearly everyone in the audience.

The door prizes included tee-shirts, video tapes and Resource Books. One of the advisers took home SLTP’s newest resource, the IT Kit, which is large shoebox filled with activity ideas, directions and toys. The Kaplan raffle was won by a parent from Swampscott, MA.

The next big event on the SLTP Calendar is the InterLead Conference, which is a student leadership forum on current issues and community service. The InterLead is scheduled for April 2 at Nichols.

Our new play— “if not you-who?”

Our Connections theatrical troupe has written several plays, a number of which have been widely acclaimed. All of our plays are directed towards student leaders and the issues they face.

Last summer we produced “*silence is NOT an option*” which dealt with the issue of abuse towards women. Did you know that 1 out of 4 high school females are involved in an abusive relationship?

Three years ago we produced “*stop, look and listen*” our award winning production dealing with physical, social and emo-

tional bullying. Did you know that our Federal Government still insists that only 18% of high school students have ever experienced bullying?

At the ReEnergizer Conference we presented “*If not you – who?*” This production concerns the highest percentage of students in every school. That is because this production is about those who are left behind, left out, ignored, picked on, bullied or excluded from real involvement in their schools.

Like all of our theatrical productions, “if” was written by

students for students. “If” presents what we like to think of as windows to everyday occurrences – selected not because they are rare or obscure but because they are NOT. While these do not happen every day, they are ordinary everyday events – there is nothing unusual except the attention we pay by placing the events on stage.

The occurrences range from the words we use (retarded, gay, etc), to gossip, to exclusion, to bullying, to closet racism.

The Jester & Pharley Phund

Recently we heard from Claire, the Director of the Phund who called to congratulate SLTP for binging the message to so many students who want to make a difference. We are proud to share that over 17 alumni have begun read-a-thon fundraising programs in their towns.

The Jester has lost his jingle is among our favorite stories. Reading it at camp after the difference makers is one of the highlights for every CC and Director.

In case somehow you missed this plea for help, the Saltzman family has created an opportunity for you to bring this amazing 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 learning, 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.

SLTP recommends and endorses this worthy cause.

Visit: www.thejester.org

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

What is it—Dorm Squad? continued from page 1

reminder about the med forms and explain that the registration will take place under the green canopy near the door.

So what is it all about?

It is all part of the plan. The registration process at any conference is usually dead time. It is filled with waiting. Filled with lines. Filled with boredom. We change that.

The dorm squad is in part a vehicle to speed up the registration process (we usually have everyone registered in 30 minutes). The costumes and the routines

engage everyone. It is funny and fun to watch. The antics give those in line something to talk about other than the weather, the long ride or the waiting. All of the students who register now have something tangible in common. They have a common history. That is the first step towards the formation of our group.

Over the years, dorm squad have been many things including pirates, surfers, ducks, clowns, doctors, paparazzi, cowboys, construction workers, painters, artists, firemen, and even lil

children. All the roles have been played "over the top." More than a few cars have driven past the parking lot to think it over. We've even had tourists stop to ask what is going on.

As an opening statement it really works for us. It states plainly that here we are willing to take risks and that we are decidedly different for other conferences you might attend.

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; ad-

dress; 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

From where I sit continued from page 1

Theirs is a generation ready for authentic service. They possess a great sense of social consciousness and justice and they are looking for meaningful ways to help others. They search for adventure and are not as driven by success or money. They provide more hours of voluntary service than any generation prior to them.

Today's youth are looking for teachers who will believe in them, who will listen to them, who will equip them with skills and knowledges that they can use, who will encourage them and empower them.

Today's youth want to be involved in a meaningful way. They want to belong. They want to contribute.

Teenagers don't seem to have respect for anything anymore.

Sex, drugs, rock & roll and video games—that all you need to know about teens today.

Giving teens leadership training is like putting the maniacs in charge of the asylum.

Teens have no notion of common courtesy, basically they are rude.

All of those statements came from vice principals I have spoken with during the last year.

We know different, don't we? We see it. We live it. We can help.

SLTP can and will empower student leadership. SLTP makes a difference by empowering kids to make differences.

During each week of camp, we role model acceptance. We listen. We encourage. We teach practical APPLICABLE lessons about skills our students can use.

SLTP is a fantastic vehicle, about the only thing I can find wrong is that we do not reach enough kids. I see so many kids in the schools where I speak, who should go. I see many who MUST go. Yet, I am not able to reach them.

Some turn away because I am too old, and they have learned not to trust teachers. Some turn away because they believe I am "selling" something and they don't want to be sold. It really bothers me that I can't get them all to come.

I have to remind myself what an un-natural act it is to go to a leadership camp. Especially since most people believe that there is such a thing as a born leader. I have to remind myself not to take their rejection personally — but I do. I have to remind myself that it is an extremely high risk thing to do—going to a leadership camp—when asked by your peers where you are going it is hard to come up with a cool wise-ass comment about heading off to leadership camp.

But then I come back to square one — the urgency. The need for student leadership is huge and getting bigger. Co-curricular activities are under siege. They remain the school's lifeblood from the student's point of view — but that point of view is often regarded as unimportant.

Getting kids to camp is my first and last priority. They need us. So let's make a deal, let's keep reaching out.

National Mix it up Day was HUGE!

Last month more than 1,000,000 students accepted the challenge to begin bridging social boundaries in their schools. On **Mix It Up at Lunch** Day 2005 schools all over the country helped students to step out of their comfort zones and sit some-

where new, with someone new. More than 40 of SLTP's member schools participated this year.

To read specific stories related to this National Event, visit their website. There you will find lots of information about the struggles and triumphs that stu-

dents faced to pull this off.

www.tolerance.org

Adviser Certification

Everyone involved in student activities understands the value of cocurricular programs to both school and community. That value has been acclaimed in virtually every national study of our system of education. Yet very little training has been offered for the advisers, sponsors or coaches who are charged with those activities.

Essentially this program provides the opportunity to learn and master the techniques and methodology of advisership. It is a comprehensive program quite unlike most hour long workshops and even day long seminars that merely skim the surface by offering only idea sharing. To begin with, our program reviews the basic skill areas that are

essential to successful advisership - *organization, group process, structure, project planning, involvement, motivation and leadership training*, then we approach the step by step progression through all the aspects of activity programming as teacher preparation.

Fundamentally we hold that successful advisership is the result of actively teaching and preparing students to lead themselves. So the intent of the program is to enable and prepare advisers to teach leadership skills to their students. As a result, our program is experiential in nature.

The registration fee covers program materials and meals for the four days. The dorm and classrooms are air-conditioned. The program materials include: a leadership manual, an adviser's manual, a book of ideas, an adviser's "toolbox", a program shirt, and a group photo.

Registration is limited. Professional Development Points will be awarded.

Applications and more information can be found on line.

Join us—July 27-28!

Talking a talk

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

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, 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.

Each month, 250,000 plus students are physically attacked in schools and 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 stu-

dents report that schools 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 expectations 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 — that 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.

After Further Review by Liz Agosto, SLTP Staff



Danny Seo created an organization called Earth 2000 when he was 12 years old and by the time he was 18 had participated in and organized several successful lobbying efforts, boycotts and protests. Using his experience, Seo wrote *Generation React: Activism for Beginners* as a guidebook for youth activism. Seo built the book on the belief that one person, no matter their age, can make a difference in the world. The book is peppered with practical tools and tips, such as sample press releases and letters to legislators, as well as terminology that is useful when dealing with the media, lobbying the senate or organizing an event. While the book is geared toward youth activist organizations with such details as how to launch campaigns and effectively stage boycotts and protests, all types of student leaders can still find useful information in this book.

Of particular interest to student organizations can be the chapters on fundraising and public relations. Seo provides helpful hints on creating effective fundraising efforts

and features some creative money-making ideas, such as speaking to representatives at the local mall to find out if they donate the coins in the water fountains to local organizations. Other students may find the chapters on student rights and lobbying useful. In his discussion of lobbying, Seo stresses that student voices can make a difference in major political decisions. He presents information on how to contact local legislators and ways that youth voices can be heard. He also points out that it is important for students to know and understand what their rights are when it comes to being vocal about problems in their schools and he suggests that students visit the American Civil Liberties Union website to learn more about those rights.

Overall, *Generation React* has some very useful pieces of information that can help student leaders prepare events, reach a larger audience and work towards making a difference in their school and their world. Advisors and parents can use this book as a stepping off point to discuss effective ways of making change and to discover the issues that students are

passionate about. This book can also serve as an impetus for discussing contemporary issues in politics and can help underline some ways that adults can help students work towards making a difference. Seo provides several resources that are useful and informative and while some of them are out-of-date, the majority of the organizations and resources he lists are functioning and can be found online through a simple search. I recommend checking this book out of the local library and reading the sections that are relevant to you and the students you have contact with, particularly paying attention to the sections on student rights and lobbying which can be most useful for sparking dialogue with the youth around you..

Thank you—webbie to webbie



Thank you for passing the word along to your students about the ReE. We had an amazing turnout—104 schools!

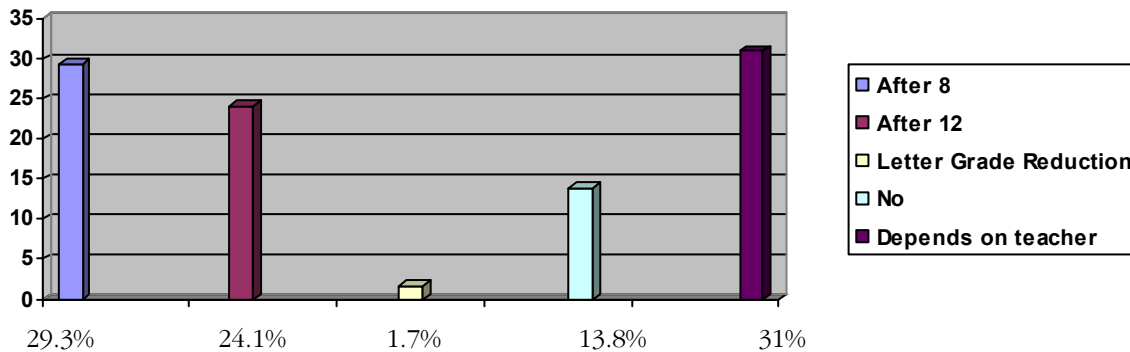
Thank you again for all of the contributions, notes and emails in support for our program and for this newsletter. We are looking forward to another successful year.

Just a reminder that contributions, suggestions for the SLTP newsletter are quite welcome. Send them to: jim@sltp.info

Have a wonderful Holiday Season. We'll see you "at the InterLead."

And the survey says . . .

This month's on-line survey asked: **Does your school punish excessive absences with academic failure?**



Yes, but I wish it didn't by Helen Fitzgerald, CASA Executive Director

Age old wisdom says that the punishment should fit the crime. If a student enjoys academic success in a class but has poor attendance, why punish him academically.

If we view attendance as important, and we should, we should address the issue of absence without compromising our integrity. That is what we do when we punish a student using grades. Grades are supposed to measure academics and

academics alone.

If we follow the logic of grade punishment, then we can take points off for not eating lunch, or running in the corridors, or throwing a spitball, or any one of hundreds of other offenses not related to academics.

Academic punishment is absurd. Yes, there is a nation wide problem with absenteeism. And solving it will take hard work. Academic punishment is

the cowards way out to a very complex issue.

No, but I wish it did. by Vinnie Compton, HS Geometry Teacher

Every day I am faced with the dilemma of multiple absences in every class. Luckily I do not work in the inner city where the number of absences is outrageous.

Students take off for vacation. They take off for college visits. They take mental health days. When they leave our schools for the real world, they will find that this is not tolerated.

We need to make a stand. Grades are the only message the students care about.

I am envious of schools that have a hard line approach to attendance. I read recently about the Boston schools that lock students out who are tardy. That sends exactly the right message.

Many students take easy

classes just so that they can coast and miss days whenever they want. The absentee policy might change their thinking.

Since 1990

Since 1990 the Student Leadership Training Program has been identified with the phrase “making a difference.” Every summer during each of the sessions, students and staff join to make differences within each other so that they may make differences for their schools and communities when they return.

One of the unique ingredients of the SLTP experience has always been the commitment to make a

difference while “at camp.”

Since 1990, SLTP has :

- Collected over 20,000 POUNDS of food
- Collected over 24,000 articles of clothing
- Made over 8,000 ornaments resulting in that many toys for needy kids
- Made eleven videos for children residing in battered

women’s shelters

- Made thousands of holiday cards for service men and women overseas
- Plus — 30,000 Peace Angels; dozens of Baby quilts; Games books; coloring books, pencil boxes placemats and thank you letters to servicemen.

The 2006 SLTP Conference Schedule

Where leaders learn HOW to make a difference!

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

April 1

- **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**

We’re on the Web!

www.sltip.info

Information for Parents, Teachers, Students,

Administrators

Applications *

Photos

Conference Brochures

Currently we have the following brochures posted on line:

- <http://staff.sltip.info/brochures/athleticsflyer.pdf>
- <http://staff.sltip.info/brochures/otsflyer.pdf>
- <http://staff.sltip.info/brochures/LTCflyer.pdf>
- <http://staff.sltip.info/brochures/ALCflyer.pdf>
- <http://staff.sltip.info/brochures/Adviserflyer.pdf>

Leadership Classroom—“words are all I have”

Reprinted with permission from “Confluence II”

Summary

Communication exercise using minimum vocabulary

15 - 20 minutes

Discuss as a group what they were able to communicate and how they managed it.

Possible Focal Points

- Teambuilder
- Warm-up
- Non Verbal Communication
- Listening skills

Energizer

Materials and Situation

Pens and paper

Timing

Procedure

Task the participants to choose only 10 words they would keep if they had to give up all of the others in their language.

Then task them to choose THREE of those ten to keep.

Form groups of two and direct the groups to hold conversations using ONLY the three words, but trying to convey as much information as they can.

Switch partners and attempt another conversation.

Switch partners again.

Form groups of 4 or 6.

Commentary

Going from 10 to 3 is a good way to ensure that participants focus on the things that are important to them. Generally there are participants who utilize a great deal of “body language” or non verbal communication and this will allow for both laughter and points to discuss.

The Power of Words by Mina Makarious, SLTP Staff

In SLTP’s newest play, “If Not You– Who?,” which premiered at the ReEnergizer conference, in one of the Windows (scenes) there is an exchange between two characters, Marissa and Doug, regarding Marissa’s comments on a new black student in the school.

The scene focuses primarily on the seemingly innocent, but deeply troubling remarks Marissa makes. In particular the scene focuses on Marissa’s assumption that the new black student will improve the basketball team. This subtle racism continues and Marissa asserts her beliefs that he must not be a very smart student.

The scene was just one example of the all too common fail-

ure to think about our words.

Marissa’s character had neglected to challenge her own assumptions about the new student or about race. As the author of this scene I was more than a little anxious about the audience reaction. I shouldn’t have been, as they reacted quickly. I felt a little sorry for Erin who was portraying Marissa, as the entire audience looked at her as a villain. The reason her words strike the audience so quickly is that at the ReE they *were* in a thinking mode, ready to analyze her language and its effects.

The play in turn asks audiences to consistently think

about words, the ones they say and the ones they hear in order to be able to change both the affects and effects of what they say.