

# Berkshire District Attorney's Office

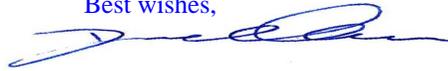
## Bullying Prevention Initiative

### Educator Newsletter

Dear Educator:

This publication is intended to support your efforts in creating a positive learning environment by providing you with information on prevention programs and activities that are current and relevant to students' own life experiences. Research shows that youth who are invested and engaged in school and community activities are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and reach their potential for future success. We look to well researched, evidenced based approaches to promote school climate change including mentorship, positive role models, supportive peer groups, and interactive teaching methods. We hope you find this resource helpful and encourage you to utilize this information in the application of your prevention plan.

Best wishes,



David F. Capeless  
Berkshire District Attorney

## Peer Leadership Program Serves 19 Schools, 285 Peer Leaders

The District Attorney's Peer Leadership Program, which fosters leadership in young people through education and service to others, served 19 middle schools in Berkshire County this fall. 285 eighth grade students participated in the 8-week program.

The program foundation applies best practices in peer mentoring fundamentals from Partners Against Hate, a collaborative of the Anti-Defamation League; the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund; the Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence and the National Association of Peer Program Professionals. The goal of the training is to develop and refine the students' leadership skills, reduce risky behaviors and improve overall school climate. A general principal of the program is the belief in the value and ability of young people to bring positive change in themselves and others.

The 8 week course, facilitated by the District Attorney's Office staff certified in peer mentoring, includes interactive discussions, media, role play, and activities on

topics such as healthy relationships, communication, public speaking, peer pressure, bullying, cyberbullying, labels, stereotyping, discrimination and substance abuse.



Because of the success of the program many schools have asked that the course be expanded from 8 weeks to one semester allowing students more learning hours to further enhance their leadership skills. This will be an option for schools in the fall of 2014.

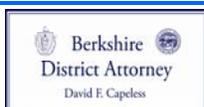
Participating schools: Gabriel Abbott Memorial School, Clarksburg Elementary School, Berkshire Arts & Technology Char-

ter Public School, Drury High School, Herberg Middle School, Hoosac Valley Middle School, Lee Middle & High School, Lenox Memorial Middle & High School, Monument Valley Regional Middle School, Mt. Everett Regional School, Mt. Greylock Regional High School, Nescacus Regional Middle School, Pine Cobble School, Reid Middle School, Richmond Consolidated School, St. Agnes Academy, St. Mark School, St. Mary's School, and St. Stanislaus-Kostka School.

For further information about the program please contact Carol Mulcahy at 413-443-5951.

### Peer Leadership Program Receives Certification

In November the office received word that after extensive review our Peer Leadership Program has received certification from the National Association of Peer Professionals.



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## Piloting Opportunity: WE WILL Curriculum - Pacer's National Center Against Bullying

The **WE WILL Generation** is an exciting new initiative developed by PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center that uses a students-teaching-students model to build leadership and encourage a change in culture to address bullying. The program is designed to inspire students to lead the bullying prevention movement.

**WE** = Uniting as a community

**WILL** = Create positive, inspired change

**GENERATION** = Recognizing today's students as leaders

PACER is offering schools the opportunity to participate in piloting the curriculum. Pilots will be provided with assistance including webinars, consultations, evaluations, and other resources. Pilots became available in November 2013. To access the program [register here](#).



A free on-line student-to-student curriculum is designed for high school student leaders to engage, educate and inspire other middle and high school students to be a part of the WE WILL Generation. The curriculum design includes:

- 5 lessons, approximately 30 - 60 minutes each

- Content that is student developed: videos, student advice, and pledge
- Capstone activity to be delivered in classrooms
- Student presenters, ideally in groups of 5 - 8, to present the curriculum to younger students; for example, 8th grade students presenting to 5th grade students.
- One or more adult advisors to lead and mentor the presenters

The curriculum starts by exploring the dynamics of bullying, then leads students towards thinking about how differences and diversity impact our behavior. The last three lessons focus on helping students think through their options of how to respond when faced with a bullying situation.

#WeWillGen

## Strategies for Connecting Students and School Staff: Relationship Mapping

The relationships formed between students and school staff members are at the heart of school connectedness. Students who perceive their teachers and school administrators as creating a caring, well-structured learning environment in which expectations are high, clear and fair are more likely to be connected to school. (Robert Blum, 2005). Students who feel connected to school are less likely to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, become involved in violence and dangerous activities and also less likely to experience emotional problems.

How do we identify the students that are not developing good relationships? One strategy to identify these students is **Relationship Mapping**.

In relationship mapping, school staff work

together to identify which students do - and do not - have positive relationships with school adults. Staff get together with all students' names posted on a wall and place a sticker on the names of students they have had a personal conversation with. The goal is to identify students who are not connected to any staff and choose staff members to reach out to those students.

An alternative strategy administers a survey to school staff (not just teachers but also counselors, coaches and others) asking them to identify students they have positive relationships with and students they think trust them. Results are compiled and an action plan developed to



reach out to students who were identified as lacking connections.

Some examples:

Read [an article from the Harvard Education Letter](#) that describes how one

school in Alaska did relationship mapping.

Read a [blog post on the Huffington Post](#) that describes how some schools use a color-coded "push pin" system to do relationship mapping.

**For additional resources**

Read about the [Search Institute's approach](#) to helping schools connect all students to adult support.

## PROJECT SEATBELT



**RK**  
PROJECT  
**SEATBELT**

Launched in June 2013, [RFK Project SEATBELT](#) aims to provide research-based information and resources to create safe environments that prevent bullying and other negative behaviors. RFK Project SEATBELT was developed and is managed by the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights in partner-

ship with the Making Caring Common Project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the Safe School Certification Program.

Does your school support the principles of Project SEATBELT - bullying prevention, engagement, leadership and teaching respect?

Many schools in Massachusetts have been employing efforts or programs for bullying prevention for some time now. Pro-

ject SEATBELT can provide you with some ideas on programs and practice that might help strengthen what you are already doing.

This new initiative is rooted in promotion of tolerance, respect and responsibility and can help you to promote an inclusive classroom. Its focus brings together resources not only for schools, but for parents and communities. For educators, their curriculum, **Speak Truth To Power** highlighted on page 4 is surely not to be missed.

## Fostering Kindness in Your Classroom

In 2009 Mark Shumaker, a 7th grade math teacher, received the Eureka Educator of the Year Award from Ohio Partners in Character Education for promoting kindness in his classroom and beyond.

At the start of each class he shares a quote along with a photograph and biographical information for the author and asks the students what they think the quote means. Mr. Shumaker encourages them to think about how the quote applies to their own lives.

He challenges his students to perform an act of kindness each week (see Weekly Character Challenge box). Together they talk about the importance of the challenge and how to meet it, and he provides examples to further their understanding.

At the end of the week the students journal their experience, express their feelings about the week's challenge, and rate how successful they were at meeting it. After reviewing the journals, Mr. Shumaker gives a completion grade at the end of the quarter.

Mr. Shumaker's efforts to promote kindness in the classroom enhance the school's efforts to reduce bullying. The school uses the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program to ensure that all adults are on the same page in regards to knowledge of bullying and how to respond. The school ap-

plies that by emailing all incidents and consequences to the whole staff ensuring that all adults are able to remain vigilant. Combining the classroom efforts along with the school-wide efforts creates a culture of character.

### WEEKLY CHARACTER CHALLENGE

**The Gratitude Challenge:** This week say "thank you" to anyone who does anything for you. You will be surprised at the gratitude you give in one day.

**The Courtesy Challenge:** We often forget to say "please" to others. This shows them we are thoughtful and not demanding, and this simple word can take you far. Be sure to use it this week!

**The Encouragement Challenge:** Everybody struggles and needs encouragement from time to time. This week offer encouragement to someone who looks like he or she could use it. This person could be a friend or foe, or somebody you wouldn't normally talk to.

**The Teacher Appreciation Challenge:** Show your teachers that you value their efforts, the lesson they are teaching, and the other students in the classroom. You can do this by participating in class, raising your hand, and listening when a teacher or another student is speaking.

**The No-Complaints Challenge:** Can you go the entire day without complaining? Well, try to go a whole week. You and everybody around you will appreciate your effort!

## Harvard Pilot Study Opportunity: SECURE Program for K-3

**SECURE** is a newly-designed universal school-based intervention that integrates executive function, self-regulation, and social-emotional skills into a high-quality language and literacy curriculum for children in grades PreK - 3.



SECURE is designed to support students' development of strategies that are aligned with positive classroom behavior and social-emotional health; students learn to focus their thinking, manage their behavior, build positive social relationships, and understand and deal with their feelings, in and outside of the classroom. The pro-

gram consists of (1) a set of daily classroom and school-wide structures and routines that build a positive and productive classroom and school, and (2) a set of weekly classroom lessons focused on the core concepts of SECURE that promote student competencies and skills necessary for the routines described above. These lessons use interactive and engaging formats such as reading thematic children's books, "Brain Games," role plays, and art projects. SECURE provides the training and on-going professional development and support structures needed for effective classroom and school-wide implementation.

Over the past five years, the SECURE Research and Development Team has devel-

oped, piloted, and evaluated the impact of the program in two low-income urban communities in the United States. Results showed positive effects on children's attention/impulsivity. They also found positive and statistically significant effects of the program on growth in both reading and math achievement. In addition, programmatic feedback from schools and teachers was positive; many educators commented that they observed improvements in the classroom setting, as well as in other areas within the school building

More pilot schools are being accepted. If you would like to see if your school qualifies, contact Trisha Anderson: [trisha\\_ross@gse.harvard.edu](mailto:trisha_ross@gse.harvard.edu)

## Middle School Classroom Assignment Impacts Students and Teacher

In an [edweek.org article](#), David Rockower details a writing assignment that changed his life and possibly the lives of many of his 6th grade students. In an effort to improve the climate of bullying and exclusion that he saw on a regular basis, he wrote them a letter. The letter compli-

mented them, but also honestly told them what he saw in regards to their behaviors toward others. He let them know that he remembered the feelings that many of them were experiencing. He then assigned them the task of writing him back and answering a few questions about what they were see-

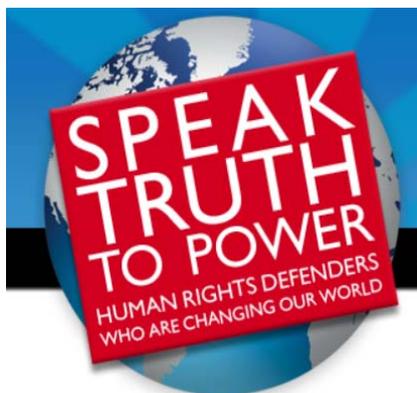
ing, what their level of involvement was, and how it made them feel. The honest replies and remarkable change in climate were inspiring.

*Take a moment to read his [article](#) and perhaps implement it in your classroom.*

## CURRICULUM: Speak Truth to Power: Human Rights Defenders

Speak Truth To Power, a project of the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, is a multi-faceted global initiative that uses the experiences of courageous defenders from around the world to educate students and others about human rights and urge them to take action.

The Speak Truth To Power curriculum introduces general human rights issues through the stories of some remark-



able people working in the field, and urges students to become personally involved in the protection of human rights. The curriculum, which includes 17 teacher-developed lesson plans for students in grades 6 - 12, is based on Kerry Kennedy's book, *Speak Truth to Power: Human Rights Defenders Who are Changing the World*.

In each story or lesson students learn about social justice principles and how and where they are grounded in international and domestic law. Beyond theory, students are provided with a tool kit for action, so they too can create change in the classroom, community, country and world.

The hope is that the actions of the defenders represented in [Speak Truth To Power](#) will incite students to pursue their own course of action, whether through an integrated classroom experience, a service learning project or an extra-curricular club activity.

## Resources

Supporting youth in working towards building a positive school climate does not have to cost money. There are free or low cost resources available:

[Making Caring Common Project](#), a website from the **Harvard Graduate School Of Education**. Inspired by the newest research this site can help you promote social and emotional learning. They offer strategies and resources that you can implement in your classroom and also ideas to bring to your whole school's climate or bullying prevention committee.

The **American Psychological Association** has a [comprehensive unit](#) to build your knowledge and develop your skills in connecting with students.

[The School Connectedness - Improving Students' Lives \[pdf\]](#) is the first in a series of monographs highlighting the best and promising practices for schools developed by the Military Child Initiative at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The report identifies successful approaches for improving "school connectedness."

[Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility](#) educates young people for hopeful engagement with their world. [TeachableMoment](#), a project of Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility, fosters social responsibility through K - 12 classroom lessons that:

- Encourage inquiry and critical thinking on current issues
- Support social and emotional learning

**Rosalind Wiseman** is the author of *Queen Bees and Wannabes: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends, and Other Realities of Adolescence* that was the basis for the 2004 movie *Mean Girls*. Recognizing that boys' issues and problems have been ignored, Rosalind just published *The Guide: Managing Jerks, Recruiting Wingmen, and Attracting Who You Want*. This non-fiction ebook is a manual to help boys navigate common yet complex problems that often arise in adolescence. The Guide can be easily used by educators to facilitate student discussions.

It is free for download for 3 months at <http://rosalindwiseman.com>.

## Additional Online Resources

[www.common sense media.org](http://www.common sense media.org)—Digital literacy and citizenship resources for educators as well as many parent resources.

[www.ConnectSafely.org](http://www.connectsafely.org)—Social media safety tips for teens and parents, the latest teen tech news and many other resources.

[www.cybertipline.com](http://www.cybertipline.com) — (1-800-THE-LOST)—resource to report cybercrimes.

[www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org) —engages educators to teach civic responsibility, tolerance, and social action to young people.

[www.netismartz.org](http://www.netismartz.org)—The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's (NCMEC) Internet Safety resource and education program targeting children K—12, parents and educators.

[www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org](http://www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org)—multiple classroom toolkits for all grade levels.

[www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)—official US Government website devoted to bullying prevention.

[www.stopbullyingnow.com](http://www.stopbullyingnow.com)—Author and educator Stan Davis' website to help adults prevent bullying.



The District Attorney's **Community Outreach and Education Program** works in partnership with schools, offering educational and enrichment programs which address the pressing social, legal, safety, and health issues facing schools, students and families.

For information on student, school staff and parent presentations call the District Attorney's Office at 413-443-5951.