

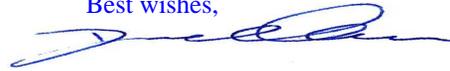
# Bullying Prevention Initiative

A Program of Community Outreach and Education  
**Berkshire County Educator Newsletter**  
 Spring 2013

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

## Leadership and Student Engagement Create Lasting School Climate Change

Research shows that the most effective bullying prevention programs incorporate student voice, engagement and student leadership. When students are invited to be part of the solutions to deal with bullying and become positive bystanders or "upstanders", they take ownership of it and the improved school climate is more meaningful and longer lasting.

Researchers from the National Center for School Engagement conducted a series of studies to explore the connection between bullying in schools, school attendance and engagement and academic achievement. The results were published in the [OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin Dec 2011](#) and made the following recommendations and strategies for school anti-bullying programs:

- Increase student engagement
- Model caring behavior for students
- Offer mentoring programs
- Provide opportunities for service learning
- Address the difficult transition from elementary to middle school (from single classroom teacher to teams of teachers with periods and class changes)
- Start prevention programs early

- Resist the temptation to use prefabricated curricula that are not aligned to local conditions
- Provide a caring adult for every student through an advisory program
- Carefully monitoring attendance, calling home each time a student is absent, allowing students to make up missed work with support from a teacher
- Adopting and implementing the *National School Climate Standards* from the National School Climate Council (2010)
- Promoting and fostering parent and community engagement, including afterschool and summer programs

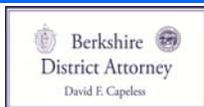
Since victimization can distance students from learning, schools can overcome this negative effect if they adopt strategies that engage.

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*In the classroom*, many models for increasing engagement can be infused and in the whole school that bring together "community". Dr. Brett Jones, Professor at Virginia Tech, presented his paper, [Strategies to Implement a Motivational Model](#), at the annual meeting of the International Society for Exploring Teaching and Learning in 2010. This paper describes how teachers



can use the MUSIC Model of Academic Motivation to make changes in their courses that will lead to increased student engagement. The name of the model, MUSIC, is an acronym based on the second letter of "eMpowerment" and the first letter of the other four components: Usefulness, Success, Interest, and Caring.

In March 2011 the University of Alberta published a paper called [Student Engagement: What do we know and what should we do?](#) in which you can learn how to define it, how to measure it and how to get it. This paper can be downloaded from [gssdstudentengagement.wikispaces.com](http://gssdstudentengagement.wikispaces.com), which also has valuable resources to help improve student engagement. Visit it and learn easy ways to connect with your students!



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## BULLY Movie released on DVD & Educators Guide from Facing History



The award-winning documentary “Bully”, which opened in limited release in March 2012, is now out on DVD. The free [Guide to the Film BULLY: Fostering Empathy and Action in Schools](#), is available from

[Facing History and Ourselves](#), an inter-

national educational and professional development organization whose mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in and examination of racism, prejudice, and anti-Semitism in order to promote the

development of a more humane and informed citizenry.

The film follows five stories of children and families who are deeply affected by bullying within the course of a school year (2009—10). With intimate glimpses into homes, classrooms, cafeterias, and principals’ offices, the film offers insight into the lives of bullied, ridiculed children.

Historically, seemingly small instances of labeling and ridicule have had catastrophic consequences for the marginalized groups involved. This film brings those “small” instances into the spotlight creating a space to discuss the effects of bullying. The accompanying guide tells the personal stories of those bullied, and sug-

gests that improving school climate takes fostering a reflective and engaging learning community.

Our Office has copies of both the 47 and 99-minute versions in our resource library to loan. The necessity of adults previewing the full film before using it with young people cannot be overemphasized. And ideally showing the film to students would be done with a group of faculty and school personnel, including counselors. In any case, it is important that adults take the time to reflect upon their reactions to the film, and many of the suggestions in the guide will assist in that process.

See more details at [The Bully Project](#) to guide you in preparing to show the movie to your staff, parents or students.

## Mindfulness Matters

Mindfulness is an activity that was developed into a [program for stress reduction](#) by Dr. John Kabat-Zinn in the 1970s. Practicing mindfulness has been shown to reduce bullying behavior and increase mental wellbeing through encouraging mindful attention, diminished self-talk and non-judgmental behavior. The work on mindfulness with young people is popular with both staff and students, and can be effective in promoting a very wide range of outcomes.

When well taught and practiced regularly it has been shown to be capable of improving mental health and wellbeing, mood, self-esteem, self regulation, positive behavior, and academic learning.

In practice, mindfulness is bringing awareness to our experiences, of the present moment without making judgments. This creates a calming and centering effect, by

focusing on the breath, the mind, thoughts and feelings and accepting them without judging them. Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) shows that positive emotions, such as kindness and compassion can be learned in the same way as playing a musical instrument or excelling in a sport.



Nationally and globally we are beginning to realize that growing adolescent relationships will benefit from the tools learned through compassionate meditation. So organizations have developed curricula to integrate into our daily routines, including: Hawn Foundations

[MindUp™](#), the Garrison Institutes [CARE for Teachers](#) (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education) and Linda Lantieri’s [Inner Resilience Program](#) offers a K—8 program.

Introduce the stories of Zen Master, poet, peace and human rights activist Thich Nhat Hanh to your students. Titles include: *A Pebble for Your Pocket*, *Dragon Prince: Stories and Legends from Vietnam*, *Each Breath a Smile*, and *Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children* to name a few. His books are published in English by [Parallax Press](#).



## Use Your Common Sense Media

The interactive website brings **free tools and curricula** to parents and educators.



[Common Sense Media](#) is dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing the trustworthy information, education, and independent voice they need to thrive in a world of media and technology.

To prepare themselves for implementing the [K-12 lessons](#), educators can take one of the 3 hour-long online training courses, broken down to elementary, middle and high school. [Standards](#) are aligned to the ELA Common Core, AASL and ISTE for all grade levels. The [Scope & Sequence](#) tool on the website helps educators find the right lessons for their classrooms, many of which utilize videos and meaningful discussion to empower students.

The Digital Passport page brings web-



based games and videos to engage 3rd –5th graders in independent learning and guide teens through Digital Literacy and Citizenship with self-paced lessons for iPad.

Parents will find the site helpful in rating everything from movies, TV shows, video games, music, apps and books to websites, all with common sense!

## Building Resiliency in Students

Resiliency is the ability to bounce back from adversity. Promoting resilience encourages children to be independent, responsible, empathic, and altruistic and teaches them how to communicate with others, solve problems, and successfully handle negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Children can then become active in promoting their own resilience.

A primary step in helping our children persevere when being bullied or facing other sources of trauma is equipping them with a solid foundation of emotional resilience. Edith Grotberg, Ph.D., a developmental psychologist, has published and written on her research nationally and internationally and makes her *free Guide to Promoting Resilience in Children: Strengthening the Human Spirit* available online. In it she notes there are three sources of resilience that children can draw from: I HAVE, I AM, and I CAN. Each factor can be described as follows:

### I HAVE

- People around me I trust and who love me, no matter what
- People who set limits for me so I know when to stop before there is danger or trouble
- People who show me how to do things right by the way they do things
- People who want me to learn to do things on my own
- People who help me when I am sick, in danger or need to learn

### I AM

- A person people can like and love

- Glad to do nice things for others and show my concern
- Respectful of myself and others
- Willing to be responsible for what I do
- Sure things will be all right

### I CAN

- Talk to others about things that frighten me or bother me
- Find ways to solve problems that I face
- Control myself when I feel like doing something not right or dangerous
- Figure out when it is a good time to talk to someone or to take action

- Find someone to help me when I need it

Each of these characteristics does not need to be present to make a child resilient, but children need to have more than one or even a couple. They also need adult help to obtain these factors as relationships are a cornerstone to many of the sources features.

Think about suggesting a discussion of resilience to your next PD, team or staff meeting times. Dr. Grotberg's guide provides teaching and discussion strategies to help you promote this discussion.

Here are other resources to help you in educating around resilience with your students and perhaps with your own children:

Webinar from the Search Institutes ParentFurther: [Raising Resilience: How All Adults Can Help Kids to Rise above Bullying](#)

[Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings](#), Kenneth Ginsberg, MD, MSEd, available for purchase on Amazon

[Building Resiliency in Students](#), Richard Sigor, Educational Leadership, September 1996

[Resilience Guide for Parents and Teachers](#), American Psychological Association

Visit Nan Henderson's website Resiliency In Action and [sign up to receive a free downloadable e-book](#), *Mentoring for Resiliency*, and read the section by Bonnie Benard, MSW, *How to Be a Turnaround Teacher/Mentor*. A turnaround teacher is described as building three crucial environmental factors: Connection, Competence, and Contribution.

Finally, while taking care of your students is a top priority, it will certainly prove difficult if you cannot bounce back from your own life's stressors. Drs. Dennis Charney and Steven Southwick co-authored the book, [Resilience The Science of Mastering Life's Greatest Challenges](#). Drawing on two decades of their work with trauma survivors, they freely make available the [Resilience Prescription](#). The prescription synthesizes the ten "resilience factors" that provide a vital roadmap for overcoming and potentially growing from the adversities we all face.

## Local Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Resources

While bullying and suicide can indeed be connected, implying clear-cut lines of cause and effect is misleading and potentially damaging, as it ignores underlying mental health issues of depression and anxiety. The following educational and preventive resources are available to assist youth in Berkshire County.

- [The Youth Suicide Prevention Project](#) under Berkshire Area Health Education Center offers Question, Persuade and Refer (QPR) Gatekeeper Training for Suicide Prevention to area schools, so adult "gatekeepers" can recognize and refer someone at risk of suicide. The training will provide adults with the tools and skills to deliver students the [Break Free from Depression](#) student

curriculum. If you are interested in having this as part of your school's health curriculum, please call Bear McHugh at 413-447-2417, ext. 1111.

- The [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) (AFSP) recently released the film [Living with Bipolar Disorder](#). The film addresses the misinformation that clouds our understanding of the disorder and helps adults recognize the signs and symptoms of the illness. It is highly recommended for staff viewing. For more information contact the [Western Massachusetts](#) chapter of AFSP at 413-734-9139 or 800-979-AFSP (2377).
- The [Live Out Loud Youth Group](#) supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students in Berkshire County. LGBTQ

students are often the targets of negative behavior which can include bullying, harassment, and physical assault and may also be at increased risk for suicide attempts. Preventive methods such as clear policies and procedures, support groups and education topics relevant to LGBTQ youth provide protective measures for supporting these students. For more information call Sara Shuff (413-358-3038) or Kelly Heck (413-358-5647).

- The [Centers for Disease Control](#) also lists a variety of resources for schools on this topic at its webpage on LGBT health, <http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth-resources.htm#school>.

## Sound Out: Promoting Student Voice in School

Have you stepped back to reflect on your or your schools ability to incorporate Student Voice into teaching practices? Student Voice is the individual and collective perspective and actions of young people within the context of learning and education. It is also more than simply listening to students.

Student Voice is about:

- **Learning**, as students learn better when they are engaged partners in their education and especially when taught by peers.
- **Teaching**, when students are engaged as partners, classroom teaching can be more effective.

- **School improvement**, because when students are engaged as partners, they have more investment in school improvement.
- **Developmental** goals being met more easily, by building participation.
- **School culture** by transforming attitudes and systems.
- **Diversity**, which ensures cultural, racial, economic and social diversity in school improvement efforts.
- **“The Bottom Line”**, because involving students in decision-making saves time, energy and money.
- **Integrity**, as we have an ethical responsibility

to engage student voice in a democratic fashion.

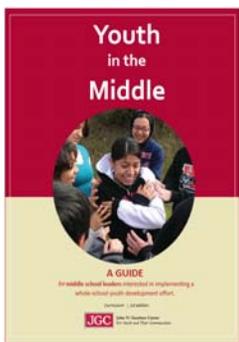
- **Civic engagement** so that students learn the necessity of active citizenship in their schools and the larger community.



A terrific resource for incorporating meaningful student involvement is the [Sound Out](#) website. Here you will find a variety of tools and publications for download that can guide you to incorporate Student Voice in your classroom and school.

## School Leader Resources

Initiatives that promote a school’s rigorous attention to academic outcomes can result in a lack of attention to other important domains of adolescent development. The John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities, has published a guide, [Youth in the Middle](#), for middle school leaders to help avoid this scenario. The guide describes work areas central to developing a whole-school youth development approach and includes hyperlinks to tools that can be adapted to support your efforts. It is **free** for download on their [website](#).



Jonathan Cohen is the cofounder and president of the [National School Climate Center](#), and in the publication [The Challenge](#) he discusses engaging the whole village to teach the whole child. In the Q & A, he responds to questions facing many administrators, such as how champions of school climate can better respond to the available research to create data driven improvement systems and how teacher job satisfaction plays a part in school climate.



Another article in *The Challenge* highlights a Tennessee school district that used an incident described as “racial unrest” at one of its high schools as an opportunity to focus on school climate throughout its entire 28 school district. They contracted with Main Street Academix, now [The Center for School Climate and Learning](#), led by Execu-

tive Director Bill Preble, who is also a Professor of Education at New England College in New Hampshire. The work that Dr. Preble and his team did included a climate assessment, the results of which identified key areas for improvement and also highlighted the different views of students and adults. This became the catalyst to better involve the students, so they chose a diverse group of students to participate on respected leadership teams. The teams were trained and empowered to help with the surveys, which made them a potent strategy in changing the school climate. Positive results were seen in behaviors, but also, impressively, an 11% increase in academic outcomes based on standardized testing.

You can learn more about their methods through Dr. Preble’s book along with co-author Rick Gordon entitled, [Transforming School Climate and Learning](#). It is available on loan through our [resource library](#).

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 Community Outreach & Education Program at 413-443-5951.

## Additional Online Resources

[www.common sense media.org](#)—Provides digital literacy and citizenship resources for educators as well as many parent resources.

[www.ConnectSafely.org](#)—A non-profit has social media safety tips for teens and parents, the latest teen tech news and many other resources.

[www.cybertipline.com](#) — (1-800-THE-LOST)—The resource to report cybercrimes.

[www.facinghistory.org](#)—Facing History engages educators to teach civic responsibility, tolerance, and social action to young people

[www.netsmartz.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](#)—The PACER Center (Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights) is the **National Center for Bullying Prevention**.

[www.stopbullying.gov](#)—The official US Government website devoted to bullying prevention.

[www.stopbullyingnow.com](#)—Author and educator Stan Davis’ website to help adults prevent bullying.