

Berkshire District Attorney's Office

Bullying Prevention Initiative

Educator Newsletter

Spring 2014

Dear Educator:

This newsletter is intended to support your efforts in creating a positive school climate by providing you with information on prevention programs and activities that are current and relevant to students' own life experiences. We look to research and evidence-based approaches to promote school climate change including mentorship, positive role models, supportive peer groups, and interactive teaching methods. We hope you find the information useful and that the research, lesson plans and resources support your efforts to sustain a welcoming and creative learning environment.

Best wishes,



David F. Capeless

Hoosac Valley Peer Leaders Rise to the Occasion

On May 29th, eighteen 8th grade student peer leaders from Hoosac Valley Middle and High School visited the Springfield Ronald McDonald House Charities. The organization is an independent nonprofit whose mission is to create, find and support programs that directly improve the health and well being of sick children. Ronald McDonald Houses act as a place to stay for families with hospitalized children who are receiving treatment. Our peer leaders decided as a group to fundraise for the Ronald McDonald House. They did different fundraisers (bake sale, \$1.00 hat day, \$1.00 walk the track day, etc.) to raise money. We raised and donated \$575.00. While visiting the Ronald McDonald House, we played games, did arts and crafts, and spent time with a few children who were staying at the house.

Students became peer leaders through the District Attorney's Middle School Peer Mentor Leadership Training Program. This program fosters leadership in young people through education

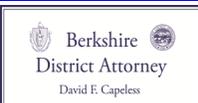


and service to others. The program raises awareness of attitudes and behaviors that impact schools and communities. Student leaders chosen to participate are given the knowledge, skills and confidence to make smart personal choices and to positively influence their peers. The training, facilitated by District Attorney's staff, focuses not only on building general leadership ability for students as individuals and as a group, but also reducing risky behaviors and improving the overall school climate.

Special Contribution by Shannon Clark, Hoosac Valley MHS Guidance Counselor

Peer Leadership Program Kicks off Fall 2014

Schools participating this fall begin the week of September 22nd.



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Register Now for the Compassion Games 2014

You are invited to participate in the [2014 Compassion Games: Survival of the Kindest](#). The 2014 Compassion Games will run from September 11 - September 21, 2014. Participating players are called upon to perform acts of service and kindness in schools, neighborhoods, and wherever their daily lives takes them. The acts of service can be organized projects, simple acts of kindness or just spreading happiness for the joy of it.

The idea originated in Louisville, Kentucky, when the mayor asked his citizens to perform acts of service over a one week period. He proclaimed his city "the most compassionate city in the world" and encouraged others to join in. The Games call upon people all over the world to share the vision of creating a more connected caring community. There are no winners or losers in the Games, but the more games that are played the more we all win. What an excellent way to bring kindness to your classroom, to your



school and to your community.

Challenge and inspire your students to make their community a safer, kinder, more just and better place to live. There are many ways a class or school could participate: Enlist students as [Secret Agents of Compassion](#), join the Compassion Relays as a class or school, perform Random Acts of Kind-

ness or participate in a service project. All of the activities that have been witnessed or you are a part of can be plotted on the [Compassion Map](#).

Compassion has measurable benefits to our health, well-being and relationships. The research, although young, is growing rapidly and clearly shows the need to cultivate it in our youngest learners. Visit the [Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley](#) (GGSC) to read more about the research on Compassion.

Berkshire District Attorney's Office Education and Training Programs

Now booking K-12, staff, teacher and parent trainings on a variety of positive behavior, wellness and safety topics for the 2014 - 15 school year. Topics described on the Office website under Educational Initiatives:

<http://www.mass.gov/berkshireda>

Dates are filling up fast, so don't miss out!

Instilling Kindness Through Cultivating Gratitude

Practicing gratitude may inherently reduce the impulse to bully during adolescence, a time when social hierarchy and status are of utmost importance.

When students are more thankful, they feel more connected to their schools and the adults around them. A study, [Being Grateful is Beyond Good Manners \(#12\)](#) by leading researchers in the field of Positive Psychology, published in *Motivation & Emotion* in 2010, showed that feeling grateful motivates adolescents to help others and use their strengths to contribute to society.



www.kindspring.org's 21-day Gratitude Challenge begins November 7th, and you



daily inspirational email with thoughts and ideas, have the opportunity to share experiences and see and hear what others are doing on their gratitude journey.

are invited to participate as an individual or a group (or class). Participants will receive a

lar online sharable gratitude journal [Thnx4](#), which is another nice free way to bring gratitude the attention it deserves.

You can also look to leading researchers Jeffrey Froh and Giacomo Bono to guide you in [How to Foster Gratitude in Schools](#).

"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us."

— Albert Schweitzer



Starting this summer, The [Greater Good Science Center](#) will once again offer its popu-

Speak Truth To Power Lead Educator Certification

As we highlighted in our last issue, the [Speak Truth To Power \(STTP\) curriculum](#), a project of the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, provides an introduction to general human rights



issues along with student lessons on its [web-site](#).

This year the Center will be conducting its 3-day Summer Institute, that certifies educators to lead STTP in their schools and communities through the Human Rights Framework.

Locations & dates for 2014 as follows:

Washington, DC - July 7, 8, 9

Memphis, TN - July 14, 15, 16

New York, NY - August 19, 20, 21

If you are interested, want more information or have questions, please contact Karen Robinson at robinson@rfkcenter.org.

An online application will be available soon.

Why Survey Students about Bullying?

A positive school climate is recognized as an important target for school reform and improving behavioral, academic, and mental health outcomes for students (Thapa et al., 2012). Recent research suggests that positive school climate is associated with reduced aggression and violence, reduced bullying behavior and reduced sexual harassment, regardless of sexual orientation.

Why do we need to measure bullying behaviors?

Assessing the prevalence of bullying identifies areas that can help a school succeed. An anonymous survey conducted on a regular basis can help schools:

- Assess perceptions of safety – from stu-

dents, parents and school staff

- Determine the effectiveness of their programs on an ongoing basis
- Make informed planning decisions about programs to prevent bullying and promote safe and inclusive schools
- Build and sustain a positive school climate

Measuring the climate shows the entire school community that their feelings and perspectives are valued.

How do we know if our efforts in bullying prevention are working to reduce the behaviors?

Schools can measure their own progress toward positive school climate based on

Have You Surveyed Your Student Population?

We have a limited number of Olweus Bullying Questionnaires available for fall distribution.

Call to get them free for your school.

Contact: Carol Mulcahy
413-443-5951

student and staff surveys and other means of measurement. Evaluation should include ongoing pre- and post-test surveys to assess perceptions of safety and effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies.

Resources

[GLSEN](#) (the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) provides webinars, guides and resources including their most recent [Elementary School Climate Report and Curricular Resource](#). This webinar highlights their report on what is happening in Elementary schools and what might be able to be improved on in regards to the climate around , utilizing their **FREE** [Ready, Set, RESPECT! Elementary School Toolkit](#).

[The Bully Project](#) is a social action campaign inspired by the movie BULLY. The website includes an Educator Toolkit to provide you with a framework to use the movie, along with many archived [webinars](#) from expert guest speakers in the field of bullying prevention and more.



[Character Lab](#) is a nonprofit on a mission to develop, disseminate, and support research-based approaches to character that enable kids to learn and flourish. It produces and curates practical tools for teachers and families. Visit their site to read the research and download the [Character Growth Card](#), a tool that can be used as a springboard for teaching and learning activities related to character skills.



Character Lab



The [National School Climate Center](#) recently partnered with NASSP for a **FREE** [webinar](#) on comprehensive school climate improvement. The webinar focuses on how prioritizing school climate supports meaningful social inclusion and violence prevention.



FREE K-12 Lesson Plans to teach kindness in the classroom.

Research shows that students who learn in a positive environment have a better school experience. Visit : www.randomactsofkindness.org

Additional Online Resources

www.common sense media.org—Digital literacy and citizenship resources for educators as well as many parent resources.

www.ConnectSafely.org—Social media safety tips for teens and parents, the latest teen tech news and many other resources.

www.cybertipline.com—(1-800-THE-LOST)—Resource to report cybercrimes.

www.facinghistory.org—Civic responsibility, tolerance, and social action resources for educators.



www.net smartz.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.pacerkidsagain stbullying.org—Multiple classroom toolkits for all grade levels.

www.stopbullying.gov—Official US Government website devoted to bullying prevention.

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.