

Beyond Bullying: Creating a Culture of Respect in Learning Environments

March 13, 2019 (Snow date March 15, 2019)

Keynote Presentation

The Courage Zone

The Yoh Theatre Players of Woodstock Union High School

A presentation in 'spoken word,' emphasizing the need to find the courage to STAND UP to bullying, and the respect to listen and understand those with whom we differ.

Morning Workshops

A - Theater Games for Engagement, Empowerment and Team Building

To learn and play games which develop community, connection, and communication skills

Presenters: Students in the Yoh Theatre Players, Woodstock Union High School and Middle School, and Marcia Bender, Yoh Theatre Director

Focus: To use games to allow participants to focus, connect, and collaborate while developing each individual's voice

- To introduce non-competitive games to encourage a sense of playful humanism
- To evoke new ways of thinking and moving, problem-solving and multitasking.
- To find a sense of humor and the skills to fail

B – Inclusion through Youth Activation: Students Changing School Culture

Unified Champion Schools promotes social inclusion by bringing together young people with and without disabilities through sports, inclusive clubs, and community-wide initiatives to foster youth leadership.

Presenters: Special Olympics Vermont Youth Activation Student Committee members

Focus: Unified Champion Schools are based on the evidence that students who “play unified” become better at helping others, standing up for each other and sharing responsibility. They gain patience and the ability to compromise.

- Socially inclusive climates are free from teasing, bullying and exclusion of any group.
- Students with disabilities are routinely included, and feel a part of all social activities
- Students without disabilities will hold positive attitudes toward peers with disabilities

C – Exploring Our Unique Identities and Complex Diversity through Stories and Literature

Creating cultures of respect in our school communities requires us to deeply consider the individuals who make up those communities.

Presenter: Gabriella Fecher, English teacher, Lamoille Union Middle School, Anna Wadlington, Para-educator at Peoples' Academy, Northern Vermont University, Johnson

Focus: We will explore excerpts from young adult literature to engage in conversations about the identities of the characters, and examine how to apply these questions to our own school spaces.

- Who are the characters? What aspects of their identities are honored?
- How could the spaces in which they live be changed to honor all aspects of identity

D – Gender Boxes

People often find themselves “boxed in” by social expectations based on gender. Come share your ideas and hear others’ ideas as you explore gender issues in our changing world.

Presenters: A World of Difference Institute Peer Leaders from Vermont Schools

Focus: To create a better understanding of gender issues

- To explore stereotypes or norms of gender
- To identify the impact of “boxes” society makes based on gender
- To consider impacts on people who do not or do not want to fit into a box

E - Team Building: Alternative to Hazing in the World of Athletics

Presenters: Marybeth Lennox-Levins, Associate Professor of Sport Management, Castleton University, a former DIII women’s soccer player from SUNY Binghamton, Nihad Basic, Sports Management Graduate Assistant, Assistant Men’s Soccer Coach, Castleton University, will present strategies they have learned in their combined 20-year experiences in coaching and leadership.

Focus: To understand how to build a strong and positive culture for success within an athletic team

- To gain a heightened awareness of hazing as a form of bullying athletics
- To understand hazing’s negative effects on individuals and on team
- To explore the most effective ways to eliminate hazing and build team cohesion

F - Conversations about Equity in Vermont

Presenter: Paul Suk-Hyun Yoon, Partner, CQ Strategies, and Senior Advisor for Strategic Diversity Assessment & Research at the University of Vermont

Focus: To explore equity in Vermont

- Introduce the concept of bias
- Discuss race and racism
- Identify steps students can take to address inequities in their schools and communities

G – Beyond the Sticker: Ally-ship for LGBTQ+ Youth

All students deserve to feel safe, healthy, and supported at school, though for many students this may not be the case.

Presenter: Jane Langner, Statewide Youth Organizer, Outright Vermont

Focus: To join with peers in activities and conversations about how to make your school more inclusive and affirming for all students.

- Review terms, definitions, and concepts related to gender and sexual identity
- Learn tips and strategies for creating an inclusive school environment
- Increase empathy and awareness of current realities for LGBTQ Vermont Youth

H – Action Plans for Creating a Culture of Respect

Each year for the past six years, school teams have created Action Plans at the Beyond Bullying Conference. This workshop will share some of these Action Plans.

Presenters: Members of the VAMLE Board and student teams from participating schools

Focus: To encourage students to implement their Beyond Bullying Action Plan

- Identify the key components of an effective action plan
- Identify the “stakeholders” that students need to inform and bring into the plan
- Create activities to engage the school and community

I – Take a Stand, Speak Up: Creating a Public Service Announcement

Strong student voices of leadership are critical to creating positive environments in schools. We will explore ways to challenge bias and bullying by creating Public Service Announcements.

Presenters: A World of Difference Institute Peer Leaders from Vermont schools

Focus: To identify ways to encourage people to stand up and speak out against cyber-bullying

- To learn what makes an effective Public Service Announcement
- To work together to develop and perform a commercial or public service announcement

J - Restorative Practices: Shifting the Culture of Our Schools

Restorative practices are a positive, disruptive force in realizing greater equity in education and stronger relationships. They provide greater balance and strength to youth-adult partnerships in learning, greater opportunity for building empathy, bridging differences, and strengthening more just, joyful, and sustainable communities.

Presenters: Lindsey Halman, Program Director, UP for Learning and UP for Learning Youth Facilitator

Focus: To learn about shifting the focus of behavior from punishments to restoring/developing relationships and gaining the capacity to succeed in moving forward

- Engage participants in a discussion/activities about the difference between punishment and restorative practices
- Practice strategies for Tier 1 – Community Building Circles
- Identify the lessons learned when a school creates a shift in culture and practices

K – Technology/Cyber-security in Social Media

Cyber-bullying may occur in social media today. It is important to recognize cyber-bullying for what it is; and to learn how to respond appropriately when/if it happens to you.

Presenter: Duane Dunston, Assistant Professor of Information Security, Champlain College

Focus: To learn how to identify common activities that can lead to bullying, and minimize involvement in those on-line activities.

- To learn how to respond to cyber-bullying, preserving evidence and reporting it
- To learn how to talk to school personnel and family to gain support

L- Groups in our Schools – How well do groups in YOUR school get along?

To explore ways the insider/outsider dynamics show up in school communities

Presenters: A World of Difference Institute Peer Leaders from Vermont schools

Focus: One generally good outcome of being part of a group is when it helps a student build a positive sense of identity. A not-so-good outcome can happen, however, when people in some groups are hostile to other groups, when they work to exclude each other, and when they develop negative attitudes of “us” versus “them.”

- To examine student groups in our schools, and how different groups are treated
- To identify ways to help groups be more inclusive
- To better understand the damage that name-calling, bullying, and social isolation can have on all members of the school community

Afternoon Workshops

M – SoundCheck: Sparking Dialogue and Action Through Music

Presenters: SoundCheck is a band of 11 Vermont high school students representing 9 different schools. SoundCheck writes and performs original music that addresses social justice issues. The group performs at schools, community events, and venues across the state to spark dialogue and action. ***Sound Check will perform for everyone at the closing of the conference.**

Focus: How to use music to build a better world

- To explore the concept of equity in a hands-on workshop
- To participate in activities to collaboratively develop original song lyrics

N-How Empathy Can Change the World

Participants will explore how positive attitudes and collaboration, through play, can foster crucial understandings of one another. While we're up and moving, we will investigate brain-based research of Jane McGonigal, and the work of *Changing Perspectives New England*

Presenter: Dr. Monica McEnery, Associate Professor of Education, Castleton University

Focus: This hands-on workshop will foster positive attitudes and collaboration among all participants.

- To explore the meaning of resilience and empathy
- To learn how play and active involvement is imperative to learning
- To discuss how to build empathy in one another

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