

Out-of-School Time Resource Center
“Teaching Tolerance”
Peer Networking Meeting
December 15, 2008

Introductions

Announcements

-The Free Library is still looking to register out-of-school time groups (in grades 4-6) for their Reading Olympics program. Contact Mark Wolfe (wolfem@freelibrary.org).

-Looking for guidance or support for your program? The OSTRC can help you by providing contact information of OST professionals who are interested in providing short term and long term guidance for your professional goals and program interests. Email Deepa, deepava@sp2.upenn.edu, for more information! Please provide your current work and professional interests in the email.

Panel Discussion

The topic this month was “Teaching Tolerance.” We asked speakers to talk about their work to create a program environment in which all students are treated respectfully by one another. Each speaker provided activities and advice on how to approach the lesson of appreciation and understanding of difference and diversity.

Joyce Drayton, from the George E. Gregory Interdenominational School of Music, founded her program in 1995. She had previously worked in law enforcement with a degree in social work. Her approach to behavioral problems and bullying students is to have one-on-one mentoring for youth following their unproductive/acting-out incidents. In her program, she uses poetry, dance, music, games (especially role play) to allow youth to explore their feelings and experiences. Role play can allow youth to understand the impact of their behavior on their peers

Joyce proposed the following activity to get a classroom or youth group to feel connected to one another.

Activity: (group keeps the beat with -- right foot forward, left foot forward, right foot back, left foot back) everyone says their name when the leader points to you
- demonstrates the diversity of peoples names, of their voices

Dyresha Harris, Program Coordinator at Congreso previously worked for 10 years at a Quaker summer camp, conducting staff diversity training. She received her Masters at University of Pennsylvania on diversity. She is used to working with a minority or majority group, and now works with a more mixed, less divisive group. At Congreso, her program consists of primarily Latino youth, and some African American youth as well. Dyresha provided the following advice to the group:

Tip 1: Realize what kind of a group you are working with, whether it is a minority group, a majority group, or a mixed group. Try to observe how the groups are interacting with one another and approach the situation.

Tip 2: It is easier to deal with acute situations after you have laid groundwork through initial diversity training:

- Staff should be trained in diversity issues
- Staff should have spent time specifically problem-solving for solving site-based conflict

Tip 3: Be aware of more subtle issues and how they emerge in your programs (e.g. camper asks another camper “why didn’t you bring hiking shoes? Everyone knows they have to bring hiking

shoes?” and the underlying issue is that hiking shoes are expensive and perhaps the camper couldn't afford to bring them)

Tip 4: When doing Role Play as a means to approaching issues of diversity:

- 1) don't ask someone to represent a group they are not a part of,
- 2) don't ask someone to represent every person in their group

Tip 5: Make the environment inviting by making diversity and tolerance public by using visuals such as posters.

Tip 6: Be explicit when creating ground rules in the program, by stating “in our space this is what we expect”, “don't assume who's in the room” (meaning, you never know what groups people are a part of).

Activity: “Big Wind Blows”/ “Shout Outs” – fewer chairs than you have people by 1 (e.g. 10 people, 9 chairs)

1. Leader: “shout out to everyone who ____.” (ex. Is born in Philadelphia!)
2. Everyone who fits in that group must stand and switch to a chair other than their own.
3. One person is left standing and they become the Leader

Note: These should be nonjudgmental category (I was born in PA as opposed to I am scared of homosexuals)

Alison Buehler, Mazzoni Center

- Please see/request her wonderful notes!

Azucena Ugarte from Women Against Abuse and Naomi Faszczyk from Lutheran Settlement House both talked about their program, **S.T.A.R. (Students Talking About Relationships)**, which helps youth talk about relationships, partner abuse, etc. Both Azucena and Naomi deal more with tolerance related to sexual preference in their program. These are their suggestions:

Tip 1: Always set ground rules at the beginning, recognize that it is okay to disagree as long as everyone is *respectful* of others opinions and decisions

Activity 1: “Lady Box and Man Box” – write things in the box that describe what it means when someone tells you to “act like a man” or “act like a lady,” what do you call someone who steps out of your Box? What happens to someone who steps out of their box?

Activity: What is tolerance? What does it mean to be tolerant?

Discussion

The discussion opened with a larger question of “What is tolerance?” and “What does it mean to be tolerant?” The group discussed how tolerance has become the jargon term for the idea of compassion and appreciation of difference and diversity.

Azucena, who has been struggling with issues of disrespect, sexism, and homophobia with one of her students, asked the group “What do you do with a student who turns a safe, open, respectful environment into a negative environment? At what point do turn them out?” One audience member responded, “Turn them out and let them sink or swim.” Dyresha suggested, “You can draw up a contract with them: We care about you but you are destroying the group so you get X number of turns to come and then you have to leave if you do not abide by this contract.”

A participant asked at what age it appropriate to start talking about gender, sexuality, and relationships. Depends partly on what your school allows you to address (e.g. pregnancy, sexuality). Azucena responded that at Overbrook High School they start their relationship classes with 9th graders and it was already a little too late. She said that it was even too late working with middle school, 6th, 7th, 8th grade students,. Behaviors are already established at an early age about relationships. When Azucena worked with 5th graders, she realized that the youth already have ideas about what relationships are and how they should work.

Suggestions for how to bring up issues of gender/sexuality/relationships:

- Have every student get a permission slip signed.
- There are studies about relationship violence between teen/dating violence which can be shown to the principal/administrator that will help him/her realize the relevance of the topic.
- Set up an anonymous question box, bring those questions to the adults in charge (teachers, principal, etc), to say, "We haven't even started yet and, in their words, these are the questions the students have."
- It is never too early to talk to youth about how they want to be treated and how they want to treat others.

Another participant asked "How much can/should I stray from my program goals (academic enrichment) to do workshops around, for example, homophobia?"

Naomi said that her students in S.T.A.R. are good at giving the perfect answers, so with middle/high school students she encourages more analytical responses, by presenting an example situation and allowing them to problem-solve. The audience agreed that program coordinators and instructors can set rules for their program without saying that a child's home rules are wrong. Ground rules should be set about respect as the norm for your program so that it does not come as a surprise later. Nancy Peter noted that it is also important to recognize teachable moments. Her example was of a young kid laughing at the word "gay" as a nonspecific insult, and her taking that moment to explain what it means and why it is not an insult.

Finally, a participant noted, "Remember that your youth will eventually be forced to interact with all kinds of people, thus, tolerance is a lifelong skill."

Conclusion

Save the Date!

Thursday, January 15th, 2009

9:30-11:30am

"Improving Communication between Adults and Youth in OST Programs"