



# PARTNERS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PRINCETON CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP TRAINING

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## NIPPING BULLYING IN THE BUD

### TRENTON BEGINS COORDINATED EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS

You know these students: Robert, picked on by older children, teases a younger student; Jelissa is ostracized daily by a group of girls on the playground; Juan, overweight, is always the last one chosen for a team in gym; Kelly, who can't afford new sneakers, is teased by her more fortunate peers; Sandeep's self-esteem is so low, he hits other children to feel confident and powerful. Bullying manifests itself in many ways, some of which are not always obvious to educators or to parents.

This is not news — a 2001 study on bullying revealed that 30% of all students grades 6-10 experience moderate or frequent involvement with bullying, either as a bully, as a victim, or participating in both roles. And we know that bullying doesn't wait until middle school to sprout. The seeds of bullying are sown in the younger years, when relationships form.

In Trenton, schools and families are working together to nip bullying in the bud. The **Trenton Family and School Prevention Partnership (TFSP)** is a

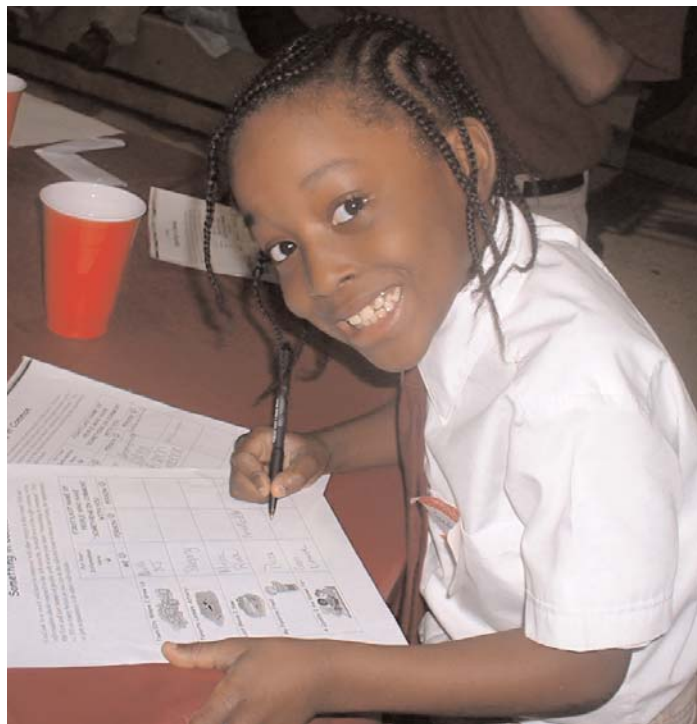
collaboration between the Princeton Center for Leadership Training (PCLT), Bayard Elementary School, and Trenton Community Charter School (TCCS). Funded by PSE&G, the project aims to foster pro-social relationships among Trenton students. The partnership features two programs that work together: *Peacemakers* and the *Parents Supporting Parents Network (PSPN)*.

In *Peacemakers*, students learn to collaborate, solve problems together, and avoid bystander behavior. The effects of *Peacemakers* extend far beyond the classroom. At Bayard Elementary School, peer helpers refer to themselves as the "Peace Police" and are positive role models for the entire school.

*PSPN* ensures that schools are not working alone to stop bullying.

Coordinating efforts across the home and school environment is critical for raising respectful, caring children. *PSPN* accomplishes this goal by sponsoring Family Nights, during which parents are invited to learn more about *Peacemakers* and to participate in

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*A Trenton Community Charter School student finds "Something in Common" with parents and her classmates during a Peacemakers Family Night activity.*

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### VIOLENCE PREVENTION: SETTING THE STAGE FOR CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT



The need for character education is not new in our schools, but the escalation of violence, both physical and verbal bullying, has raised our collective consciousness about the need to make our schools safer and friendlier. In Trenton this past year, PCLT has worked closely with school and community leaders who care about building the capacity of their faculty and parents and are invested in reaching students at every grade level from first grade through high school.

Below are some key principles that have guided our work there, whether in elementary, middle, or high school:

**1. Building relationships among diverse groups is essential.** As one astute Trenton teen put it, “Communication is key. If we work together and build relationships, we can accomplish our goals.” Attempting to take decisive action without first taking the time to build trust and mutual respect among teachers, parents, and school administrators is a common pitfall when trying to turn the climate around. In Trenton, there has been an investment in training that brings diverse groups together — to talk and share backgrounds as well as hopes and fears for the future before beginning the rigorous tasks of action planning and program implementation. One Trenton parent described the recently formed *Parent Leadership Network* as a group that “builds bridges between parents and teachers.” Gaining this sense of connection is critical in laying the foundation for the group’s future success.

**2. Shared leadership builds commitment from diverse groups.** One Trenton teacher emphasized the second key principle: “I have learned a lot about what it means to be a leader as well as what it means to be part of a team.” A shared leadership approach has been especially effective in helping members “develop the goals and vision that we would all like to achieve as a team,” as one team mentor described it. When Trenton principals like Edna Margolin of Bayard Elementary and Priscilla Dawson of Trenton Central High spend Saturdays in training with their faculty and parents, they are demonstrating their commitment to teamwork. This kind of dialogue has “reduced the isolation and desolation felt by many,” added another participant in the training.



*Parents and students learn to work together at Bayard Elementary's Family Night.*

**3. Students are an under-utilized resource in our schools that, when properly developed, can be a powerful force for positive change.** As adults, we have to start listening to kids more and learning about what’s important to them. Creating leadership programs that teach pro-social skills and give students the tools and healthy practices that can be passed on to their younger peers is an effective strategy to change the youth culture. But even more importantly, teachers and parents can work alongside students in an effort to solve problems and make the school culture more welcoming for all students. As described by one high school student following a *Safety First Summit*, “Improving communication between adults and children...[has been] uplifting, educating, enlightening.”

In summary, Trenton has set the stage for long-lasting character development initiatives — by valuing relationships among adults and between adults and children; and by using a shared leadership model that taps into the powerful influence of students among their peers.

*Sharon Rose Powell*

Sharon Rose Powell, Ed.D.  
President

## ANNOUNCING A NEW PARTNERSHIP

PCLT and the Center for Alcohol Studies at Rutgers University have joined forces to conduct an intensive 5-year study of Peer Group Connection (PGC) as it is implemented at Trenton Central High School. PGC is a high school peer leadership program wherein freshmen meet weekly with upperclassmen who lead discussions and activities about the common challenges facing teens such as peer pressure, relationships, and academic concerns.

A multidisciplinary team of researchers from Rutgers, PCLT, the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Colorado State University, the University of Washington, and the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services will study the effectiveness of each program component and its impact on students. Look for updates in future issues of *Partners*.

## NIPPING BULLYING IN THE BUD

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some of the program's activities with their children. At TCCS's Family Night, peer helpers performed "The Peacemakers Stomp," their enthusiastic pledge to "stomp out bullying."

During Family Night, parents are recruited to join PSPN, which consists of a series of four parenting forums led by trained

*"[Family Night] brings parents closer together as well as the children."*

TCCS Parent

parents and educators. At these forums, parents learn how to identify whether their child is bullying or being bullied and how to address the issue. When kids are surrounded by support, it becomes difficult for them to slip through the cracks.

Schools interested in having a comprehensive bullying prevention program at their school can contact Dr. Melissa Brand, Director of Special Projects, at 609-252-9300 x 120 or send an email to [Mbrand@princetonleadership.org](mailto:Mbrand@princetonleadership.org).

*"[Peacemakers is a] valuable tool in helping children to accept others thus eventually ending racism, bullying."*

Bayard Elementary School Parent

## IT TAKES A COMMUNITY

### PROMOTING POSITIVE CHANGES

As 188 students from Trenton's Grace A. Dunn Middle School stepped off the bus on the campus at Rider University, some wondered why they were there, some resented being there, and some felt cautious. What was a *CPTY Activity Day*, anyway? By the end of an afternoon filled with activities, all cautiousness had vanished and was replaced with interest and energy. Teams of students worked on posters that illustrated their visions about unity and diversity, and then shared them proudly (see two posters pictured below). They understood that CPTY stands for *Community Partners for Trenton Youth*, and they began to appreciate how important their role was in making meaningful and lasting changes in their school and community. As one adult mentor reported, "The mentees [were] receptive and enthusiastic about helping, sharing, and having an impact on their communities."

CPTY began in January when community members, parents, and educators from Dunn rallied together to tackle youth violence. Through implementation of this innovative afterschool program, the mentors hoped to improve students' attitudes toward adults and to help them get along better with their peers. For two days, PCLT guided 40 educators and community volunteers through leadership and facilitation activities to give them the skills necessary to be effective team mentors to Dunn's students.

Other CPTY events to be held this spring include a Family Supper and a Closing Celebration for students, parents, mentors, and community stakeholders.



*Above are two of the shared vision posters created by Dunn Middle School students illustrating what unity and diversity mean to them.*



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## SAFETY...*FIRST!*

### TRANSITION PROJECT UNVEILS “NO TOLERANCE FOR VIOLENCE” CAMPAIGN

Transition Project, PCLT’s peer leadership program designed to help incoming freshmen make a successful adjustment to high school, introduced a *Safety First* module to its curriculum this winter. The new module explores school safety issues ranging from bullying to harassment to gangs. *Safety First* offers students the chance to deconstruct myths, discuss options, and create a common vision to support a *No Tolerance for Violence* campaign for their school.

The *Safety First* module culminates in the collective creation of a *Unity Wall*. Using poster board or fabric, small groups design and construct their own Building

Block that visually depicts the students’ no tolerance message. Each small group’s Building Block is then assembled together to shape a *Unity Wall*, which is displayed prominently in the school. In addition to their Building Block, the small groups also write poems, songs, and/or role plays that are presented to the entire freshman class. Using the *Unity Wall* as a backdrop, a clear message is sent to all students that violence and destructive behavior will not be tolerated by the school community.



*Transition Project Advisors from Lower Cape May Regional High School discover for themselves what the Safety First module is all about at a recent Advanced Training.*

*To join Transition Project, please call Rachel Kyle, Assistant Director of NJPTP, at 609-252-9300 x 119, or send an email to [Rkyle@princetonleadership.org](mailto:Rkyle@princetonleadership.org).*