



# PARTNERS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PRINCETON CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP TRAINING

FALL 2002

VOLUME 12 • ISSUE 1

## PEER LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS: NOW AND LATER

### THE SHORT- AND LONG-TERM BENEFITS OF PEER LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Everyone has heard teachers and parents ask kids, “If your friends jumped off a bridge, would you follow?” This, of course, is a reference to “peer pressure”, two words that strike fear into every educator’s and parent’s hearts. Administrators, teachers, and parents all know the negative pressure peers can place on each other. However, peer influence can also be a strong, positive force. Herein lies the basis for all of the peer leadership programs developed by the Princeton Center for Leadership Training (PCLT).

At the heart of PCLT’s programs is the development of a shared leadership model. Young people learn about leadership in a team context, including how to share roles, define their purpose, support one another, and discuss issues openly and with compassion.

Studies abound on peer leadership showing that it works. Research conducted by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the School District of Philadelphia proved that PCLT’s peer leadership programs had a positive effect on students’ behavior and performance. Participants outperformed their peers in Math, English, Social Studies, and Science; they had higher attendance records with fewer suspensions and

discipline referrals. PCLT, in partnership with the Center for Alcohol Studies at Rutgers University, hopes to secure funds for a more comprehensive up-to-date evaluation that includes looking at the long-term effects of peer leadership on behaviors such as substance abuse.

In the meantime, we’ve turned to graduates of one of our peer leadership programs, Peer Group Connection (PGC), to hear what they have to say about the impact these programs have had on them 10 to 15 years later.



*Williamstown peer leaders look forward to another successful year. (Photo courtesy of Tim Hawk, Gloucester County Times.)*

According to Tim Kingston, a 1983 alumnus of Princeton High School and Managing Director of the Investment Banking Division at Goldman Sachs, & Co., PGC continues to be an influential part of his life today. “A key to surviving in today’s difficult business environment is the ability to work successfully in a team environment,” Tim reported. “Many of the team and group facilitation skills I use today in the business world began developing through Peer Group Connection.”

Jennifer English concurs with Tim. A 1991 peer leader

*(continued on page 2)*

THE PARTNERS NEWSLETTER is published by THE PRINCETON CENTER for LEADERSHIP TRAINING  
12 Vandeventer Avenue • Princeton, NJ 08542

For more information, please call (609) 252-9300.

Visit our web site at [www.princetonleadership.org](http://www.princetonleadership.org). • Email us at [princetoncenter@princetonleadership.org](mailto:princetoncenter@princetonleadership.org).



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### LASTING CONNECTIONS

For the past several decades, high schools have been searching for programs that can help students address a myriad of social problems and cope better with the academic and emotional challenges of adolescence. Whatever issues students are facing, educators agree that young people need social problem-solving skills and both the confidence and the competence to handle the daily pressures of high school.

PCLT's high school leadership programs, including Peer Group Connection and NJ Teen PEP, are a good example of how to sustain, grow, and institutionalize effective programs that promote character education and the social competence of young people. Featured in the October 2002 issue of *New Jersey Life* magazine as a pioneer in the field of peer leadership, PCLT's programs have been running successfully in

schools for over 20 years. (Article enclosed.)

In addition to developing students' leadership and communication skills, PCLT also recognizes how important these skills are for the administrators and teachers who run our schools. The adult working environment often gets overlooked. In fact, we know that staff morale and positive working relationships among adults have a direct effect on whether school-initiated programs are effective. In several studies conducted by PCLT in collaboration with researchers from Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, there has been a direct correlation between a program's impact on student outcomes and the degree to which faculty ranked their school climate as positive.

On page 4, we feature three school districts that have invested in the professional development of their staff and are leading colleagues through a school-wide visioning and change process. When faculty and administrators work together to promote a healthy social and academic climate, then lasting changes and powerful connections are the result.

*Sharon Rose Powell*

Sharon Rose Powell, Ed.D.  
President



*Phillip Lester, South Orange Middle School, Amy Ardito, Cape May County, and Rhea Doherty, Our Lady Star of the Sea School, recently participated in advisor training for REBEL 2, the tobacco prevention peer leadership club for middle school students.*

---

### PEER LEADERSHIP... (continued from page 1)

at New York's Port Chester High School, Jennifer recently sent PCLT an email message in which she stated, "I had no idea how much the training program [PGC] would have affected me throughout my life." Asked what still stands out for her after 12 years, Jennifer answered, "Sometimes I hear myself thinking...IALAC [I am loveable and capable]...a powerful lesson in self-image." She added that she strives to instill this in the people that she works with as head of the Quality Assurance and Training Department at Westchester Jewish Community Services. "I utilize the principles of PGC as I train staff in the importance of accepting others and believing that we are special and all capable of great things."

Kyle Williams, a graduate of Plainfield High School and Assistant School Leader at Community Academy Public Charter School in Washington, DC, felt that PGC "opened my eyes to what was possible within me." He uses many of the skills and capacities learned through PGC everyday at work. "PGC gave me the leadership vocabulary and the understanding of how to develop leadership skills. It's made me realize how important character education and peer mentoring is for today's kids."

By growing peer leadership in our elementary, middle, and high schools, we can build on these successes and reach a whole new generation of New Jersey's young leaders. For more information on peer leadership programs, contact PCLT at 609-252-9300 or email us at [princetoncenter@princetonleadership.org](mailto:princetoncenter@princetonleadership.org).

## PILOT YEAR POINTS TO FUTURE SUCCESS

### TRANSITION PROJECT ENTERS SECOND YEAR

Finding your way to class, making new friends, balancing school and a social life, and handling peer pressure are only a few of the challenges that freshmen face upon entering high school. This year, over 6000 freshmen in New Jersey will have an opportunity to discuss these topics and others during activities led by junior and senior peer leaders participating in the second year of Transition Project, a statewide program that helps incoming freshmen make a successful adjustment into high school.

In its pilot year, 85% of participating freshmen reported that Transition Project helped them consider the long-term consequences of their actions while in high school. Positive outcomes are achieved by training faculty advisor teams to supervise and train a team of upperclassmen to co-facilitate monthly, highly interactive learning station activities for all freshmen. “We talk about what a freshman would encounter,” explained Joe Lopez, a junior student facilitator at Williamstown High School, describing what happens

during the small group meetings in a recent article in the *Gloucester County Times*. “Some of the issues are more serious, like drugs, alcohol or sex while others are about organization or managing time.” According to Dave Geyer, a Williamstown faculty advisor, the program provides a forum to “talk about new issues [freshmen] will face in high school that they probably didn’t encounter at the middle school level.”

Lawrence High School, a newcomer to the program, is already seeing positive results by adding their own innovative twist to freshmen outreach. They invited the entire freshmen class to participate in a two-day orientation at Rider University that included 41 Transition Project peer leaders. Team-building exercises and peer-led courses were just some of the activities available to the freshmen, according to Linda Weltmann, program coordinator at Lawrence. At the close of the retreat, freshmen were already starting to think about their future as reflected by one of the ninth grade participants who said, “I want to be a peer leader.”

To sign up for Transition Project or learn more about the program, call Lori Muffi at 609-252-9300 x 105 or send an email to [lmuffi@princetonleadership.org](mailto:lmuffi@princetonleadership.org).



*PCLT's Executive Committee and lead trainers are getting ready for a new year. Seated (l to r) are: Sherry Barr, Psy.D., Director of NJ Teen PEP, and Sharon Rose Powell, Ed.D., PCLT President. Standing (l to r) are: Calvin Thomas, Lead Trainer, Abby Attias, Ph.D., Director of REBEL 2, Angela Spence DeGraff, Lead Trainer, and Margo Ross, Psy.D., Director of NJ Peer to Peer.*



*Peer leaders of all ages engage in an activity-based model at a recent Day of Learning. (Photo courtesy of Jeff Zelevansky Photography)*



12 Vandeventer Avenue  
Princeton, NJ 08542

PRINCETON  
CENTER *for*  
LEADERSHIP  
TRAINING

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Princeton NJ  
Permit 783

## PAYING ATTENTION TO THE NEEDS OF ADULTS

### RETREATS FOR ADULT LEADERSHIP TEAMS

It's easy to define the kind of leadership experience that school administrators, counselors, and teachers want to provide for students: we want them to experience a leadership model that allows them to thrive as individuals while simultaneously feeling connected to a larger, productive team.

Ironically, while we work to develop and implement high-quality leadership programs and classroom strategies for students, we often expect adults to achieve a productive dynamic easily and spontaneously, despite daily stresses and demands, changing personnel, and time challenges.

At PCLT, we recently had the opportunity to work with three districts—North Brunswick, Lawrence, and Mt. Arlington—that decided to pay attention to the needs of their administrators and their leadership teams. In each case, school leaders came together for a summer retreat designed to foster open communication, explore the impact of district history

on present and future dynamics, and articulate and address shared challenges.

The primary goal was to establish a shared vision and practical plan for moving forward—but to do so by building a context of greater trust, better rapport, and increased confidence in the team as a whole.

Said one administrator, “This retreat was essential for our future work. We have crossed some boundaries, gained new knowledge, learned about past history, and identified issues to be addressed.”

If you're interested in exploring a leadership retreat for administrators and faculty in your district, please call Dr. Sharon Rose Powell at 609-252-9300 x 110.

*“[I’m] excited about the prospect of creating a new color/hue in our district’s culture. I am grateful for the opportunity to open dialogue among the team.”*

**Participant,  
Leadership Team Retreat**