



# PARTNERS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PRINCETON CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP TRAINING

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## AND THEY'RE OFF!

### PEER GROUP CONNECTION BEGINS AT TRENTON CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

After a year of development and planning, Peer Group Connection (PGC) began at Trenton Central High School (TCHS) this past September. The program, PCLT's premier peer leadership program, has three TCHS staff advisors—Barbara Palmer, Barbara Walden and Marc Freeman—who spent part of their summer at an intensive residential training experience preparing for their roles and responsibilities.

The advisors put their summer training into action during the first week of school when they took 15 peer leaders on a three-day overnight retreat in Hardwick, New Jersey. The students boarded the bus in the early morning hours and headed north to begin their training as peer leaders. Over the three days, they examined what it means to be a role model, shared their expectations for the year ahead, began to develop the skills needed to be effective team members and peer leaders, and formed strong bonds that will likely last a lifetime.

As the retreat wound down and the peer leaders packed for the trip home, they began to look forward to working with freshmen. Throughout the school

year, they will meet weekly with their freshman peer groups to facilitate engaging, hands-on games and simulations about the transitional challenges faced by freshmen in their move from middle to high school. Activities and discussions address important mediating risk and protective factors associated with substance

use among adolescents. The connections that students make and the skills they learn in PGC will have a lasting effect on their social adjustment to high school and the decisions they make.

Once back at school, the peer leaders continued their preparation and practiced during their daily peer leadership class for their first session with the freshmen. At last, on September 30<sup>th</sup>, the day finally arrived—15 peer leaders and 96 freshmen met on the TCHS soccer

field for Activity Day. Eager and apprehensive, the freshmen were introduced to their peer leaders and to each other. After the ice was broken and everyone began to feel comfortable, peer group members discovered what they have in common, worked on problem-solving activities, and connected with each other.

*(continued on page 2)*



*PGC Advisors prepare for the year ahead by experiencing firsthand one of the many activities their peer leaders and freshmen will experience as part of the PGC curriculum.*

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### CRITICAL ELEMENTS IN YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Youth leadership development is the Princeton Center's highest priority. We believe all of New Jersey's children should have opportunities to learn about and become leaders. Leadership training involves learning how to (1) communicate effectively; (2) solve problems; (3) develop social confidence and competence; and (4) become a positive role model.

When the classroom environment includes time for teambuilding, group problem-solving activities, and reinforces healthy practices like straight talk and reflective discussions, students feel more connected to adults and peers, and increase their overall sense of belonging to their school community.

We have grown our cadre of model leadership programs in every New Jersey county—with special emphasis on reaching young people in some of our largest urban communities. In Camden, with support from a grant from the New Jersey Department of Human Services, a character education program called PeacePALS is training over 60 teachers in six elementary schools to infuse leadership and group problem-solving skills into the curriculum.

In Newark, the Prudential Foundation is funding the implementation of New Jersey Teen PEP, a statewide teen sexual health prevention program, in three comprehensive high schools. Another four high schools in Newark are preparing upperclass peer leaders to lead freshman groups in the Transition Project.

Each of our peer leadership models, whether the target is elementary or secondary school students, has five critical elements:

1. The training of faculty to work with student leaders on a regular basis, either in a course for credit or in weekly check-ins

2. A student-centered, activity-based curriculum that is engaging and user-friendly
3. Teambuilding retreats that set a positive tone for the year
4. Involving parents in family night events, so that healthy practices are shared between home and school
5. Ongoing assessment of programs with built-in flexibility to adapt curriculum as needed

Our leadership programs are built to last over time—both in your schools and in the lives of the young people whose leadership represents our future.

*Sharon Rose Powell*

Sharon Rose Powell, Ed.D.  
President

## PGC BEGINS AT TCHS *(continued from page 1)*

The PGC program at TCHS was made possible through a partnership between PCLT and the Center for Alcohol Studies (CAS) at Rutgers University. CAS received a multi-million dollar grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse to establish a Transdisciplinary Prevention Research

**“It was great to get to share about ourselves and talk to the other students.”**

*Freshman Participant  
TCHS PGC Activity Day*

Center to develop and study innovative substance abuse prevention programs. The Prevention Research Center

**“PGC...forces kids to move outside their comfort zones and meet new people.”**

*PGC Advisor  
Trenton Central High School*

chose to study PGC and began its five-year study at TCHS. The primary focus of the study is the impact of PGC on freshmen and how they

navigate through the daily pressures of a new environment and make a successful transition into high school.

## NEWARK INITIATIVE TAKES GIANT LEAP FORWARD

### SMALL LEARNING COMMUNITIES BEGIN SECOND YEAR

Now that PCLT has completed another round of intensive Summer Institutes in partnership with four Newark high schools, 80 faculty and administrators are planning to take significant steps this year to improve instruction and personalize their newly-formed Small Learning

**“I’m more energized than ever to get back to school and practice what I learned.”**

*Faculty Participant  
Newark Summer Institute*

Communities. Up to 20 members from each of the faculties at Malcolm X Shabazz, West Side, East Side and Barringer high schools have formed a Professional

Development Corps. These teams have made a commitment to engage in peer mentoring; increase the number of innovative instructional practices they try in their classrooms; and raise the bar to become more distinguished and proficient—as defined by the district’s rigorous *Teaching Framework* (adapted from PATHWISE™ Institute, © 1997 ETS).

In addition, each high school has established up to three Action Teams to work in areas ranging from

Achievement Mentoring and increased school-community partnerships to finding ways to “get students out of the halls and into the classrooms.” PCLT will continue to build the capacity of dedicated Newark faculty in 2004-05 through on-site technical assistance and teacher training meetings and events.



*Shabazz High School faculty members enjoyed the learning opportunities and the camaraderie at Newark’s Summer Institute held in August.*

## THE PIECES OF PEACEPALS ADD UP

### CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAM INITIATED IN 6 CAMDEN SCHOOLS

What is *PeacePALS*? It’s many things...a learning process, an elementary school peer helper, a hands-on activity...and it’s fun!

Students engaged in *PeacePALS* explore personal identity, values and attitudes. A *PeacePALS* peer helper is an older student who, along with the classroom teacher, helps the younger students in the school learn problem solving and other life skills.

Each unit in the *PeacePALS* curriculum focuses on a specific theme such as healthy choices, cooperation, and friends. Activities allow the participants to see how each individual’s special talents fit into the puzzle of their school community. Everyone benefits in *PeacePALS* by participating in collaborative learning activities; attending Family Night with family and friends; and learning how to work together

cooperatively. Put all these pieces together and you have *PeacePALS*, an experientially-based character education program designed to help children realize the powerful contributions they can make to positively impact their school community.

**“I will model and reinforce the themes throughout the school year.”**

*Faculty Participant  
Camden PeacePALS*

This year, the following six Camden elementary schools have begun *PeacePALS* with funding support from the Office of Prevention & Education, New Jersey Dept. of Human Services: Cramer, Bonsall, Cooper’s Poynt, Dudley, Molina, and Yorkship. *PeacePALS* will help these six elementary schools build pride in their schools by building character in their students.



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## DUNN'S COMMUNITY PARTNERS PROGRAM GROWS

### TRENTON AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM MOVES INTO 6TH GRADE CURRICULUM

Plagued with violent outbreaks in their community last year, Dunn Middle School educators are taking a

**“It forced me to think about the way I teach and to look at the broader picture when planning my lessons.”**

*Faculty Participant  
Dunn Middle School  
Faculty Retreat*

proactive approach to addressing bullying behavior and promoting cooperation and respect for diversity among their students.

Originally an afterschool program at Dunn, Community Partners for Trenton Youth (CPTY) now targets 230 incoming 6<sup>th</sup> graders in twice monthly 90-minute modules during the school day. Another exciting, new component of CPTY is the involvement of Junior Mentors—20 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders who will co-facilitate CPTY activities with their adult mentors and provide buddy support to younger peers.

As part of the second year launching of CPTY, 80 teachers and administrators attended an August retreat

led by PCLT. Classroom strategies were identified to help students start their year off “on the right foot,” and create a safe, supportive environment for learning. Beginning in October, teachers and community volunteers in the CPTY program are initiating an expanded, activity-based curriculum focused on building character and life skills, and ultimately, on replacing violence with positive leadership opportunities.



*Dunn Middle School's Junior Mentors practice skills they will need when helping their younger peers this year.*