



MARCH 2017

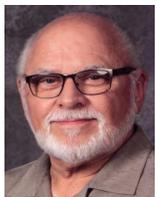
Coordinator's Corner

While completing research for this newsletter's focused article regarding incivility, I came across an excellent report regarding emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD). The report was produced by Hanover Research and published in 2013.

I discovered the increasing incivility teachers are experiencing in the classroom may be a direct result of a growing social problem in our society today. A part of that problem probably relates to an increasing number of those diagnosed with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD).

Let's not pretend that all incivility in the classroom can be attributed to EBD. However, I do suggest that just a few students with the disorder can be a major contributor to classroom group behaviors. Just being more aware of the disorder may help to address incivility in the classroom.

I encourage faculty members having difficulties with incivility in the classroom to read the referenced report. It is entitled, "Effective Programs for Emotional and Behavioral Disorders."



David Gillis
Coordinator
Office of
Student
Conflict
Resolution

The Peacemaker

New Haven Community Schools / Office of Student Conflict Resolution

Exploring Incivility in the Schools

There is ample research available that indicates almost one-third of the population believes that failing to learn such values as honesty, respect and responsibility is the greatest problem affecting our youth today. An overwhelming number of people say this problem is widespread, with many parents indicating they believe students treating teachers with a lack of respect has become a serious problem in our schools. Many adults, however, will concede that the youth they personally know are more respectful than "kids in general."

So, what do most people consider examples of uncivil or poor behavior? Certainly we will all agree that the normal contributions to uncivil activity include bullying, profanity, and various

forms of altercation. Let's, however, review some other areas of in-school behavior that may also be judged as uncivil:

- Expecting teachers and school administrators to grant special consideration.
- Being inconsiderate of other students and teachers.
- Making sarcastic remarks to others or calling others offensive names.
- Using social media to cause controversy and intimidation.
- Being inconsiderate or irresponsible in the use of property belonging to others.
- Littering hallways, classrooms, cafeterias or other areas of the school.
- Responding inappropriately when not getting their own way.
- Shifting responsibility or blame for personal unacceptable activities to others.

• Using a cell-phone or other electronic device at inappropriate times.

These are only a few examples of incivility that may be witnessed in the school. On the other side of the spectrum, there are behaviors that are very desirable and displayed by many students. Among them are:

- Sincerely complimenting others.
- Showing awareness of the needs of others.
- Leaving school areas neat and clean when finished with an activity.
- Responding respectfully to the opinions of others.
- Having the skills necessary to successfully address conflict with others.
- Sincerely listening to teachers.
- Being able to sincerely apologize to others.

-continued on page 2

"Peacekeepers" Named at NHHS and EMS

Endeavour Middle School 7th grade student **Lisa Stuckman** and **Randy Rudich**, a junior at New Haven High School, have been named "Peacekeeper of the Month" for February. The *Peacemakers* (Peer Mediators) of the respective schools and their Faculty Advisors select the award recipients each month.

The recognition program

honors monthly a student from recommendations submitted by students, teachers and staff members.

The award is designed to draw attention to students whose words and actions reflect a creative and consistent effort towards a peaceful environment and who promote understanding and acceptance among others. This recognition

promotes and encourages positive behavior within the student body.



Lisa Stuckman



Randy Rudich

Exploring Incivility in the School, continued from page 1

Many students will agree that disrespect is common in their lives. A substantial percentage of students say their peers treat each other with respect and many say their fellow classmates treat their teachers with respect.

This disregard for others often manifests itself in aggression among youth. One report suggests that approximately one-third of all 6th to 10th graders in the United States have been involved in bullying, either as the bully, the target of bullying, or both. And research has found that some bullying starts as early as pre-school. That same report says 70 percent of parents think bullying and harassment are somewhat or very serious problems. Another study of middle school students found that, during the school week, 50 percent of children report being bullied in some way: being called names, having rumors spread about them, or even being threatened with physical aggression.

In order to act civilly, students must have both the skills necessary to respond appropriately in a given situation as well as a general concern for others. Research offers that an underlying lack of social and communications skills may lead youth to act uncivilly. As an example, students who have low self-control are more likely to engage in disruptive classroom behavior and youth who report being emotionally responsive to others' feelings are less inclined to show aggressive and delinquent behavior. The skills necessary to understand and control one's emotions and the ability to empathize with others are key components of responding to a situation in a civil way.

While teaching character and social skills may result in youth acting in respectful and appropriate ways, instructing youth on how to act civilly is distinct because it is "other-focused." While character and social skills education focuses mostly on developing personal

characteristics, teaching civility also means teaching youth to respect and be aware of the needs of others.

On the brighter side, today's youth seem to be more concerned with helping others than ever before. In one of the reports referenced above, more than two thirds of today's youth believe that it's important to help people in need. And while less than 40 percent of adults believe today's children will make the world a better place after they become adults, over 70 percent of youth believe that they can make a difference in their community.

Teaching youth how to behave civilly is important to parents, but many don't feel as though they have succeeded in doing so. Over 80 percent of parents say that it is absolutely essential to teach their child to be courteous and polite, while 60 percent feel as though they have succeeded. Similarly, more than 90 percent say they must teach their child to be honest and truthful and only 55 percent feel as though they have succeeded.

All adults, including parents, counselors, ministers, and educators, can take steps to promote civility among youth. Setting clear boundaries or rules, then explaining them and using them consistently is the best way to set the expectation for civil behavior. Furthermore, it is important for adults to follow the same rules as youth so that they can serve as a model for civil behavior. Finally, it is important to remember that lessons in civility should be repeated multiple times as youth learn how to respond and react appropriately in different situations.

A primary focus of restorative practices in the school is to address directly or to provide support for teaching, motivating and promoting civility within the school. This is accomplished through the training of selected students in the skills of conflict resolution, dispute ne-

gotiation and peaceful environment promotion. This is our school's "Peacemakers." Through the various processes of restorative practices such as mediation conferencing, peacemaking/dialogue circles, and conflict resolution coaching there is an ongoing orientation in developing proper attitudes and behavior towards a civil atmosphere within the school campuses.



New Advisor Named

Brittany Aguinaga, a teacher at Endeavour Middle School, has accepted an appointment to serve as a member of the Faculty Advisor team for the "Peacemakers" of Endeavour and New Haven High Schools. She joins Advisors Noelle Divosso, Dayna Polehanki, John Hepper, Kristina Moran and Jason Hann.

The Advisors, three from each of the schools, work to help expand the interest in and use of various conflict resolution processes among students. They will soon be provided additional training and guidance to bring about sustainability over time. The support from and cooperation of peer educators is important to a continuance of the Restorative Practices effort within the New Haven Community Schools system.

The Office of Student Conflict Resolution is grateful for the support and dedication of these volunteers who work to make the program all it is intended to be.



Addressing Incivility with Restorative Practices

In a recent newspaper opinion page article, a retired teacher advocated that not every child belongs in the regular classroom. He began by stating that his assertion would be opposed by those who believe that all children can learn and therefore all belong in the regular classroom. He declared that was a myth and went on to challenge it.

Some research quickly suggests that the focus of the author's essay and the concern about rising incivility in the classroom are the same. Incivility is a social problem that seems to have permeated many middle and high schools nationally.

Incivility can be defined as any action that interferes with a harmonious and cooperative learning atmosphere. We might categorize them as annoyances, defiance, intimidation and violence. The degree of incivility can vary, but there appears to be a general agreement among educators and school administrators that it is on the rise. Some teachers stressed that a demonstrated lack of respect, name calling and threats were daily occurrences.

Additional research supports a widespread concern over inappropriate student activity ranging from troublesome to disruptive. Many teachers have indicated distressing experiences with classroom behavior ranging from continuous texting in class to outright intimidation or threats. Too often, the intimidation is from student to teacher.

To look closer at the subject of incivility in the classroom, let's examine this description of a disruptive student as offered in a major university study: "A disruptive student is one who persistently makes inordinate demands for time and attention from faculty and staff; habitually interferes with the learning environment by disruptive verbal or behavioral expressions; verbally threatens or abuses school personnel; willfully damages school property; mis-

uses drugs or alcohol; or physically threatens or assaults others."

Certainly irritating and immature student behavior is time-consuming for teachers to manage and prevents them from instructing course content. More intense encounters leave them stressed and occasionally shaken. Many students in the classroom where bad behavior is displayed are short-changed because of disruptive behavior.

Unfortunately, the college preparation for teaching may not effectively deal with incivility in the classroom. This may be especially true where the teacher is frequently the target of the student's incivility. If it did, we may have fewer teachers.

A student's poor choice of unacceptable classroom activities is addressed in the adopted behavior rubric. Here the student who displays incivility can rise through the maze of punitive sanctions, past the detention stage, through periods of in-school and out-of-school suspensions, and all the way to expulsion. Some students learn from these consequences and return to the classroom a better behaved person. However, some do not and the behavior continues.

The school's behavior rubric includes, in many situations, an additional alternative or supplemental action for student misbehavior – restorative justice. Currently it is offered as voluntary, but effective August 1 can be made mandatory.

While there are several approaches to classroom management of incivility that are very worthy of exploration, the processes of restorative practices are available within the New Haven Community Schools system through the Office of Student Conflict Resolution. Some can be applied in the classroom while others require separating the student from the classroom for specialized processes.

In-class use of the peacemaking or dialogue circle process can be effective

and allows the misbehaving students to contribute to the solution. It also encourages participation by students who are not a contributor to the problem but, because they are in the classroom, are impacted by the uncivil behavior. Other processes that address issues of incivility include restorative mediation conferences and conflict resolution coaching. Each requires separating the student from the classroom to participate in the process.

While this article has not solved specific classroom problems, it, hopefully, has caused some critical thinking about how to address them. You are invited to contact the Restorative Practices Coordinator in the Office of Student Conflict Resolution to discuss your classroom situation.

Off the Shelf



If you're an e-book reader and want a good and quick (31 pages) overview of intervention approaches to incivility in the classroom, you may want to read this single chapter excerpt.

From the ASCD classic book, "Discipline with Dignity: New Challenges, New Solutions" 3rd edition, you can order an excerpt. It is chapter 8 of the book and is entitled, "Strategies for Students Who Chronically Misbehave." The authors are Richard L. Curwin, Allen N. Mendier and Brian D. Mendier.

The book focuses on creative, unconventional and effective interventions for students who have not responded to more traditional means of discipline.

Within the Office of Student Conflict Resolution we use many of the techniques discussed in this chapter as an aspect of the often used conflict resolution coaching process.
