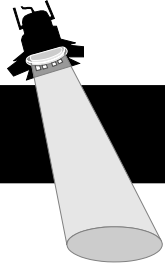


# Gender Notes

A newsletter to support Gender Healthy Schools in Boston and Cambridge—a project funded by the Schott Foundation.



## SPOTLIGHT on the 2001 Gender Healthy/Respectful Schools Kick-off Event



Workshop for GH/RS teams on evaluation tools led by Marianne Castano.

Educators from 16 Boston and Cambridge school teams attended this year's Gender Healthy/Respectful Schools Institute, held at the College Park Hotel @ MIT on September 28 and 29. The Institute is an annual kick-off meeting/banquet for Schott Foundation grantees from the Gender Healthy/Respectful Schools (GH/RS) initiative. This time gives team members a chance to regroup after the summer vacation, learn some new skills in program implementation and evaluation, and have structured planning time for the project year ahead. It is a time when veteran teams and new teams have a chance to network and learn what others are doing in their schools to make a difference for their students. This year, the theme of creating schools that are academically, socially, and emotionally healthy for both boys and girls was enhanced by a focus on the development of respectful environments.

The Institute opened with welcoming remarks from Dr. Maria-Paz Avery, the GH/RS project director from Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), Shirley Mark, the GH/RS program director from the Caroline and Sigmund Schott Foundation, and Dr. Rosa Smith, the new president of the Schott Foundation. Opening remarks included

information on the project partnership between EDC and the Schott Foundation, project staff introductions, and acknowledgement of new and continuing teams, as well as a story read by Dr. Smith. The story she shared, *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, is symbolic and exemplary of the work that Schott teams do in their schools. It is the story of a teacher working to stop teasing and bullying in his school and how his efforts made a difference in one little girl's life.

Throughout the two-day institute, teams were engaged in activities and workshops that pushed them to think about the work they do in an analytical way and to develop action plans for implementing and evaluating the work they will do with students and teachers throughout the year. Teams were asked to focus on their goals for the year and develop a headline they would like to see in June 2002, highlighting their intended accomplishments. The headlines were inspirational for all and set the tone for a positive working environment for the Institute.

The keynote speaker for Friday evening's festivities was Nan Stein, Ed.D., from the

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Sharing the news of the Gender Healthy/Respectful Schools (GH/RS) project in Boston and Cambridge Public Schools

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*Teams from the Baldwin School and Hernandez Two-Way Bilingual School plan for the coming year.*

### **2001 Gender Healthy/Respectful Schools Kick-off Event, continued from page 1**

Wellesley Center for Research on Women. In her talk, entitled "Sexual Harassment in an Era of Zero Tolerance," she proposed the replacement of zero tolerance with "zero indifference" and made recommendations for teachers and administrators on how to create both safe and democratic schools.

Team members also participated in one of four workshops that occurred simultaneously on Saturday morning:

- Evaluation Tools (such as surveys), led by Marianne Castano from EDC
- Enhancement of Self-Awareness for More Effective Communication with Youth, presented by Penninah Ogada, an educator and trainer from Kenya and an EDC consultant who has had numerous experi-

ences in cross-cultural training activities in the Boston area

- Strategies to Address Harassment and Hate Crimes and How to Change School Climate, facilitated by Amiée Valenzuela-Altomare from the Mayor's Task Force on Hate Crime Prevention
- Building Respect for Diversity in the Classroom, presented by Vengerflutta Colita Smith, a nationally recognized workshop leader on diversity issues

The final activity for the two days was a closely facilitated workshop on how to assess the effectiveness of project work. Overall, the Institute was ranked a success and a worthwhile use of time for those who attended. ❖

### **Definitions for Thought . . .**

**Bias**—An inclination or preference for or against an individual or group that interferes with one's impartial judgment.

**Discrimination**—Treatment that favors one person or group over another.

**Prejudice**—An opinion formed without enough knowledge or thought; a bias against someone or something on the basis of opinion, rather than fact.

**Sexism**—Prejudice and /or discrimination, either personal or institutional, based on gender.

These definitions are from the sources listed. Check out these Web sites for further resources, activities, and curriculum ideas:

- *MTV's Fight for Your Rights Action Guide*, available for downloading or ordering at [http://www.mtv.com/onair/ffyr/actionguide/action\\_guide\\_web.jhtml](http://www.mtv.com/onair/ffyr/actionguide/action_guide_web.jhtml)
- California Dept. of Education, *Diversity: Issues and Responses*, available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/iasa/diversity.html>
- *Resist: A Tool to Help Teens Manage Feelings, Build Tolerance, and Understand Patriotism*, available at <http://www.rippleeffects.com/resist/teens>

## Nan Stein's proposal and strategies for environments of "Zero Indifference" on sexual harassment

*To achieve a gender safe school, we need to employ several simultaneous strategies to ensure that sexual harassment will not have a presence. Calling this "zero indifference," rather than "zero tolerance," would mean that the adults will notice the behaviors, comment on them, intervene, and make corrections accordingly.*

*Strategies for achieving a community of "zero indifference":*

- 1. Institute classroom education and curricula on sexual harassment that are long-term, engaging, age appropriate, and fun.*
- 2. Train all staff, including administrators, custodians, school secretaries, bus drivers, coaches, teachers, guidance counselors, playground and lunchroom supervisors, and psychologists in a consistent and repeated way.*
- 3. Designate at least one man and one woman in every school building as the "ombuds."*
- 4. Development of school-based codes of discipline for sexual harassment.*
- 5. Development of school-based restraining orders/stay-away orders.*
- 6. Creation of multiple strategies for resolution.*
- 7. Offer compassionate responses to the harasser, in the form of counseling in an individual or group setting.*
- 8. Parents need to be involved, through open community forums as well as in private discussions.*
- 9. Administer sexual harassment surveys that include inquiries about the relationship between the harasser and the target.*
- 10. Incorporate subjects such as dating violence and student-to-student sexual harassment into college teacher training and recertification courses.*

*An expanded version of these strategies developed by Nan Stein, Ed.D. at the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women can be found in the Fall/Winter 2000 WCW Research Report. Please call the WCW Publications Office at 781-282-2510 for copies of the report. A longer version of the article also appears as a book chapter, "Sexual Harassment meets Zero Tolerance: Life in K-12 Schools" in the book, Zero Tolerance: Resisting the Drive for Punishment: A Handbook for Parents, Students, Educators and Citizens, edited by William Ayers, Bernadine Dohrn, and Richard Ayers (New Press, 2001).*



*GH/RS team from Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School working on their headline for June 2002.*

## A True Partnership: Gender Healthy Schools for All

*Opening Remarks by Maria-Paz Avery,  
GH/RS Project Director*

The Gender Healthy/Respectful Schools Project is truly a partnership. The Schott Foundation has offered their vision for gender healthy/respectful schools and have backed it up with funding. Grantee teams have taken that vision and proposed to make it a reality in their own sphere of influence. We at EDC bring our expertise to support grantees in their work and to collaborate with them and with Schott to build a network of activists working to build school communities that are free from sexism, gender biases, and other “isms” that inhibit the academic and social development of our young people.

We are all engaged in work that is of essential importance: creating schools that are socially, emotionally, and physically healthy places for our youth—for our girls and boys, young women and men, who come from a variety of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, who represent the many racial/ethnic origins that have made the United States what it is, and who bring a myriad of perspectives stemming from differences in age, abilities, sexual orientation, and spirituality.

The implications of this work are profound. We knew this before September 11, 2001, but it became even more real after that day of tragedy. A couple of days after September 11, Mark David Milliron, president and CEO of the League of Innovation in Community Colleges, issued a statement addressing our responsibility as educators to look at the terror that is perpetuated in the “lesser crimes of prejudice and hate.” He goes on to say, “Perhaps when we hear and see the daily ramblings of talk show hosts, neighbors, or anyone else that weaves in subtle and not so subtle, broad-based attacks on Middle Eastern people or Muslims, we should say, “That is the terror.” “That is the terror” makes the point that these small acts are what can lead to the deadly actions taken on September 11.

Each Gender Healthy/Respectful Schools project has a direct impact on the creation of new school cultures that embody the values

of respect for oneself and for others, of confidence and pride in the fullness of our personal identities, of high expectations for academic performance in all of our students, of collegiality and inquiry among the adults, and, most importantly, of social responsibility toward our communities. We look forward to working with all the grantees throughout the coming year. ❖

## Generating Expectations for Student Achievement

*Dee Grayson, trainer and developer of the Generating Expectations for Student Achievement (GESA) model, returned to the East Coast this past fall to facilitate two training workshops, sponsored by the Gender Healthy/Respectful Schools project. This year’s workshops included a two-day teacher training and a one-day GESA training for parents. More than 11 schools and teams were represented at the two trainings, which took place on October 30 and 31 and November 2, respectively. Here is what the participants had to say about the workshops:*

- *“Refreshing, positive, reaffirming my beliefs as an educator. Medicine that the doctor ordered . . . all teachers (novices/veteran teachers) would benefit [from this training].”*
- *“Terrific. I wish there were more people from my district here.”*
- *“Thank you!”*
- *“Very powerful and applicable.”*
- *“Very powerful; I wish I had this information when my children were younger.”*
- *“Terrific! I want to bring this information to others.”*

*For more information on GESA trainings or products, visit [www.graymill.com](http://www.graymill.com) or call (909) 246-2106.*

## Excerpts from Dr. Rosa Smith's Welcome Address



Photo: Ellen Shub

[At the Fall Institute, the president of the Caroline and Sigmund Schott Foundation, Dr. Rosa Smith, read a story written by Patricia Polacco, entitled *Thank You, Mr. Falker*. It was a story about Trisha's (the author) personal journey to learn to read in fifth grade with the help of Mr. Falker. It was also a story about Eric, the bully in Trisha's life. Below is an excerpt from the story (in italics) and the text of Dr. Smith's speech.]

Trisha was a good artist. She could draw much better than everyone else. However, she couldn't read, even in fifth grade. Eric, the school bully, knew about her disability and tormented her. For example, *He waited by the door of the classroom for her and pulled her hair. He waited for her on the playground, leaned in her face, and called her, "Toad!" Trisha was afraid to turn any corner, for fear Eric would be there. She felt completely alone.\** One day she found a place to hide. But during recess, Eric followed her to her secret hiding place. *"Have you become a mole?" he laughed. And he pulled her out into the hall, and danced around her. "Dumbbell, dumbbell, magotty old dumbbell."* Mr. Falker heard all this and *marched Eric down to the office. When he came back, he found Trisha. "I don't think you'll have to worry about that boy again," he said softly.*

Mr. Falker noticed that Trisha was scared. *He sank to his knees in front of her. "You poor baby," he said. "You think you're dumb, don't*

*you? How awful for you to be so lonely and afraid."* He continued, *"But, little one, don't you understand, you don't see letters or numbers the way other people do. And you've gotten through school all this time, and fooled many, many good teachers!" He smiled at her. "That took cunning, and smartness, and such, such bravery." . . . "We're going to change all that, girl. You're going to read—I promise you that."*

That day, Trisha found a "hero" in Mr. Falker. Not only did he save her from Eric, but he also taught her to read.

Thank you, Mr. Falker.

Every child, every student deserves a Mr. Falker. Every child, every student, every day.

That is why you are here today . . . because you understand the critical role you play in each child's life . . . individually and collectively.

This is why the Schott Foundation and the Schott Center for Public and Early Education sponsors this mini-grant program.

Because every child needs a Mr. Falker—many Mr. and Ms. Falkers—to maximize their potential in school.

Students and victims like Patricia Polacco need a Mr. Falker to support them, protect them, and understand their uniqueness so that they can be taught appropriately.

And students, also victims, like bully Eric need a Mr. Falker. Non-violent, non-bullying, non-harassing behavior can be taught and learned. We do the Erics of this world a disservice when we do not make and take opportunities to teach them alternative behaviors.

Hopefully, your work will produce opportunities for both Patricia and Eric to be successful as young students and later as adults.

Schott's goal is to have an impact on gender healthy and respectful schools by supporting your work in your schools and districts with the end goal of promoting this same appreciation all across Massachusetts.

We appreciate your commitment to the ideals of gender healthy and respectful schools and wish you well as you implement your mini-grant projects. ❖

\* From Polacco, Patricia, *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, Philomel Books, New York, NY, ©1998.

## An Afterthought: Respect for Differences

*By Marianne Castano, GH/RS Research Associate*

**You are providing the scaffolding that your students need to learn to behave and treat one another in an equitable way.**

Power. Respect. Relentlessness. Perseverance. These were the words that came to my mind as I was speaking to some of the attendees at the Fall Institute about the September 11th events and thereafter. I also thought about how these words applied to our Boston and Cambridge public school teachers who are part of our Gender Healthy/Respectful Schools project.

Marianne Williamson, internationally acclaimed author and lecturer on spirituality, wrote, "Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate, but that we are powerful beyond measure." Indeed, we surprise ourselves with the sheer magnitude of what we can do and our effect on others. We can use our power either to do positive or negative things. We can also use our power to turn negative things into positive outcomes.

As teachers, we have the power to change the world. This is our truth. One of the things we can do with our power is build a community that supports and teaches respect for differences. Our diversity is also our strength, and we know this to be true, too.

The victims of the terrorist attacks came from diverse backgrounds. And now the United States and other nations from around the world have come together in an embrace to help us all put the pieces back together—both of our own lives and our neighbors'. We have learned and continue to learn that when we respect those who are different from us, we are at once better human beings. And if we don't, we inevitably end up destroying ourselves. With respect comes our motivation to treat others the way we want to be treated—the golden rule of our existence.

From this experience, we have also learned that our differences account, in part, for what is common between and among us. Our uniqueness as individuals transcends the descriptions we have assigned to ourselves in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, and gender. At the same time, our uniqueness makes us one with a bigger global humanity.

As teachers who are teaching and implementing strategies to build communities within your schools that support respectful and respectable ways of being, you have the

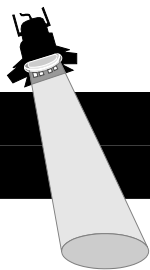
opportunity to make a difference in the lives of your students. You also have the distinct role of being a historian, in that you are helping to create a generation of individuals who value differences and live respectfully, and who have the ability to pass this on to others, young and old.

As change agents within the Gender Healthy/Respectful Schools project, you have committed yourselves to helping students respect themselves and one another as males and females. You are providing the scaffolding that your students need to learn to behave and treat one another in an equitable way. When male and female students feel validated and treated respectfully, they develop an understanding of gender equity and act in ways that promote a gender healthy self-image and relationship with others.

This pursuit of a gender healthy and respectful relationship with oneself and others can be daunting at times. In trying to figure out what teachers can do to address this challenge, I think about the firefighters and other rescue workers in Ground Zero who have demonstrated relentlessness and perseverance. They never for a moment thought about quitting as they went from day to day trying to save lives. And I've seen these traits in teachers as well.

If not for teachers like yourselves, albeit the myriad difficulties you face in your school settings, our youth would not have grown up to be the positive human beings that many of them are. For the past two years, teachers who were part of the Gender Healthy/Respectful Schools project have been relentless and persevering; many of them are back this year, wiser and with more vigor.

We should accept the mission before us: to be steadfast in transforming male and female students to use their power positively, to become respectful of themselves and others, to be relentless in pursuing their goals and dreams, and to persevere through life's ups and downs. And the best way for them to learn to be so is to see you as their role models. You have the power. You can build a community of respectful and respectable individuals who promote gender equitable and healthy relationships. And finally, you don't quit; this is not in your vocabulary. So, all together, we say, "Forward!" ❖



## SPOTLIGHT on the Cambridgeport School 2000–2001

### *Making a Difference at the Cambridgeport School*

*By Mason Mitchell-Daniels, GH/RS Project Coordinator*

On June 11, 2001, the halls of the Cambridgeport School in Cambridge bustled with excitement. Since I had read about the Cambridgeport School's project on gender equity, I knew what their curriculum *Making a Difference* was trying to achieve, but seeing the results was the proof I needed to be reassured that this kind of work can not only be done, but also be very successful. As I approached the third and fourth grade classrooms, not quite sure what to expect, I was greeted by an environmental activist who told me of her life's journeys, her work, and (in very scientific language for a third grader) how she made a difference. Little did I know that I would encounter women from all walks of life that night, from astronauts to athletes, diplomats to artists. The girls and boys had studied these women, and tonight they were proud to portray them, each dressing the part and sharing the story of a woman who, in some way, had made a difference. The students were well-versed, prepared, and excited to show what they had learned during the unit they had just completed in their classes. The night culminated in a song and dance presentation of "I Won't Back Down" by Tom Petty—a song about integrity. The students also performed "Lean on Me"—a song about the qualities of one's character that enable someone to make a difference in the world.

Throughout the weeks of the *Making a Difference* unit in these classrooms, students looked at the qualities of character that are unique to people who make a difference, they examined how these qualities exist in themselves and in the people around them, and they realized that they themselves also have the power to make a difference. Teachers engaged their students in dialogue around how gender roles were and are restricting for women. Students were encouraged to recognize women they knew

from their own lives who were doing nontraditional things. While integrating these important life lessons into their everyday classroom environment, students learned how to research facts about their featured female historical figures (chosen by the student), analyze their findings, and craft essays about these women's lives. The students also used computers to create timelines of significant moments in each woman's life, which they were encouraged to share in their presentations.

Teachers shared some anecdotes of how, at times, some of the boys were unhappy about dressing like a woman for their performances. When this happened, other girls and boys seized the opportunity to reassure the worried students that it was no different than a girl dressing as a boy for a dramatic role. Both boys and girls set examples for the class by speaking about women on a level equal with men, and addressing the harm that stereotypes have on women. The girls were empowered by learning about the many diverse women who have made a difference throughout history and for other women and men worldwide.

The teacher team at the Cambridgeport School made a difference in their students' lives by simply enhancing the curriculum at their school. Through their hard work and passionate interest in gender equity, their students have now been exposed to a variety of women who have made a difference in different spheres of life, many of whom are not found in the history books. The *Making a Difference* project showed what power information can have on students and how easy it is to make a difference in a child's life.

If you would like more information on this project, please contact any of the following team members: Jen Castaldi, Frederick Won Park, or Erica Beck at the Cambridgeport School at (617) 349-6587. ❖

***Little did I know that I would encounter women from all walks of life that night, from astronauts to athletes, diplomats to artists.***

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**Gender Notes Newsletter**

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## Gender Healthy/Respectful Schools Project Mission Statement

The Gender Healthy/Respectful Schools Project works with teacher teams from Boston and Cambridge public schools to support the growth of school communities that are free from sexism, gender bias, and other discriminatory practices that inhibit academic achievement. Learning environments that are socially, emotionally, and physically safe and in which students and adults respect themselves and one another provide an essential foundation for fostering academic excellence and social responsibility in all students. Funded by the Caroline and Sigmund Schott Foundation, the project supports the professional development of teachers and other educators on equity issues; strengthens and expands a network of activists and advocates for gender equity; and raises the awareness of gender inequities among district administrators, principals, policymakers, parents, and the public. The project uses a reflective practice approach that assists teams in documenting the impact of their work and disseminating their learnings about gender equity to the broader community. ❖