

November 6th 2007 - Professional Development Day

Theme: Promoting School Safety within a Positive School Culture and Climate

District-wide incidents in the past school year related to harassment, bullying and cyberspace have indicated a need to further understand how to create better and safer learning environments. Students learn best and achieve their full potential in safe environments. Such an environment begins with safe families and safe communities. Statistically, schools continue to be one of the most safe and sound places for our children. Our districts are committed and willing to work together to ensure that our schools remain so. One incident of violence or disruption of learning is one too many! Research indicates that creating a supportive school climate is the most important step in preventing incidents of bullying, teasing, and harassment. In addition to our policies and procedures, we are committed to strong preventive work to ensure that the schools and the districts provide safe and healthy learning environments where students are safe and sound in their pursuit of educational success. Our school communities can do a great deal to prevent harassment and bullying, through effective prevention, intervention, and crisis response strategies. The morning presentations will begin to set the stage for common understanding.

7:30-8:00

Coffee/Danish at the location of your first session

8:15-10:15

High School and Elementary School Staff @HS Auditorium

Meeting the Challenge: Promoting Safe Schools and Civil Rights

Presenter: *Richard W. Cole, Esq., Civil Rights and Safe Schools Consultant*

Richard W. Cole, Esq. is a nationally known civil rights attorney, former Civil Rights Division Chief and Assistant Attorney General in the Massachusetts Office of Attorney General - - with extensive experience in law enforcement, race relations, educational equity, and in addressing harassment, bullying and hate crimes in schools. He has co-chaired former Massachusetts Attorney General Tom Reilly's Safe School's Initiative, and innovative statewide collaboration to provide the training and technical assistance school need to make them safe from harassment, hate crimes, and bullying. He also co-chaired a national initiative that culminated in the U.S. Department of Education's 1999 publication "Protecting Students from Harassment and Hate Crime - A Guide for Schools", which is a nationally acclaimed guide.

This workshop will explore the increasing problems of harassment, bullying and hate crimes in schools, including cyberspace. Common mistakes and issues will be highlighted contributing to major conflicts, incidents of violence, and racial and other forms of inter-group tensions in school. The workshop will identify warning signs and incident precursors and address the fundamentals for transforming school cultures. It will provide participants with practical tools and strategies for recognizing, responding to, and preventing bullying, hate crimes, and harassment based on race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and disability.

Goals for the Presentation:

- Increase awareness of the nature and extent of bullying, harassment, and hate crimes in K-12 schools.
- Better understand relationships between school climate, school safety, equity, positive inter-group relations, social inclusion, and learning.
- Improve recognition of warning signs and indicators of harassment and bullying.
- Improve response to cyber-bullying and cyber-harassment.
- Enhance the role of educators in promoting safety and learn strategies for recognizing, preventing and responding to bullying and harassment.

RJ Grey Junior High and Pupil Services Staff

@JH Auditorium

Internet Safety: Cybersafety and Cyberbullying

Presenter: Dr. Elizabeth Englander, Ph.D

Dr. Elizabeth Englander is a nationally recognized expert in bullying behaviors among children and in cyberbullying. Her areas of expertise are in child psychopathology and violence and computer science. She is the author of articles, book chapters, and three editions of a widely-used text on the topic of violence and abusiveness among children and adults, and has been a researcher and academic for more than two decades. This training will review how online life has impacted the social life and social problems of today's children. How and why children become involved in misbehavior online; the risks they take; the online roles they play; and the way in which cyberspace has contributed to the bullying seen in educational settings. The training will also focus on the psychological profiles of bullies versus cyberbullies and how bullying and cyberbullying differ (and how they are alike). "Digital natives" and Cyber Safety Basics will be reviewed and future trends in three-dimensional virtual worlds described. How children bully each other online, and how they bully adults online, will be examined. Dr. Englander will review Intervention Principles with children, to promote cybersafety and reduce cyberbullying.

Goals for the Presentation:

- Identify and understand the concept of cybersafety and cyberbullying
- Identify the causes of unsafe cyber practices among preteen children
- Develop a set of strategies to educate children and raise awareness about cybersafety among their students

10:15-10:30

Break

10:30-12:00

High School and Elementary School Staff *@HS Auditorium*

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Goals for the Presentation:

- Identify and understand the concept of cybersafety and cyberbullying
- Identify the different types of problems emerging among children of different ages
- Discuss the practical difficulties posed by technological immersion of elementary-aged children
- Review research on the progression of cybersafety problems through high school-aged children
- Develop a set of strategies to educate children and raise awareness about cybersafety among their students

RJ Grey Junior High and Pupil Services Staff @JH Auditorium

Meeting the Challenge: Responding to the Legal Challenges of Cyberspace

Presenter: *Richard W. Cole, Esq., Civil Rights and Safe Schools Consultant*

Richard W. Cole, Esq. is a nationally known civil rights attorney, former Civil Rights Division Chief and Assistant Attorney General in the Massachusetts Office of Attorney General - - with extensive experience in law enforcement, race relations, educational equity, and in addressing harassment, bullying and hate crimes in schools. He has co-chaired former Massachusetts Attorney General Tom Reilly's Safe School's Initiative, and innovative statewide collaboration to provide the training and technical assistance school need to make them safe from harassment, hate crimes, and bullying. He also co-chaired a national initiative that culminated in the U.S. Department of Education's 1999 publication "Protecting Students from Harassment and Hate Crime - A Guide for Schools", which is a nationally acclaimed guide.

This workshop will revisit the problems of harassment, bullying and hate crimes in schools, including cyberspace. The legal implications of regulating cyber-behavior will be highlighted, including the constitutional right to free speech, and relevant case law. The workshop will use specific case studies to teach practical response options to cyberspace challenges and to better understand when school officials can and should take action around student behavior.

Goals of the Presentation:

- Improve recognition of student conduct as it pertains to bullying and harassment
- Understand the legal implications of cyber-behavior, including the right to free speech
- Provide practical options for responding to cyberspace challenges
- Enhance the role of educators in promoting safety and learn strategies for recognizing, preventing and responding to bullying and harassment

12:00

LUNCH - at the individual schools

1:00

Central Office Staff *optional...* @JH Computer Lab A

First Class: Tips for Using First Class

Presenter: *Steve Hall, Information Technology Director*

Goals for the Presentation:

- Staff will learn how to use First Class more effectively and efficiently
 - First Class basics
 - Learn about more advanced message features
 - Question and Answer opportunity

1:00

Afternoon School-Based Professional Development @ each school

Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

Topic: *School Safety*

Goal:

- Conduct school safety drill

Outcomes:

- Staff will be prepared for emergencies
- School and safety personnel will make necessary adjustments to the plan
- Future plans for larger scale drill

RJ Grey Junior High School

Topic: *Promoting a Positive School Climate for RJG Students*

Goal:

- Using case scenarios, RJG staff will meet in cross grade, interdisciplinary groups to review and discuss content from morning workshops and to identify prevention and intervention strategies for incidents of bullying, teasing and harassment at the middle school level.

Outcomes:

- Identify/create a list of practical preventative strategies to avoid incidents of bullying, teasing and harassment at the RJG.
- Identify/create a list of practical interventions to address incidents of bullying, teasing and harassment at the RJG.

Acton Public Schools

Conant Elementary

Topic: Setting the Parameters for Program Reflection and Discernment

Goal:

- The Conant staff will define areas of the school program and philosophy to examine over the coming year

Outcome:

- Staff will create a master list of areas for discussion as well as an agreed-upon set of strategies for coming to consensus

Topic: Science Initiative- Review of Physics and Engineering

Goal:

- Each grade level will meet to discuss and review the Physics and Engineering strands

Outcome:

- Staff will develop a plan for the review of the curriculum as a year long process

Douglas Elementary

Topic: Reading

Goal:

- Grade level teams will meet with a professional consultant to assess reading program based on four previously identified questions

Outcome:

- Each grade level team will have made progress on one of the four questions and have a plan for remainder of the year.

Gates Elementary

Topic: 6 +1 Writing Traits

Goal:

- Participants of the 6+1 Writing Traits course will share an overview of the *6 Traits Model* with staff

Outcome:

- Teachers will have definitions and a shared understanding of the 6 traits of writing.

McCarthy-Towne Elementary

Topic: Literacy

Goals:

- Staff will meet by grade level to review previously developed rubrics for evaluating student writing
- Staff will assess student writing to determine if and what changes are needed for the rubrics

Outcome:

- Each grade level will have recommendations for changes to the rubrics for assessing student writing

Merriam Elementary

Topic: Safe Schools

Goal:

- Staff will review and discuss content from the morning programs
- Staff will identify “What this means for our school” and “What do we want to do about it?”
- Staff who are being trained in *Open Circle* will present their training thus far

Outcome:

- Staff will develop a follow up plan for the year by choosing and implementing ideas for promoting safe schools