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*Nurturing that unprejudiced, youthful innocence
may be the answer to better multicultural relations.*



School Safety

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School Safety

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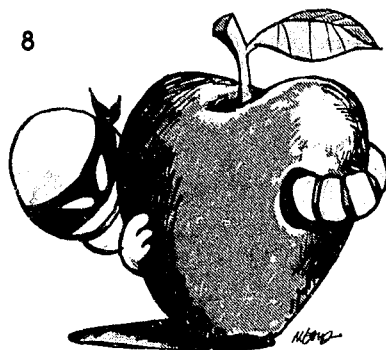
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About the cover:

Kids playing in sewer pipes may be a sad commentary on available recreation for inner-city (San Francisco) youths, but it also suggests a multicultural camaraderie all too uncharacteristic among older youths and adults. Photograph by Stuart Greenbaum, Copyright © 1978. Hand colored by Hope Harris.

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BY SUE-ANN ROSCH

Surrounded by a den of inequity, the students at this New York City school are taking responsibility for the safety and welcoming of their "culture."

Students help strengthen multicultural relations

Outside the Forsyth Street campus of Satellite Academy, prostitutes solicit passers-by under the watchful eyes of their pimps; homeless people lie on the streets; junkies overdose, their bodies discovered on the handball courts and in the concrete strip of park across the street; and a parade of customers steadily descend upon the nearby crack houses.

To get to school, students sidestep used condoms and empty crack vials, ignore the strangers and the prostitutes, avoid the stores selling drug paraphernalia and the dealers peddling dope, and turn their backs on the atmosphere of despair and hopelessness that surrounds much of the neighborhood. As soon as the students enter the school, they are in an environment which says that this is a caring and loving community.

Satellite Academy is an alternative public high school with two sites in Manhattan, one in the South Bronx and one in Jamaica, Queens. The first site opened in 1971. Three of the four Satellite campuses are in desperate areas, yet all have created warm and

Sue-Ann Rosch is curriculum director at Satellite Academy High School in New York City. She previously taught at Satellite for seven years. She also recently wrote an article that appeared in the English Journal.

safe climates that are in marked contrast to their outside environs and, in many instances, to other New York City public high schools.

Between 185 and 210 students are enrolled at each site. Students come from all five boroughs, and their average age upon entering is 17½. Ninety percent of the students were truants and dropouts from the city's traditional high schools, and many have a past history of disruptive behavior.

These youths come from the most disadvantaged areas of the city. Some students come in angry and highly distrustful. Some come because of pressure from their parents or the courts. Still others enter Satellite in the hope that they will not be victimized as they have been in their old schools, where theft and violence are commonplace. Most students enter with the hope that they will not get lost in the crowd as they did in their former schools of 2,000 to 5,000 students.

Overcoming diversity

The foundation of Satellite's educational philosophy is collaboration between students and staff to create a safe, caring and effective learning environment. Both students and staff participate in making important decisions about the school. This imparts a strong sense of ownership and belonging to the school community, and it also combats the aliena-

tion and apathy that both teachers and students can feel in New York City's immense and impersonal educational system.

Sensitivity to the needs and differences of others is stressed. Respect for each other's culture, race, gender, sexual preference, dress, music and neighborhood allegiances is important to us and we approach this in a variety of ways.

The student population is made up of many cultures: Puerto Rican, Dominican, West Indian, American black, Caucasian and Asian. However, about 95 percent of the student population is split between the larger groupings of Hispanic and black, while the other 5 percent of the student population is white and Asian.

When students first come to Satellite, they often bring many stereotypes and misperceptions along with them. A lack of understanding about each other's customs and norms is common, as most of these students have moved through their lives in fairly segregated neighborhoods and school groups that do not know much about each other. Similarities, as well as differences, exist culturally that the students are quick to note.

In addition, students may have formed strong allegiances to neighborhoods, "possees" or gangs, and "homeboys/girls." This often leads to explosive situations when confronted by

true than in how school staff addresses incidents of racism.

In preschool and kindergarten, regardless of what you think may be the underlying reasons, do not ever permit a child to reject another child because of race or ethnicity, or to use derogatory terms about a child's identity. Such behavior is equivalent to physical aggression. Stop the behavior first, comfort the child who has been the target, and then find out from both what was going on and take action accordingly.

With children in first to third grade, create and post classroom rules about discriminatory behavior. Have children write down the rules and take the list home to their parents. Students in grades four to six could interview people in your community and write to important national figures who contribute to the work for racial justice. Junior high school students might form a schoolwide council of students, with teacher supervision, similar to a student governance council, whose responsibility is to discuss and make suggestions when incidents of racial prejudice and discrimination occur. Encourage high school youths to become involved in a community service that improves the quality of life for people.

What do teachers need to know to implement anti-bias curriculum?

Teachers, administrators and other school staff must first work on cleaning up the filters through which they perceive and interpret the behaviors of various racial and ethnic groups. Through individual and small group study, learn about the dynamics of institutional racism and how they manifest themselves in our schools. This is not a question of assigning individual guilt, but of understanding how these dynamics can act even without conscious intent on the part of school staff.

The existence of institutional racism is apparent by its consequences. For example, in a multiracial/multiethnic high school, if most of the students in the advanced placement or gifted classes

are white, or if there is insufficient support for non-English-speaking students, then institutional racism is operating. An anti-bias commitment means analyzing why these situations exist and implementing strategies to improve them.

We also need to learn about the cultural patterns of the various ethnic groups with whom we work and how these influence learning styles. This step, usually the first and often the *only* step in staff development, comes *after* work on individual and institutional racism. Otherwise, new information about cultural patterns is negatively distorted by the unexamined filters of racial bias.

We need to investigate the impact different classroom structures have on promoting or sabotaging multicultural relationships. For example, "cooperative learning" techniques improve the learning of many "minority" children and also enhance intergroup interactions.¹⁰

We need to make the internal organization of schools more democratic by introducing participatory decision making, where teachers, students and parents join administrators in decisions regarding the school's management.¹¹

It is time we realize the dream so powerfully stated by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: "I have a dream today...to



transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. . . ." ¹² How we teach our children *will* make a difference. □

For more information and examples of anti-bias curriculum activities, Louise Derman-Sparks can be contacted at Pacific Oaks College, 5 Westmoreland Place, Pasadena, California 91103, 818/397-1300.

Endnotes

1. Racism is any attitude, action or institutional practice that subordinates people because of their color. This includes the imposition of one ethnic group's culture in such a way as to withhold respect for, to demean or to destroy the cultures of other races. In the United States, targets of racism include Afro-Americans, Asian-Pacific Americans, Jewish-Americans, Latin-Americans and Native-Americans. Racial bias is any attitude, belief or feeling that results in, and helps to justify, unfair treatment of an individual because of his or her identity.
2. Carol B. Phillips, "Nurturing Diversity for Today's Children and Tomorrow's Leaders," *Young Children*, January 1988, p. 44.
3. Comment by Helen Epstein, in "Halocaust: Children Confront the Lessons," *Los Angeles Times*, November 9, 1988, p. 2.
4. For further information, read: J. Phinney and M. Rotherman (eds.), *Children's Ethnic Socialization: Pluralism and Development* (Newbury Park, California: Sage Press, 1987); L. Derman-Sparks, et al., "Children, Race and Racism: How Race Awareness Develops," *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*, 11 (November 1980), pp. 3-9; and E. Barnes, "The Black Community as the Source of Positive Self-Concept for Black Children," in Jones, *Black Psychology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), pp. 106-130.
5. Collected by members of the Anti-Bias Curriculum Project at Pacific Oaks College, Pasadena, California. Results of this project appear in *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children* by L. Derman-Sparks, et al. (Washington, D.C.: NAEYC, 1989).
6. Collected by members of the Anti-Bias Curriculum Project.
7. *The Seattle Times*, September 11, 1988, p. A12.
8. For information, read: Ashley Montagu, *Statement On Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); and Robert V. Gullrie, *Even the Rat Was White* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).
9. For detailed information, read: Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasurement of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981).
10. Catherine Emilovich, "Social Interaction in Two Integrated Kindergartens," *Integrated Education*, 1981, pp. 72-78.
11. Francis Nakano, "Settling for Nothing Else," *School Safety*, Fall 1988, p. 19.
12. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "I Have a Dream," Washington, D.C., August 28, 1963.

Resources

Early Childhood: Louise Derman-Sparks and the ABC Task Force, *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children* (Washington, D.C.: NAEYC, 1989).
Elementary School: Nancy Schniedewind and Ellen Davidson, *Open Minds to Equality* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1983); and B. Banfield, et al., *Winning Justice for All* (New York: Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1980).
Junior and Senior High: *Violence, The Ku Klux Klan and the Struggle for Equality*, prepared and published by the Connecticut Education Association, the Council on Interracial Books for Children, and the National Education Association, 1981.
Adults: Judy Katz, *White Awareness: A Handbook for Anti-Racism Training* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979) — book; "From Racism to Pluralism" and "Understanding Institutional Racism" (New York: Council on Interracial Books for Children) — filmstrips; and "Frontline: A Class Divided" (Washington, D.C.: PBS) — video.

other students they have been in conflict with previously.

Students at Satellite must learn to respect students of the opposite sex, those who have different sexual preferences, students who like rap versus those who want to hear only heavy metal, along with students who dye their hair green and wear combat boots. It is a major job creating an environment that teaches students to respect, care about and appreciate the many types of people who are in the Satellite community.

A safe and accepting environment

Satellite's environment is in surprising contrast to most urban schools with the same student population, where robberies, stabbings and other violent acts are a common reality. A national climate of intolerance has made possible such actions as the racially motivated violence in New York's Howard Beach and gang wars in Los Angeles.

At Satellite Academy (all four sites combined) in the past three years, only four fights have occurred and no weapons problems exist. No staff member has ever been assaulted. Violence (physical or verbal) occurs very rarely at Satellite and is generally the result of two students getting angry with each other on the spur of the moment and lashing out. These outbreaks are quickly "squashed" by other students who jump in to separate the students until they can talk it out.

When I first came to Satellite seven years ago, I remember seeing two male students outside the building at lunch time start to argue and square off to fight. Other students rapidly clustered around them, and I assumed that this was going to become a general brawl or that the others would egg them on to fight.

By the time I got over to the group, I heard and saw these other students talking the young men out of fighting, telling them that they knew the consequences if they fought, and urging the two students not to throw away their

education for a stupid fight. The young men listened and followed the group's advice. As for me, it was a powerful lesson that something important and rare was going on at this school, something that allowed for support and protectiveness of each other.

The students have made a no verbal or physical violence rule, with one of the possible consequences being immediate discharge from Satellite. In essence, the rule says that any member of Satellite must be safe with another Satellite student at any time and in any place — not just during school hours and in the school environment. A fight between two students at night, in Staten Island, is breaking the rule just as much as if it occurred in the lunchroom during the school day.

Recently, in a conversation with a student who has been at Forsyth Street for only four months, I heard my sentiments echoed as he compared the lack of violence at Satellite to his other school:

At my old school, I was real popular with fights and riots, usually over my posse or girls. Most of the time weapons, guns and knives especially, got involved. I don't fight here; everyone is entitled to be whatever they want to be. If they're gay, that's their choice; and if they're black, that's who they are naturally. Here nobody's looking at what people are wearing or their color. They're just looking for a smile as they walk down the hallway and a, "Hi, how you doing?" Others don't instigate or push you to fight. They tell you don't fight, we all go to the same school.

This same student then thought for awhile and added, "One good thing is I never hear anyone call anyone "nigger" or any other racial name; no insults are made about each other's race — that's the best thing at Satellite."

A shared vision

What makes it possible to have a school whose members strive for tolerance, re-

spect and sensitivity? At Satellite Academy, we have shown that it is essential for every member of the school to have a shared vision of what it means to be a part of the school community. However, to simply have a stated vision is not enough. The entire community must take this philosophy and *put it into practice* in everything that goes on in the school.

Recently, a painful situation arose at another site that made us very aware of the need for our actions to match our stated commitment. The staff members always have said that we value student input and believe that they have rights in the policymaking and running of Satellite. Therefore, the staff had to support a group decision by the students to bring a veteran teacher (but new to Satellite) before the student "court" for inadequate preparation and presentation. If we did not do so, we would be telling the students that our vision was a lie.

The staff constantly has to be vigilant against sending out messages that conflict with our philosophy. For example, if we say that we value the contributions that blacks, Hispanics and women make to our lives but we only teach courses that show white males as the sole discoverers, authors, leaders, artists, inventors, then we are broadcasting a very different message from our stated vision.

All too often, programs that are concerned with creating unity among all their members forget that *everything* they do also will send messages to the school community. As a staff, we provide extensive in-class skill building so that students gain expertise in decision making and leadership.

We also encourage students to assert themselves *before* they feel the need to be aggressive. We work hard to create a strong school culture that says we respect diversity and will not tolerate having students in our community harmed by prejudice or stereotyping, whether the harm takes the form of verbal insults or gang fights.

Becoming a Satellite student

Rituals and ceremonies are essential in reinforcing this philosophy. The power of rituals and ceremonies upon our community should not be underestimated.

One important ritual at Satellite that addresses respecting diversity, among other values, is our intake process, which each student must go through if he or she wants to be at Satellite. Applicants must spend a day at the school being guided by a current student who helps orient the applicant to the values and practices at Satellite. Only after the prospective student has spent this time in our community and decided if this is an environment that will be beneficial for him or her, and if he or she can support the values and practices at Satellite, can an application be obtained.

Fairly soon afterward, small groups of four to five applicants are interviewed by two to three students and one to two staff members. The interview is the setting for talking to the applicants about the vision, rules and expectations of Satellite members in a more formalized manner.

The types of questions that the students choose to ask signal our beliefs to the newcomers. Questions generally focus on the following areas: violence, drug and alcohol use, academic behavior, and respect for diversity.

The questions might not be the most sophisticated, nor the answers the most truthful. After all, who is going to say, "yes," when asked if they have a substance abuse problem after being told that we have a rule of "no drugs or alcohol in you or on you" at Satellite! But the questions very clearly establish our values to the applicants and allow them some time to work through them for themselves. This also benefits the current students, who by telling others about our beliefs are reaffirming their faith in those beliefs.

In every one of the 20 or more intake interviews that I have been part of in the past seven years, I always have heard a student ask the question: "If a gay guy

or girl came up to you and started talking to you, what would you do?" This is usually followed by a lengthy explanation that we have many types of people at Satellite and that we don't put them down or harm them here. Without a doubt, applicants respond in the vein of: "That's fine with me, as long as they don't try anything funny. Some of my best friends are. . ."

Our students feel very strongly that everyone here must not only feel safe from physical violence, but also from ridicule and censure. This is re-emphasized by the students' prideful recitation to the applicants of the no-violence rule at Satellite.

At this point, students coming into Satellite have gotten our messages about our school's values and the expectations of its members. They know that to be a part of our school, they too must be willing to give this vision a sincere try.

It is important to note that if a student does not complete the intake process, he or she will not be accepted into Satellite. The individual must re-apply and complete the entire process before he or she can enter Satellite. We try to communicate that what we say is also what we do.

Accepting one another

Why is being a part of this school such an attractive idea to so many students? The values that have been discussed — sensitivity to differences, respect, fairness and safety — are all values that were absent in practice at the students' old schools, and to some extent, in their personal lives.

Who doesn't want to be accepted? Who doesn't want to belong to a group that gives unconditional caring? Who doesn't worry about their differences and long to be respected for who they are? Students may "front" that they don't care about these things, but to be cared about, respected and accepted, and to have the opportunity to be supportive and accepting of others, is a very strong need in these young men and women.

We attempt to sensitize students to diversity in other ways as well. We have special schoolwide activities such as one-day to one-week workshops that promote multicultural awareness and bias/prejudice reduction. Often, these coincide with such events as Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, International Women's month and Puerto Rican Pride days. We attempt to make use of the resources available in our city that also work toward fostering ethnic sharing. These work as components of a structure that is designed to reinforce these values in as many ways as possible.

In addition, we work to create courses that make students aware of contributions from different races and cultures, from both the sexes, and from their own ethnic background. It is crucial for students to learn that people from their culture make valuable contributions in all sorts of fields: the arts, music, science, politics. All too often, this lack of pride in their race, culture or gender leads students to lash out against others who are different. When they begin to feel less threatened, they usually threaten others less and begin to appreciate the value of other groups.

Creating a family bond

To build a bond between each member and to create a caring community dedicated to strengthening feelings of self-worth and tolerance toward others is a major goal at Satellite. We certainly feel that this is imperative if we are to keep students from dropping out.

With this in mind, our "Family Group" class is looked upon as the cornerstone of our program. The class meets at least three hours per week, and one to two staff members act as adviser(s) for each group of about 17 to 20 students. Although the adviser(s) are responsible for the tasks that a guidance counselor does (records, transcripts, programming), the primary role of the adviser is to:

- break down barriers between groups of students;
- build bonds of support and caring;

- foster a climate of responsibility for each other and for oneself; and
- create a climate of trust in which our confidences can be shared and respected.

Here a small family is formed within the larger Satellite family. These members of the "Family Group" are not all of the same sex or race or culture. In general, they are people who, outside of school and inside another school, would not associate with each other. Yet, these students not only grow to tolerate each other's diversity, but also to care about and protect these members of their "family."

This bond takes time and much effort to create. But as the group coalesces, the support, acceptance and validation of self that they give to each other is a powerful weapon against the hatred and violence that comes from intolerance. Students who would not ordinarily talk to each other are looking out for each other in classes and in their personal lives. They will not let another student hide if he or she is cutting class, is acting disrespectful to the staff, or is in pain because of a family situation. The students will talk to each other individually and privately, and sometimes they also will bring problems to the group for help.

I have sat in my group when students have talked another one out of dropping out, when the group has comforted a student whose brother is heavily involved with crack, when the group protected a student whose stepfather hurt her. They also have come down on students who were chronically coming in very late to classes and were jeopardizing their privilege to be at Satellite.

With one of these particular students, I often felt that he would never graduate, would disappear for good one day, and that I was of little help in keeping him in school. The group persisted in caring about him and demonstrated this to him by calling his house to wake him in the morning, having private talks with him about his problem, offering to

get him an alarm clock, confronting him in "Family Group" when he slid, and praising him when he made a sincere effort. He finally graduated this past June, and I believe that the efforts of his family of many colors, cultures and other diversities were the crucial support he needed to see that he could make it.

Combating the consequences of bias

To build a program that supports diversity and addresses the problems of prejudice/bias, attention must be paid to the effect of the program. A structure must be built to carefully reinforce the vision of how students should view diversity, which includes:

- The school culture must be strong enough to make individual differences less important than the desire to belong to the collective identity.
- If you perceive that acceptance of cultural diversity is a problem in your program, work to make sure that the students also see this as a problem. You can only address a problem when all parties identify this as a concern.
- Rituals and ceremonies are crucial in sensitizing staff and students to this vision.
- Group experiences that foster understanding, trust, acceptance and caring should be incorporated into the program.
- Consider how size affects the program. It is difficult to break down prejudice and stereotyping in schools of thousands. While we can't wave a magic wand and abolish these institutions overnight, we can look at creating smaller, more personal units (called "houses" by some educators) within the larger school.

Changing values and combating the consequences of bias is an enormous task, but a conscious striving toward a shared vision will lessen the horror of prejudice that we daily confront in our society, on our streets and in our schools. □

School violence prevention seminar slated

A special seminar on "The Prevention of Violence in Our Schools and School Safety" will be presented this summer by the University of Louisville National Crime Prevention Institute (NCPI) in conjunction with Pepperdine University's National School Safety Center. The seminar will be conducted June 12-16 on the University of Louisville campus in Kentucky.

Weapons are showing up at schools with increasing frequency, student and teacher victimization is a growing problem, and the threat of intruders committing acts of violence on school campuses is a major concern. Clearly, school safety has emerged as a critical issue today.

School administrators, school security officers and teachers are encouraged to participate in the event, which will show how to develop and administer a comprehensive school security program. It is estimated that less than half of this nation's 16,000 school districts have a formal security program.

The seminar will be an intensive learning experience, with participants and instructors working in NCPI's specially equipped classrooms, laboratories and field sites. All phases of school security, loss prevention and civil liability protection will be addressed.

For additional information and registration, write to the Admissions Office, National Crime Prevention Institute, Shelby Campus, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky 40292.