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AMERICAN RE-EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

AREA News

Re-ED At Work: Reflections on Teaching in a Re-ED Program

BY JEFF LENKER,
WHITAKER SCHOOL

Over the years, I've often been reminded of the unique nature of the Re-ED Teacher/Counselor's (T/C) work as compared to that of the typical public school teacher. The special opportunities and challenges experienced by the T/C are rarely found in the public school setting.

For example, T/C's know that "teachable moments" are found everywhere and anytime, not just in the classroom. They know that "teachable material" includes knowledge about the nuances of living and growing and other "non-testable" subjects - things typically not found in federal and state curriculums. T/C's are flexible in their use and delivery of a wide range of information. as we seek to inspire every student we meet. In my classrooms I often changed the day's lesson topic in response to student's interests and classroom dialogues.

While the public school teacher has many roles, the role of the T/C typically has a breadth and depth that exceeds the boundaries of the classroom. T/C's must daily demonstrate the capacity to support the roles of other Re-Ed team members, such as direct care staff and clinicians. The T/C role is defined by the needs of the individual students and the professional team.

So on a typical day at Whitaker School, it is not uncommon to see T/C's joining in on a therapeutic group, or helping staff and students cook a meal, or spending some time on the court shooting hoops with students. These activities allow the T/C to encounter many different students, where they daily function as much needed life and social skills coach. Thom Smink, a T/C whose teaching experience began in the public school environment, shares his experiences and approach on page 5.



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President's Corner

by Kit Kryger



Teacher/Counselors attending this year's AREA conference in Portland showed tremendous spirit and enthusiasm! Thanks to everyone who made it a huge success!

Representatives from AREA agencies across the country had a loud and clear message - "Our passion for working with troubled children is alive and well!" The quality of conference attendees in Portland speaks highly of AREA member agencies. It is comforting to know that these folks are serving children and families across the country.

Summer has since changed to fall, and now winter is announcing its arrival throughout the country. Just as in nature, change provides us with much to look forward to and be anxious about. AREA is going through a period of change.

The potential impact of new evidence-based practice requirements on children, programs and funding present AREA with many difficult questions and no easy answers. Will Re-ED remain a fundable approach to care? Can AREA members respond to challenges without losing their hold on principles, values and spirit?

We may not have all the answers, but I have the utmost faith in the wisdom of AREA members' and leadership's ability to steward Re-ED through this challenging time. May we all embrace these challenges with the spirit and passion seen at the conference!



TEACHER/COUNSELORS America's Social Entrepreneurs

YOUTH VILLAGES AND T/C'S - PROMOTING INNOVATIVE POLICIES FOR YOUTH SERVICES.

Across the country, social innovators are developing new policies that address the challenges faced by providers of youth services. The *America Forward* initiative is a nationwide effort to enlist public support for such policies.

Youth Villages recently announced its participation in *America Forward*. This initiative's goal is to urge adoption of results-oriented, solution-focused national policies in

education, criminal justice, and health care.

America Forward Director Kelly Ward says "Americans are calling on public officials and presidential candidates to change the status quo by embracing innovative solutions to address our country's greatest challenges. With the right amount of public investment, social entrepreneurship has the potential to be as vital to the strength of our society as business entrepreneurship is to the strength of our economy."

It is no accident that Youth Villages, an AREA member organization that employs

many Teacher/Counselors, is participating in this initiative. From the earliest days of Re-ED, Teacher/Counselors have been the foot soldiers of innovative and effective program design. The 12 Re-ED Principles (see page 8) were, and continue to be a guide for innovative policy and program development.

As guided by the principles, the work of Teacher/Counselors

has inspired the development of effective programs and services across the country.

Teacher/Counselors, with their passionate commitment to quality and effectiveness, embody the highest standards in the field. Thus the partnership with *America*

Forward is an opportunity for the entrepreneurial ideas and quality standards of Teacher-Counselors to become the foundation of national policy.



T/C'S = ENTREPRENEURS

NEWS BRIEFS: All Around the AREA

AN OREGON FIRST!

ChristieCare recently opened Oregon’s first transition program for young adults no longer eligible for children’s services. Named Mosaic, the program integrates education, therapy, life skills, vocational skills training and recreation to help them build independent, stable and fulfilling lives. See www.christiecare.org.

BEST WORK PLACE

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette named **Pressley Ridge** as one of the “Top 50 Best Places to Work.”

MOMS CLUB 800 families

benefited from a gift to **Pressley Ridge** by the Wexford MOMS Club®, which donated numerous items to families receiving foster care, residential treatment, and other services.

SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

West Virginia’s Dept. of Education named **Pressley Ridge’s** White Oak residential facility for troubled youth a *School of Excellence for the 21st*

Century.

E-PARTNERSHIP

“With this generous grant from Microsoft, Youth Villages will be even better equipped to provide our youth with technology skills critical to the future workforce.”

KEN MAY, YOUTH VILLAGES BOARD MEMBER

Youth Villages and Microsoft are partnering to assist emotionally and behaviorally troubled youth better prepare to enter the workforce. Microsoft’s \$3.2

million grant provides each Youth Village campus school with a Microsoft Technology Learning Center. Each Center has 16 workstations where underserved youth can improve their computer literacy skills.



Susan’s Journey - Finding Hope

A STORY OF HOPE FOR ALL WHO HELP TROUBLED TEENS MAKE THE DIFFICULT TRANSITION TO LIFE AS INDEPENDENT YOUNG ADULTS.

A story filled with heart-wrenching circumstances brought 16 year old Susan to ChristieCare’s residential psychiatric program. But thanks to effective Teacher/Counselors, horses, music, and a nurturing home-like environment, her story is now filled with hope.

Previously diagnosed as bi-polar, Susan’s battles with depression and self-harm behaviors had resulted in multiple placements and therapies. After her fifth hospitalization in three years, she was admitted to our Assessment and Evaluation program.

90 days later, she transitioned into a long-term open residential program, where she quickly became comfortable with her Teacher/Counselors and the program’s homelike setting. She decorated her private room, and became an engaged, contributing learner.

Her recovery was enhanced by our Equine-

Assisted Psychotherapy program. Through interactions with her favorite horse, she worked on relationship and trust-building skills. She also developed her talents as a musician.

Susan left ChristieCare the day after high school graduation, and today is a college junior studying nursing. After graduation, she hopes to work in pediatrics or neurology - interests borne of her experiences and those of whom she met at ChristieCare.

Susan periodically returns to ChristieCare to re-connect with staff. She can also be seen, often with her parents and friends, attending ChristieCare events in support of those who now face challenges similar to her own. Recently she spoke of ChristieCare’s motto that hope is never lost on any child. “I was that child, and hope is not lost.”





Wisdom from Dr. Nicholas Hobbs 1915-1983

Below are excerpts from one of the last talks Dr. Nicholas Hobbs gave to Teacher/Counselors. It is remarkable to see how almost 25 years later, his stories, insights and concerns remain fresh and vital points to ponder for 21st Century Teacher/Counselors. These remarks are extracted from the audio recording of the talk, and are edited only for clarity and coherence on the printed page.



We went into residential programming...with Re-ED...because that where the problem really lies...where what has happened was such a disgrace to our society...where there was such an urgent need for action. This is why we got committed early to residential programming. It remains, and always will remain, an extremely important part of any comprehensive system. But the place where youngsters are, and their families are, is in public schools. It seems possible to many of us that the ideas can be adapted. Cleveland [Positive Education Program] has already the most remarkable, imaginative, forceful long day program...it is a true Re-ED program in the public school serving quite disturbed children...not a watered down program, but the real thing. Now it seems to me if we can go...with some real measure of success, and working with less disturbed children...into the regular classroom. There's just no reason why classrooms need to be the deadly places they often are...(with their) lack of imagery, lack of purpose, lack of zip, and lack of objective...much can be done, right there, to incorporate the ideas of Re-ED. It seems to be most important for those schools that have children that come without preparation for academic effort. Many children...and their parents...come so well prepared that they can overcome the deficiencies of schools. But what about the children that haven't had that (preparation) before? Maybe the greatest pasture for Re-ED ideas is right there.

Re-ED came into being as an act of discovery, of exploration, and one of the ideas that we began to formulate in the early days was that there should really not be an orthodoxy...had there been a real orthodoxy we were part of when we started, we would have never been able to conceptualize anything like Re-ED. I think that is absolutely essential for the future. There has got to be a spirit of discovery, of invention...all ideas, including the idea that there shouldn't be an orthodoxy, have got to be open for examination.

Preservation of a source of new ideas is important...I hope that Re-ED programs all over the country can seek out sources of...intellectual, cognitive dissonance...that can cause you to ask yourself, "Is this really the best way to do what we're trying to do?"

I have no doubt that as long as Re-ED lasts, this will be its central characteristic...that is, a deep respect for children and young people...a confidence in their ability to grow, to make sense of their lives; and a willingness to test this optimistic hypothesis beyond all ordinary professional expectations.

An idea so central to Re-ED that I think it will have to be preserved if Re-ED is to continue in its vital tradition is...a deep appreciation for the importance of competence. First in the work of Teacher/Counselors, then in the work of children, and parents.

There is a concept crucial to the kind of work we do that I'm going to call "engagement"...an experience-based curriculum, from early morning to late at night, is what we mean by "life is to be lived now, not in the past, not in the future, but right now." There needs to be an continuing engagement for us all, with life as lived, not as talked about in the past, or in general, but in the particular. I think that should remain an inspiration for us in the future...immediate experience, maturely reflected upon, (is) the source of new wisdom.

PEOPLE AROUND THE AREA

Dr. Mary Beth Rautkis, Director of Research and Evaluation received the *Nicholas Hobbs Award* for preserving and advancing the Pressley Ridge culture. She is known for seeing the kids behind the data and constantly reviewing research data to help improve services to kids.

On behalf of the staff at the Pressley Ridge Day School for Autism, **Cathy Clark** (Family Liaison Specialist), **Cheryl Admachik** (Coordinator of the Day School for

Autism), **Shannon** (Special Education Teacher) and Autism and

Developmental Disabilities Program Director **Susan Lautenbacher** recently attended the award ceremony for the *Scott E. Folmer Award*. This award is awarded to programs and individuals who make a significant contribution to

children with special needs. The school was nominated on the basis of a nomination

“Re-ED came into being as an act of discovery, of expectation. There has got to be a spirit of discovery, of invention. All ideas... have got to be open to examination.”

DR. NICHOLAS HOBBS

by a parent, Diana K. After years of struggle, her son, a student at the school, found a team that supports her son and her family. Her letter reflected the program’s belief in the value of all children and families.

Roy Hayes, Cal Farley’s alumnus/employee, has spent a lifetime passing on the support received while at Cal Farley’s Boys Ranch - to homeless and injured animals. In 2003, he rescued and made a home for a blind Alaskan Malamute pup called Chance. Roy and Chance will be featured in an upcoming issue of *Dog Fancy* magazine.

Re-ED & Me: The Power of Relationships

BY THOM SMINK, WHITAKER SCHOOL

I move from being the Sage on the Stage to being the Guide on the Side.

From my earliest days as a public school teacher, my approach to teaching has been based in philosophies that dovetailed nicely with those of Dr. Nicholas Hobbs. Now, as an educator in a Re-ED program, I am guided by truisms of self-directed learning.

First, I believe education is an intimate affair that requires enormous amounts of time, deliberate thought, and close interactions with the students. For troubled students, early development of the positive teacher/student relationship is critical, since it enables the teacher to provide the supports and guidance needed by these students.

Second, while all students are capable of learning, they do so at different rates and at different times. So the classroom experience must be tailored to the individual student’s capacity to maximize new experiences; thus enabling each student to experience daily success.

Third, teaching and learning will only occur when the student is ready to learn. I have never met a teacher that could make a student learn. Instead, you have to create for the student a situation in which they choose to learn.

These truisms guide my daily teaching in the math classroom. A new student spends the first couple of sessions talking with me and laying the foundation of the relationship. I want to know things about their last school, last teacher, their favorite and least favorite

subject. These questions are interspersed with ones about food, movies, music, sports, career aspirations etc. I want to find out what the student wants so that we can set realistic goals.

When assessing where students are functioning, I typically find that they have missed so much school that they have large gaps in their knowledge. Building on their readiness, we set goals and start filling in the missing knowledge. As the student moves forward they require less direction from me. By expecting them to take ever-increasing responsibility for their own education, I move from being the Sage on the Stage to being the Guide on the Side.

I rarely lecture. To lecture in the traditional fashion is to repeat past teaching failures. Instead, I allow students to progress at a natural pace. When material is mastered (with a grade of 80 or above) to my satisfaction, we move on. There is nothing better than having a student tell you that he/she wants to keep their papers to show their parents, guardians and case managers. Translation: I can learn, therefore I can live!

I respect the Re-ED teacher/counselor as someone who thinks and teaches with understanding and creativity that far exceeds standard expectations; as someone who supports team members; as an educator who fuels each student’s passion for success.

It's A Fact: Good News! According to the NEA's "To Read or Not to Read" Study: Reading comprehension scores have soared since the early 1990's among 9-year-olds. (Source: <http://news.yahoo.com>)

Re-ED Principles In Brief

TEACHER/COUNSELOR ALERT!

Mark Freado, Executive Director of the American Re-EDucation Association, has often said that the AREA newsletter should be a tool that helps teacher-counselors develop healthy, effective

BY - ABOUT - FOR THE TC!

ecologies for children and families. This means the newsletter should be written by teacher-counselors, about teacher-counselors, and for teacher-counselors. So, we need to hear your stories! If you have an interesting story about your work or your colleagues' work with children and families, email us at mfreado@pressleyridge.org. We'd love to hear your story, and will help you develop it into something that your peers across the country will learn from and enjoy. We can't wait to hear from you!



TRUST IS ESSENTIAL.
LIFE IS TO BE LIVED NOW.
COMPETENCE MAKES A DIFFERENCE.
TIME IS AN ALLY.
SELF-CONTROL CAN BE TAUGHT.
INTELLIGENCE CAN BE TAUGHT.
FEELINGS SHOULD BE NURTURED.
CEREMONY AND RITUAL ARE IMPORTANT.
THE BODY IS THE SELF'S ARMATURE .
COMMUNITIES ARE IMPORTANT.
CHILDREN SHOULD KNOW JOY EVERY DAY.

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