



FRCS Partners with Experts to Develop Comprehensive Anti-Bullying /Violence Program

We have been researching and evaluating various programs that combat bullying and violence, seeking a comprehensive plan that is proactive and engages the entire school community. As a result of these efforts, we are pleased to partner with a leader in the field, the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) housed at Bridgewater State College. A summary of the program follows:

The Center's goal is to bring low- or no-cost services to K-12 education in the area of bullying prevention, cyber-bullying education and prevention, and violence prevention. MARC is designed as a prevention program. It is not a crisis-reaction, treatment, or therapy program. Rather, it is designed to help schools change their culture to discourage incidents of bullying and violence.

MARC was founded and is directed by Dr. Elizabeth Englander, a professor of Psychology at the College, and an expert in the field. MARC also benefits from the services of other experts, faculty, graduate students, undergraduate students, and support staff.

The program has several unique characteristics, and is based upon the belief that any attempt to change the culture of a school will only succeed if all persons in the school have heightened awareness and education about the problem of violence and bullying in schools. Therefore, MARC offers a program utilizing a multi-faceted approach by:

- ♦ engaging and educating students
- ♦ training all school personnel
- ♦ engaging parents and the community
- ♦ assisting to develop effective policies and procedures

The program presumes that student education must take different forms for children of different ages. Younger children tend to learn best from teachers with whom they have a positive relationship, and older children (preteens and teens) tend to learn best from high-status peers. Approaches are ongoing, although one-time assemblies will be useful for kicking off the new anti-bullying effort. Therefore, MARC has developed a plan including:

- ♦ in-class procedures for teachers of grades K-1, 2-3, 4-5
- ♦ help from MARC Student Associates in forming student-led efforts to change school culture
- ♦ student assemblies for different age groups
- ♦ student contests, a Youth Summit, and other proactive events designed to encourage student-led anti-violence efforts

Parental involvement and improved parent-school interactions around bullying incidences are a critical part of a successful community effort. MARC offers traditional evening parent presentations, but it goes beyond these when discussing how to engage parents in the program. Some other, innovative methods include:

- ♦ parent-child school breakfasts, coffee hours, etc.
- ♦ parent-engaging, curriculum-based homework assignments for children in different grades
- ♦ parental handouts and educational flyers

- ♦ MARC Award Ceremonies & Exhibits for parents of students recognized for their anti-violence efforts
- ♦ MARC workshops for administrators focusing on parent-school problems and solutions

MARC is a teaching Center, instructing up to 20 graduate and advanced undergraduate students. These students are powerful tools in bullying prevention efforts, as they are high-status peers and role models to teenage children. They are trained, among other things, to facilitate with groups of teens on changing their school climate. They also develop assembly programs. The purpose is two-fold: to promote the training of students in this area; and to help schools deliver this program without increasing the teaching burden on classroom teachers and counselors.

We are currently working with MARC program staff to discuss our unique needs, enabling us to tailor the program for FRCS. Please stay tuned for more information as we begin to fully implement the plan during terms 2 and 3.

FRCS Special Education Program Scheduled for State Review

The Massachusetts Department of Education is required by federal and state law to conduct reviews of regulated education programs implemented by public school districts. The DOE reviews approximately 70 districts and charter schools each year.

These reviews evaluate several program areas including federal and state special education requirements; targeted federal civil rights requirements under Title VI, Title IX, and Section 504; Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71A (limited English proficiency program); and state learning time and physical education requirements. State and federal Career and Technical Education requirements and Title I and related "No Child Left Behind" requirements may also be part of the review. In addition, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act programs; the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, Nutrition Programs, and Food Services; and fiscal procedures may be reviewed concurrent with the coordinated program review (CPR).

This year, FRCS is scheduled for our state review of many of the areas stated above. The onsite portion of our CPR is scheduled to begin during the week of January 7, 2008. A member of the DOE's Program Quality Assurance Services staff will lead the team, consisting of state and local educational professionals

Susan Rasicot, our Special Education Director, has been preparing a comprehensive report that will serve as the basis of the review. During the week of January 7th, CPR team members will conduct interviews, observe classrooms, inspect student records, and meet with various school stakeholders. If you have any questions or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact me or Mrs. Rasicot.

- Mark Logan, Executive Director