


on. I think she will remember moments like these, as I do, and know that she has the potential to try something that she might not immediately be good at. When we take the time to develop a strong sense of community and safety in our classes, we help make such moments possible.

Leaving a few minutes at the end of class to debrief sports activities can further strengthen the norm of exploring possibilities and encourage students to approach novel experiences with confidence instead of fear. One of the tools that I often use for such debriefing is called Captain, Crew, and Passenger. We take turns going around

fool of myself playing games that sometimes involve clucking like a chicken or howling like a wolf. However, I also perform on the flying trapeze, and my nervousness before shows can bring me almost to tears. Having this experience of walking the line between stretching myself and full-out panic has made me more sensitive to the way students experience my class, and I make sure to share my own stories like this throughout the year.

We don't all need to fly through the air or jump out of airplanes to demonstrate our willingness to take risks—we can be silly, sing in public, laugh at ourselves, and simply let our students

approach in many schools, where the goals of physical education are more often structured around increasing student fitness, building skills in specific sports, or simply allowing students to burn off excess energy. But adolescents in the throes of emerging identity urgently need opportunities for healthy risk-taking.

Before self- and peer-assigned labels like “jock” or “geek” become entrenched in adolescents' emerging sense of identity, we should challenge their notions of what they can and cannot do. Students should be learning not only how to build their repertoire of physical skills, but also how to interact with their peers in a playful way and how to practice safe ways to fulfill their developmentally appropriate need to take risks. As physical educators, we can cultivate an atmosphere in which students push themselves to new limits, both physically and emotionally, while feeling supported by their classmates and teachers. 

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“Risk-taking is the major tool that adolescents use to shape their identities.”

the circle, saying what role we most often took on during the previous activity—*captain*, meaning any kind of leadership role; *crew*, working or helping the group to succeed; or *passenger*, just listening and going along for the ride.

The message I aim to send is that there is no value judgment on these roles—we certainly couldn't be successful with 26 captains! Then, I ask the students in my classes to think about taking on different roles in future games. If they are most comfortable being a captain, I ask them to “try just listening next time. Let someone else take over. It might be hard, but it's worth trying.” In the same way, I encourage habitual passengers to speak up and try out a more active role.

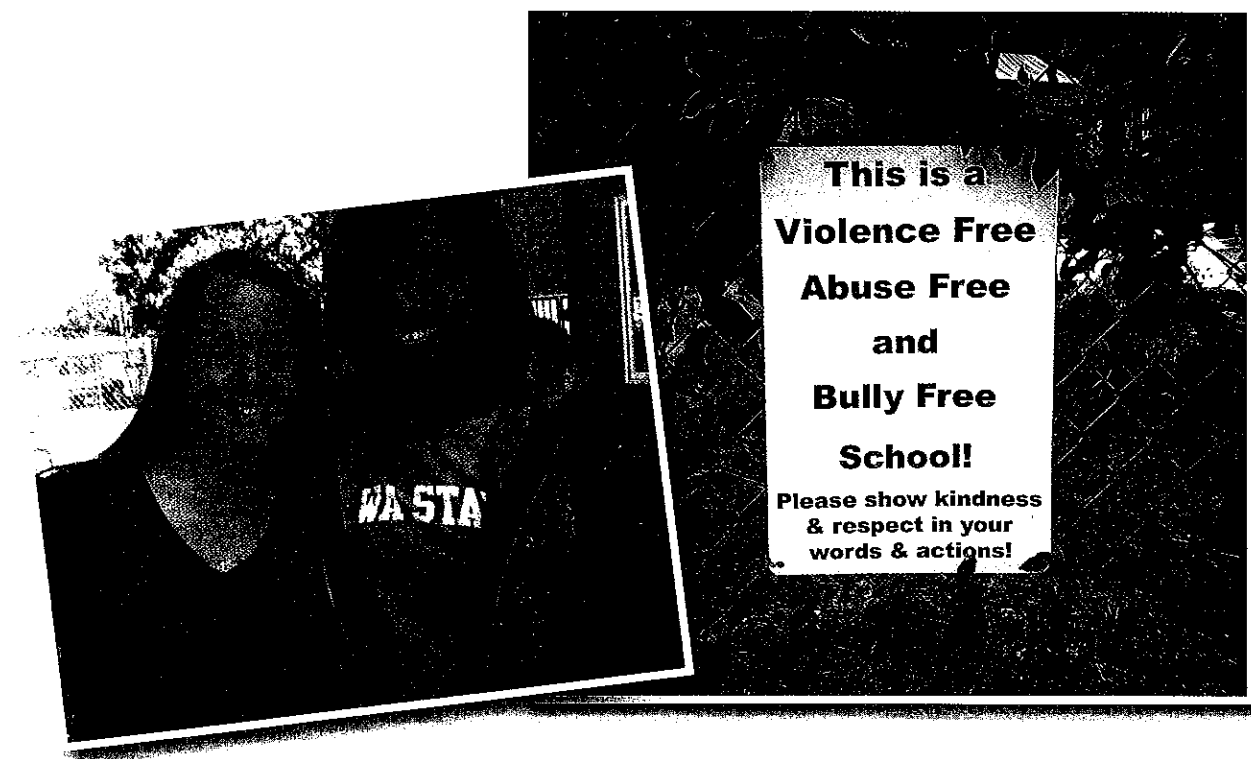
Finally, as educators we need to model healthy risk-taking for students. I'm relatively comfortable teaching in front of large groups, answering detailed questions about sexuality, and making a

see us try out new lessons we aren't sure will work. Kids know when we let ourselves be vulnerable, and although it's almost guaranteed that they won't congratulate us at that moment, they will remember—and they will be more likely to let themselves be vulnerable in the future.

Providing Safe Places to Take Risks

Most of us have never mastered anything without practice. By providing spaces in school where teens can develop and nurture a sense of creativity, where they can be playful and innovative with their learning, and where we reassure them that it's OK to be less than perfect, we are offering them a chance to practice risk-taking.

Reenvisioning physical education class as a place where educators can scaffold activities to provide appropriate levels of physical, social, and emotional challenge to students may be a new



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHINE CHARTER MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Bully-Free School

At this urban middle school, building a positive school climate is priority number one.

**Wendy W. Murawski,
Jennifer Lockwood,
Abbie Khalili,
and Adrienne Johnston**

CHIME Charter Middle School (CCMS) was founded on the premise of diversity and inclusion. Our charter requires that 20 percent of our student body be composed of students with cognitive, physical, social, or behavioral disabilities. Located in the Los Angeles Unified School District in California, CCMS is like other middle schools—students sometimes make fun of one another, engage in bullying, and otherwise act like middle school students. But our staff has actively and collaboratively

addressed those issues through three practical sets of strategies. The results have been a decrease in bullying and an increase in positive behaviors.

Environmental Strategies Signage

To set the right tone, one of our first actions was to post signs around the school promoting a safe environment. To ensure buy-in, we asked the student council and the school's leadership committee to help make, post, and enforce the signs. A typical sign reads, “This is a violence-free, abuse-free, and

bully-free school. Please show kindness and respect in your words and actions." When students, parents, or visitors arrive on campus, they know right away that bullying is not tolerated.

Lunch Clubs

At the secondary level, as the curriculum becomes more intense and students struggle with their identities, giving students choices and opportunities for social interaction—without sacrificing precious in-class content—becomes crucial (Lavoie, 2008; Murawski & Dieker, 2004).

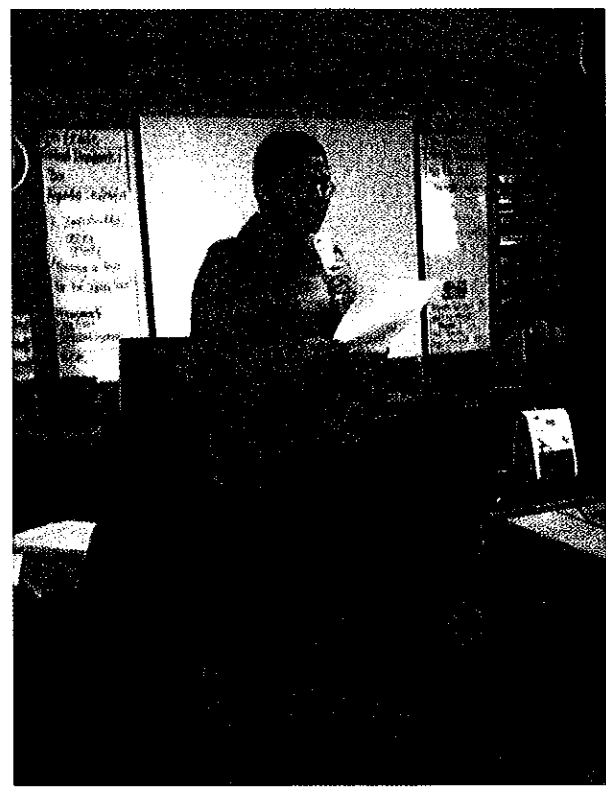
One popular innovation that our faculty developed is lunch clubs. Students can choose a different activity every day—for example, dance on Monday, karaoke on Tuesday, movies on Wednesday, origami on Thursday, and art on Friday.

Two additional options, Friendship Circle and The Art of Giving, support CCMS's important principle of accepting others. In these two clubs, students with and without disabilities are paired as buddies to support one another throughout the day.

Lunch clubs help students engage in positive friendships in a structured environment. Teachers volunteer to lead these courses once a week, giving up their personal time to share an activity they enjoy.

Tolerance Activities

To reduce teasing, name-calling, and social isolation, we participate in No Name-Calling Week, an annual event cosponsored by more than 40 organizations. Beforehand, teachers use literature to talk with students about how name-calling harms young people who are targeted because of their race,



Monks from a local Buddhist temple teach students at CHIME Charter Middle School to respect diversity.

ethnicity, sexual orientation, or mental ability. Students create posters and participate in a door-decorating contest. Throughout the week, we present lessons from the No Name-Calling Week Web site (www.nonamecallingweek.org). For example, in a lesson titled "I Was Just Kidding," students consider the difference between good-natured teasing and bullying by discussing fictional scenarios and reflecting on real-life situations. As a result, our students have become more aware of name-calling and less likely to engage in it.

As a schoolwide follow-up activity to No Name-Calling Week, we have celebrated the International Day of Pink (www.dayofpink.org). First established to support the rights of individuals with different sexual orientations, this event has become a way for schools to help students take a stand against all

bullying, harassment, hate, and violence. The school sent home flyers encouraging students to wear pink to demonstrate their support for diversity. Many students, staff, and teachers participated. Once again, this activity enhanced both students' understanding of the importance of tolerance and the school's positive culture.

Instructional Strategies

Literature

Research supports the use of literature as an effective strategy for helping individuals learn about acceptance and diversity (Smith & Johnson, 1995).

However, merely reading a book about diversity is insufficient, especially for middle school students. Our English and social studies teachers collaborate to select curricular themes that promote diversity, acceptance, and compassion.

Two specific books that have helped accomplish these goals are *The Misfits* by James Howe (Alladin, 2003) and *Daniel's Story* by Carol Matas (Scholastic, 1993), which explore such themes as labeling, assumptions, bullying, and discrimination. In class discussions of these themes, we model acceptance, tolerance of ideas, and compassion. As students read the books, they write daily journal entries on prompts related to the themes.

The culminating assessment for *The Misfits* unit is a three-page paper whose format students can choose from a variety of options: an essay about a social issue that is important to them, a letter to a government official, an interview of a student or adult at school, a discussion of a parent's role in the life of an adolescent, a letter to the author of the book, or a summary of the book.

We connect *Daniel's Story*—which

addresses such topics as discrimination, hate crimes, genocide, and the holocaust—with the 8th grade content standards in U.S. history. We ask the students to identify recurring themes from history through the lens of *Daniel's Story* and themes from current times through the lens of *The Misfits*. This integration of literature, history, and real-life issues makes the curriculum more relevant to students.

Speakers from Diverse Cultures

Our state content standards require that 6th grade students study ancient civilizations and their religions, such as Buddhism. Lessons on ancient civilizations, however, frequently don't connect with students because they are just

concept of pi, we had a pi party. We took students outside to participate in various stations—pi charts, pi survey, estimating pi from the area of a circle, measuring items in circular shapes using yarn and rulers, and creating a colorful pi chain. Because classes at CCMS are cotaught, teachers were able to actively engage students using a variety of coteaching approaches (Murawski, 2009). For example, one teacher gave oral directions for how students should rotate through the stations, and the other teacher wrote the guidelines on the board, providing visual support for those who needed it. At the end, students and teachers came back together for the culminating activity, the pi party (with real pies, of course).

Lunch clubs help students engage in positive friendships in a structured environment.

that—ancient. After discussing how to engage students while infusing a focus on diversity, teachers contacted a local Buddhist temple and invited the monks to visit the school. Students were equally fascinated by the monks' informative presentation on Buddhism and their bright orange robes and shaven heads. These guest speakers made history come alive; they not only motivated students to learn about an ancient civilization, but also taught them more about respecting those who are different from themselves.

Outdoor Activities

Although structure is key in any secondary classroom, at some point routine may become boring. Once again, teachers collaborated to find a way to make content (in this case, math) more interesting. This time, field activities were the solution. For instance, to teach and reinforce the

Video Discussion

In their home teams, all students viewed and discussed the film *Let's Get Real*, a documentary in which "actual middle school youth—not adults or actors—speak candidly and from the heart about their varied and often painful experiences with name-calling and bullying" (www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/booklink/record/2274.html). Because the film includes strong language and difficult situations, a group of parents previewed a copy before it was shown and provided feedback.

Violence Prevention Curriculum

We have implemented Second Step, a schoolwide, research-based violence prevention program developed by the nonprofit Committee for Children (www.cfchildren.org). This ongoing program, conducted for 20 minutes once a week in students' home teams throughout the year, provides lessons

and activities that teach problem solving, emotion management, impulse control, and empathy. The program does not talk down to students or tell them what they should do; instead, it teaches students to make smart choices and react positively to negative situations.

Teachers receive training to implement the program proactively. They discuss the Second Step program at weekly faculty meetings, deciding together what chapters are important to tackle and sharing innovative ways to introduce certain topics to students. When issues like alcohol use arise on campus, teachers can immediately jump to that aspect of the curriculum and also increase the lessons to more than once a week. The focus of the program is on prevention, enabling us to address possible problems *before* they occur.

Interpersonal Strategies

Involving Faculty and Staff

To achieve a positive school culture, staff members must be on board and able to accept diversity and model tolerance themselves. Teachers and para-professionals at CCMS participate in ongoing professional development through SafeSchools (<http://safeschools.com>), an online safety training and tracking system designed specifically for school employees. Courses cover such topics as bullying, sexual harassment, child abuse, and playground supervision.

Another valuable resource is the professional development section of the Teaching Tolerance Web site (www.tolerance.org). In addition, professors from our affiliated university have provided us with information and strategies related to motivation, collaboration, and positive behavior support.

Involving Families and Students

The support of parents is key in any school, but especially in a school dedicated to creating a positive culture. We

encouraged parents to form an anti-bullying committee, which meets regularly, collaborating with the school administration to develop an action plan. Parents whose children have been bullied came to talk to paraprofessionals and teachers so that they, too, would have a better understanding of what was occurring.

We developed parent education nights to provide information on such topics as disability awareness, academic content strategies, and positive behavior support. The CCMS parent association brought in Candice Kelsey, the author of *Generation MySpace* (DeCapo, 2007), to speak to students and their families. As a result, we changed our Internet policy to state that the school would get involved in any form of online bullying, even if it occurred off campus. The parent education nights, which provide a forum for parents, teachers, and administrators to share concerns with one another, have helped us enforce such a policy.

Students themselves created another interpersonal strategy that improved the school culture—Warm Fuzzies. One 8th grade class came up with the idea of giving small gifts of encouragement to 6th graders, who sometimes feel intimidated as the youngest kids on campus. The 8th graders surprised a 6th grade class, giving each 6th grader a small gift and a card that contained a friendly message. This activity made the 6th grade students feel special, and it was even more positive because the idea, money, effort, and words came from the 8th grade students.

Addressing Negative Behaviors

Our goal is to create a school culture in which students focus on their similarities rather than their differences. As believers in positive behavior support (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2007), we are convinced that preventive rather than reactive measures are most effective in creating such a culture.

We changed our Internet policy to state that the school would get involved in any form of online bullying.

But we are also realists. We know that no matter what we do, students will still engage in some undesirable behaviors that we will need to address. We have found three specific types of consequences to be the most effective in addressing negative or inappropriate behaviors: counseling and mentoring, lunch monitoring, and community service.

We have a part-time counselor on campus, and we also encourage counseling interns from our affiliated university to complete their fieldwork at CCMS. Counseling is confidential; the counselors share information with parents or administrators only if the student is engaging in dangerous behavior such as self injury, suicidal thoughts, or drug use. Counselors also participate in team meetings with parents, students, and families.


Lunch monitoring means that a student who has misbehaved has lunch with a teacher and discusses what happened and what the student could have done differently. Lunch monitoring can occur on a one-on-one or small-group basis. Teachers or administrators refer students to lunch monitoring for one or two days. During lunch, students also engage in an activity that relates to the incident that occurred (for example, writing an apology letter).

Students may also be assigned to do community service, which gives them

the opportunity to give back to the community. For example, if a student defaces school property with graffiti or other forms of vandalism, he or she must do campus cleanup or a beautification activity after school or on the weekend.

An Antibullying Community

Commitment to change needs to come from all stakeholders. A few years ago, the school administrator received bullying referrals daily. Now, referrals are virtually nonexistent. How did we do it? By addressing bullying as a community.

The environmental, instructional, and interpersonal strategies that CCMS teachers, administrators, parents, and students have created have resulted in a healthy and motivating school culture. Educators and students feel safe, included, and ready to learn. 

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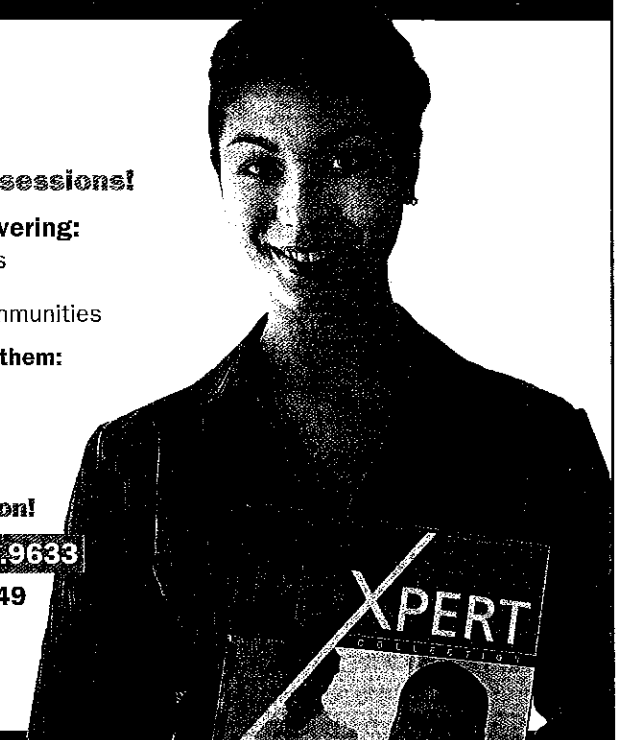
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