

## **Connect and Respect: Helping Smaller School Reduce Bullying and other Types of Mistreatment to Improve School Climate**

### **The Problem:**

Often, smaller schools have a student population that has known one another for many years. This familiarity can have consequences regarding interpersonal interactions. For example, once a child is labeled, targeted, or otherwise categorized by his/her peers, this reputation is likely to follow him/her throughout his/her school years. Furthermore, stereotypes and other assumptions about one another can develop at early ages and continue unchecked, gathering momentum and causing divisiveness and conflicts.

Many students have learned ways to avoid detection and attention from adults: their mistreatment of one another can be subtle and covert, and therefore, harder for adults to notice. To become aware of the mistreatment and to combat entrenched beliefs and labels require new skills.

*Connect and Respect* provides students and faculty with the skills and tools to interact with one another more positively, creating a better social atmosphere, one that leads to new perspectives and more positive relationships, and reduces incidents of bullying and other types of mistreatment.

### **The Workshop:**

*Connect and Respect* is a one-day program designed to reduce youth-on-youth mistreatment and improve the overall social-emotional climate of a school.

#### **Which schools would benefit?**

This program is designed for smaller schools in which students typically know one another well and have friendships and/or family ties that have existed for many years. For example, a school of 100 students in grades K-8, possibly serving a small rural community or several remote villages in a large geographic area.

#### **Who participates?**

The training could include all students in grades 4-8 or grades 6-12. Maximum number in a session is 50 students, with 7 adults (ratio: 1 adult to 7 students). Additional students can be accommodated through additional sessions.

#### **Length:**

Each session is one full school day.

## Workshop participants will:

- **develop a common and youth-friendly language for mistreatment** – this helps students to identify the hurtful behaviors they see, experience, or do ... which is the beginning of changing those behaviors.
- **understand the costs of mistreatment** – how mistreatment negatively impacts not only the students who experience it, but the perpetrators who do it, the bystanders who watch it, and the school as a whole, which helps students develop empathy and stronger motivation to treat their peers better.
- **connect with participating adults** – these are typically school staff as well as parents and/or community volunteers. Strengthening these relationships increases students' school connectedness (which is linked to good attendance, academic achievement, and other thriving behaviors) and increases the flow of information to adults about fights, drug/alcohol use, and other destructive behaviors (subtle and overt, actual or potential).
- **learn and refine skills they can use** –with their peers and with adults – to prevent and/or stop bullying and mistreatment and improve the quality of the interactions among their peers.
- **strengthen their relationships with one another** – “It’s harder to hate someone when you know their story.” Seeing each other with new eyes and learning the truths about one another deepens channels of communication and increases trust and compassion. These improvements help to reduce interpersonal mistreatment and intergroup conflict.

**Cost:** \$2500 per session/day, plus travel-related expenses for one Trainer.