



## THE SEMI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF THE EDUCATION SECTION



Association for  
Conflict Resolution

### “It Happens in Nearly Every Class” Undercover Anti-Bullying Work

By Michael Williams & John Winslade

#### Contributing Authors

- Gladys Coles
- Warren Robert Heydenberk
- Roberta Ann Heydenberk
- Patrick Robardet
- Anne Smiley
- Bill Wartens
- John Winslade
- Michael Williams

In September 2008, Latika Fatialofa (a pseudonym) came to see her (Auckland, New Zealand) school counselor with a complaint about being bullied. The counselor (first author) used an innovative approach to dealing with this situation through the establishment of an “undercover team” charged with the mission of undermining the bullying narrative and establishing a counter-story of improved relationships. The approach builds on a narrative perspective of conflict resolution (Winslade & Monk, 2000; 2008; Williams & Winslade, 2008). It is outlined and illustrated below through the actual scenario that transpired. *(Continued on page 4)*

### Writing Our Wrongs: Using Journals to Navigate our Narratives

Drs. Roberta Anna and Warren Robert Heydenberk

We are Homo Narratus: we are storytellers. Storytelling has been an important part of all cultures throughout human history. Throughout history human beings have been willing to fight and die for their stories and beliefs. Our stories define us and determine the direction of our lives. Our stories can give us strength or sabotage us. Writers have long known that when we write we find out what we know and we often discover what we don't know. Writing about our lives in a way that includes the facts while expressing our feelings may be the creative strategy that makes the difference between sabotage and success in developing meaningful, healthy personal narratives. *(Continued on page 6)*



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### What can we do about Bullies?

Gladys Coles

As a middle school teacher, counselor, and principal, I witnessed first-hand the effects of bullying: the disruption of school, the fear and anguish of victims, the shame and guilt of bystanders, and the escalation of violence in the bully. School administrators know that bullying is one of many safety issues to be addressed in today's schools, from bee stings to shelter-in-place drills, and released child offender alerts; all are important in providing a safe and academically focused learning environment. It was in the last years of my public school career, that I began to see the dis-

tressed victims, and the acts of bullies through new eyes. It was then that I learned of more effective ways to address bullying. We failed to teach what bullying is and did not take adequate steps to prevent it. It is not enough to address the bullying problem by simply including it within our school safety plans, mentioning it during orientation, or by applying routine discipline procedures. I realized that we adults got it wrong and I wanted to learn more about what we could do to get it right.

*(Continued on page 10)*

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The newsletter of the Education Section, *The Fourth R* is a publication of the Association for Conflict Resolution, a professional organization dedicated to enhancing the practice and public understanding of conflict resolution.

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## the Fourth

A Publication of the  
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THE SEMI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF THE EDUCATION SECTION

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### Greetings *Fourth R* Readers!

From the editors of "The Fourth R"

It is my pleasure to bring you the latest edition of *The Fourth R*. I want to begin by thanking all of the contributors for their submissions and patience during the publication process. Our vision in original call for submissions was to create an issue focusing on conflict stories by the summer of 2009. During this time submissions came slower than expected, the education section grappled with some dilemmas between online and print editions, and the Association of Conflict Resolution had some changes. Nevertheless, we received high quality submissions of great interest to members of the ACR Education Section.

John Winslade and Michael Williams introduces readers to bullying from the narrative perspective of the bully and observers during undercover interviews. Winslade is one of the global experts on Narrative Mediation. Winslade co-authored a series of books with Gerald Monk including *Narrative Mediation: A new approach to conflict resolution (2000)* and *Practicing Narrative Mediation: Loosening the grip of conflict (2008)*. These books generated narrative stories as an alternative unit of analysis to evaluative, facilitative, or transformative conflict resolution models. Winslade and Williams provide a specific example of how narrative mediation is applicable to educators through their undercover anti-bullying story.

*(Continued on page 3)*

Roberta and Warren Heydenberk return with their discoveries about the efficacy of check-in writing activities during conflict resolution education. Heydenberk and Heydenberk found that narrative writing can both enhance social and emotional awareness and stimulate student writing skills. The Heydenberks also described how the check-in writing activities had a longitudinal positive impact on students remembering conflict resolution education through three years of post intervention interviews.

Gladys Coles submitted a policy analysis of impact of the South Carolina Safe Schools Act on bullying. Coles found several best practices including: (a) focused leadership and publicity is necessary generate interest in effective school wide bullying prevention, (b) all school staff should receive professional development on how to effectively deal with incidents of bullying, (c) administrators should assess their needs and develop a school wide plan to address bullying, (d) all constituencies must collaborate to reduce or eliminate bullying, and (e) bullying prevention should be integrated into the school curriculum.

Patrick Robardet describes a conflict story from the perspective of school board ombuds. Robardet explores

the roles of an ombuds as an informational resource, a policy adviser, and a complaint processor. In this story the ombuds analyzes the interests of a parent of a non-attending autistic student and a school administrator who has a position of denying a transfer to a different school. Robardet explores the role of ombuds using multidisciplinary metaphors from governance, quantum physics, and rugby football.

The issue also includes information about the ACR Education Section by Lisa Hersman, Youth Day 2010 by Ann Smiley, and an update about CREducation by Bill Warters.

We hope you enjoy this issue of The Fourth R, and continue to commit to sharing your work with the Section!

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## Message from ACR Section Chair

Lisa Hersman

Forrest Gump's mother often said, "What goes around comes around." I was reminded of that quote from the popular movie when reflecting on the power of stories and storytelling in conflict interactions. As the pieces in this newsletter demonstrate, stories have powerful effects on both the storyteller and the listener. This year, the Education Section will be telling and listening to some very important stories relating to Conflict Resolution Education in the classroom, on the street, and in the halls of Congress.

In March, the Education Section is partnering with the Global Issues and Resources Center at Cuyahoga Community College (and a host of other organizations) in the 3<sup>rd</sup> *International Conference on Conflict Resolution Education, Building Infrastructures for Change: Innovations in Conflict Resolution Education and Justice Initiatives* in Cleveland, Ohio. Workshops include stories of what worked – and what didn't – in pre-K – 12 education, higher education, the international arena, and justice initiatives. At the Education Section mid-year meeting on Friday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, Section members

and those interested in becoming members will have a chance to talk about how the next chapter of the Section's story will be told. To find out more information about the conference or to register, go to <http://creducation.org/cre/goto/3rd>.

Planning is well under way for Youth Day 2010, which will take place in conjunction with the ACR annual conference in Chicago. This year's Youth Day will focus on the difficult issue of youth violence. However, instead of telling youth stories about the impacts of and remedies for this potentially devastating topic, we are inviting youth to tell us – and other youth – their stories. These stories will include what they have learned and can teach others about coping with and preventing violence. In the morning, youth from the Chicago area will share their experiences and skills with conference participants, while the afternoon will consist of a series of intergenerational dialogues on the topic youth violence where conference attendees can come together to start writing a new script for the future. We hope to see many of you there!

Finally, the themes of conflict and violence among youth are in the forefront of the nation's thought. On November 2, 2009, Congressman Bobby Rush (D-IL) introduced the Conflict Resolution and Mediation Act of 2009. The bill directs the U.S. Department of Education to make grants available to school districts affected by violence and discord. It also calls for the U.S. education secretary to devise a model for on campus conflict resolution and mediation to be made available to all schools. According to Congressman Rush, "[On-campus mediation programs] help young people develop priorities and coping skills – including the victim and the victimizer. These programs save lives." We at the Education Section could not agree more. We urge you to write to your congressperson in support of this bill.

There is a Native American proverb that says, "It takes a thousand voices to tell a single story." When it comes to conflict affecting youth, this could not be more true. Please join the Education Section this year in at least one of our projects and make sure that the story is one that you are proud to tell.

## It Happens in Nearly Every Class *(continued from page 1)*

The counselor first sought out an accurate account of the problem and took careful notes of the details. Latika outlined the following story:

“It happens in nearly every class. He just thinks it’s a joke and sometimes I take these jokes, but sometimes it makes me sad and angry. He teases me and says that I’m ugly and fat and he calls me names like “corn beefy”. Sometimes people laugh and he mocks my family, like he says that my sister’s got scabby legs and says that I have a big forehead. Sometimes he’s kind but then a couple of days later he’s mean again. He makes fun of my height. Sometimes the kids laugh. It’s been going on all year and I hate it. I can’t concentrate.”

The counselor then explored the effects of the problem, using externalizing language (Winslade & Monk, 2000) to track and separate it from any specific person. It was the bullying that was the problem, not the person.

Latika spoke about how it made her “feel upset and angry and I want to hurt him back. I have tried crying and punching him and sometimes he says he is sorry but other times he mocks me harder and gets more smart. It’s a big problem, because sometimes all the boys join in and I feel embarrassed. I don’t think it’s fair because I don’t deserve to be teased like this. Now his friends are getting in on it. I feel ashamed and I don’t want to go to class. I wish he wouldn’t come to school.”

“Ideally, how would you like things to be?” asked the counselor.

“I want him to stop teasing me and say some nice things to me. It would make me feel like I fit in and can be part of the class. I am getting sick of the bullying. Sometimes I punch him and it makes it a sort of better, but it still carries on.”

At this point the counselor suggested implementing the undercover anti-bullying team, explained the process, and Latika agreed to give it a try. With the help of one of her teachers, Latika and the counsellor drew up a list of six peers to be invited onto the team that would change this situation for Latika. The team included two students who were involved in the bullying and four other respected members of Latika’s class.

The counselor then met with this team, without Latika present, and explained what they would be asked to do. He read out Latika’s story and the effects of the bullying on her without (at first) mentioning her name. The team members discussed what it sounded like to them and agreed that it sounded unfair. They would not like this to be done to them. One of the team, Viliami, on this occasion then admitted that he had, in fact, been doing the bullying. Often, however, this admission does not come out and it is not essential. The confession was acknowledged and Viliami and the other team members were invited to develop a plan to change what was happening and to make life better for Latika. They agreed to do this, including Viliami. The only proviso was that whatever they did had to remain secret and undercover.

Latika, teachers and other kids were not to know. The intrigue created by this proviso generated considerable enthusiasm and some elaborate planning for how to maintain secrecy was discussed.

On this occasion the plan included the following strategies. Everyone on the team would encourage Latika to stick up for herself. Janis and Filimoni would make a special effort to make Latika feel welcome at school. Mike and Mele would look out for opportunities to give her compliments. Everyone would be alert for openings to start friendly conversations with Latika. And everyone would listen out for any teasing and bullying of Latika and would take the initiative of telling the perpetrator to stop. The counselor wrote down the details of this plan carefully and said that he would check back in a few days to see how things were going. If the team was successful in its mission, he promised, they would be rewarded with a food voucher.

A few days later the counselor met with Latika and asked how things were going. She was much happier and very relieved.

“They are being kind to me now,” she said. “They come up to me and say, ‘Hi’. They stick up for me when people joke around in a bullying way. They haven’t even bullied anyone else. I am not embarrassed anymore because they don’t tease me. They have stuck up for me. Sometimes they tell me to ignore bullying and they sometimes start conversations with me. The class atmosphere is better. Teachers have noticed that the boys have turned good, especially Viliami has been very different. They are hardly ever naughty to the teacher now. I would like to meet them and thank them.”

The next thing was for the counselor to meet with the team and to talk through what had changed.

“The bullying has definitely gone now, ‘cause we stopped!” announced Viliami.

“I’ve been greeting her more and talking,” said Filimoni.

“The class has changed, everyone is more civilised,” Ebony remarked and Mike nodded in agreement.

“Latika laughs and smiles a lot more. She’s happy now,” observed Mele.

The counselor issued a Principal’s certificate and a food voucher to each of the team members. At Latika’s request they met one more time with her present and she thanked them for their work. Follow up checks showed two months later that the improved relationships had continued.

So this was another successful case in the undercover teams file which has been steadily growing at the New Zealand high school where it has become a central part of the school’s approach to bullying.

It remains to underline some of the principles at work here. It is an approach that eschews punishment and official retributive “bullying” by school authorities in favour of direct involvement by students in addressing

the problem. Young people are invited to participate in changing the relational culture in which the bullying takes place. All of the parties are involved in producing the narrative transformation: bullying perpetrators, bystanders and victims. No one is singled out for responsibility or shamed. In the above scenario the perpetrator of the bullying did own up to his behaviour but in many other instances this does not even need to happen.

All of this is consistent with the narrative principle of understanding persons as participants in a problematic storyline, rather than as problem persons by nature. This principle is sometimes expressed in the maxim, “The person is not the problem; the problem is the problem” (White, 1989). No one is totalized (Winslade & Monk, 2007) as either a bully or as a victim.

Neither is bullying understood here as resulting from a build up of anger in the psyche of the bully, requiring “anger management.” Instead it is understood as a discourse practice that exists in the culture of schooling and sometimes catches up people in its various roles. The assumption is that the identities of bully and victim and bystander are formed in relational exchanges between students. Change to these identity narratives is targeted directly through addressing these same relational exchanges. It is not strictly mediation, or group counselling, but it is about conflict transformation achieved through directly working at changing the nar-

ratives governing relationships between students. The professional role is a skilled one but the knowledges drawn on to form the plan for change come directly from the repertoires of the students.

(For a fuller account of how to implement the undercover teams approach, see Williams & Winslade, 2008.)

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### Visions for Youth Day—1010

Anne Smiley

This year’s youth day event is intended to engage local youth and adults through youth serving agencies and institutions of higher learning working within the youth violence/conflict resolution field. Youth day is co-sponsored by ACR’s education and restorative justice sections. We are not sure of the location at this point.

The following is the tentative agenda:

Continental breakfast/registration

Motivational /engaging plenary session

Youth activities/interactive workshops based on target audience experience/needs

Adult workshops – adults accompanying youth could either attend skill building workshops led by ACR education section members or local educators or attend sessions with youth.

Lunch – some entertainment or a video to jump start the

afternoon dialogue series.

Afternoon sessions – open to the conference attendees and the community with youth.

We are exploring many different presentation formats that would be entertaining for both youth and adults. These include: peace circles, restorative justice, appreciative inquiry, and Sonoma circles.

The last hour would be spent in a plenary session – each group reporting out a response to the theme from their group – with the intention of taking something very positive and useful away from the day.

Higher education institutions – several contacts have been made who are interested in partnering with us. These include: North Park University, Northwestern University, North Eastern Illinois , and Loyola Academy.

Stay tuned!!!! To find out more or join the planning committee for youth day please contact Anne Smiley, [smiley\\_aw@yahoo.com](mailto:smiley_aw@yahoo.com) or Lisa Hershman, [lisa.hershman@gmail.com](mailto:lisa.hershman@gmail.com)

## The Social Justice Mediation Institute is holding its annual trainings this May and August 2010!

Over 1500 people have gone through the social justice mediation training in the past 15 years and we are offering two options to attend this summer: May 19-23 and also August 29-September 2 in Amherst, Massachusetts, U.S.A. for those who are interested in becoming trained mediators from a social justice perspective.

Please check out the details at <http://www.sjmediation.org>

## Writing our Wrongs (continued from page 1)

Writing fundamentally reveals and changes our thinking in powerful ways. The early research on the power of expressive writing was published in the 1980s. Twenty years later, well over 150 expressive writing studies have been published (Pennebaker and Chung, 2007). Two decades of research on expressive writing have shown us that the positive effects are found across different populations and in diverse cultures (Pennebaker and Seagal, 1999, p. 1245). Many of the effects are unique to expressive writing as opposed to other expressive arts such as dance. Apparently the “mere expression [of emotions]...is not sufficient to bring about long-term physiological changes. Health gains appear to require translating experience into language” (p. 1248). To effect significant change, writing must contain personal, emotional content and the cognitive component which naturally evolves as we examine our narratives.

The research has shown that simply venting... emotions has failed to support the clinical value of emotional expression in the absence of cognitive processing” (p. 1247). Furthermore, purely cognitive writing tasks, such as writing unemotional text or listing facts, has little long term impact on well being. Integrating emotions and cognition is essential. Suppressing emotions causes incongruence in brain hemisphere activity. In contrast, when emotional and linguistic information are processed together, there is an increase in hemispheric congruence or brain wave activity between the left and right hemispheres (Pennebaker, 1997; Pennebaker, 2004a). Decades of research have revealed that the significant benefits of expressive writing include “immediate cognitive changes” (Pennebaker, 2004b, p. 139) as the writer is forced to label, structure, and organize emotional content. In addition, expressive writing causes “immediate emotional changes” (p. 139) and, “long term cognitive and emotional changes” including

***Students report that the journal writing helps them create an inner dialogue that changes how they think and helps them try different conflict resolution styles, make new choices, and envision different life strategies.***

increased working memory due to emotional insights, and decreased rumination and suppression. Other benefits of expressive writing include increased academic performance as well as social and health benefits, including biological markers of improved immune function and general health. Processing and integrating emotions and thoughts lays the foundation for creating meaningful narratives that improve writers’ lives, health and general well being (Graybeal, Sexton, and Pennebaker, 2002).

Although the prescription for well being through expressive writing sounds easy, finding a delicate balance of emotion and reasoning is essential to success. Ignoring emotions hinders brain function; however merely venting emotions is no better. In fact, “being overwhelmed by emotions interferes with clear thinking and hinders the use of effective emotional responses” (Kennedy—Moore, Watson, 1999, p. 298). Obsessive rumination and repetition of negative emotions is very destructive (Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, and Palfai, 2004). Effectively processing emotions requires clarity (the ability to identify an emotion) and the use of strategies related to emotional repair such as the ability to understand the impact of circumstances and choices on emotion and to resolve problems (Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, and Palfai, 2004).

The authors’ earliest conflict resolution research revealed that the majority of students in their studies lacked the emotional vocabulary and emotional clarity necessary to discuss and resolve conflicts successfully (Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2000, 2007). In order to help students identify their emotions several teachers in conflict resolution treatment classrooms conducted a classroom activity known as a ‘check-in circle’ which is a brief classroom meeting using “I messages” and emotional vocabulary. In other treatment classrooms teachers conducted



the same check-in using the same emotional vocabulary in an expressive writing activity—a conflict resolution journal. Years of research confirmed that the social interaction of the verbal classroom check-in circle had significant positive impact on classroom attachment and classroom climate (Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2007); however the authors’ longitudinal data also revealed that there were significant benefits from the journal check-in activity—essentially an expressive writing ac-

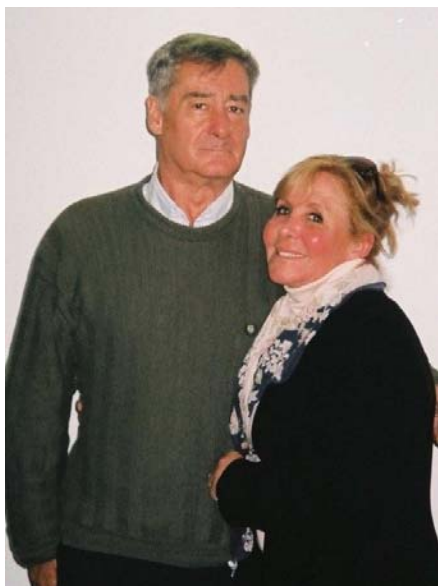
tivity. Both methods of expression developed emotional awareness and both were beneficial in unique ways—far beyond the intended benefits of increasing affective/emotional vocabulary.

Understandably, the authors' research revealed that the relative impact of the emotional expression journal changed as students' writing and language abilities developed. As students became capable of more complex writing, analysis and reflection, the impact of their journaling became more significant. In one of our longitudinal studies we had an opportunity to interview students three years after their conflict resolution program ended. Although the students were not advised in advance of our interview schedule, many of them had their conflict resolution journals with them or in their lockers. Other students reported writing in their journals at home. During the interviews several students also revealed continued use of the verbal check-in strategy, including using the strategy at family gatherings, "sleep over parties," and "to introduce new friends."

Older students, college students, and adults typically report that their expressive writing journal activities "change how I think," "change how I see myself", and "change how I react...." to friends, family members, spouses, and co-workers---responses that support Pennebaker's findings on improved social interaction. Students report that the journal writing helps them create an inner dialogue that changes how they think and helps them try different conflict resolution styles, make new choices, and envision different life strategies.

The conflict resolution classroom provides the perfect opportunity to balance the essential elements of expressive writing — emotion, cognition and problem solving — all of which are needed to make expressive writing activities effective — perhaps even transformational. The journals impact important aspects of the writers' lives, from choices impacting career goals, health and relationships to developing a meaningful life mission---

transforming their life stories with the simple stroke of a pen in a few minutes a day.



#### About the Authors

The Heydenberks are faculty within the College of Education, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA.

Roberta is Research Director of the Peace Center ([www.thepeacecenter.org](http://www.thepeacecenter.org)), a nonprofit organization in suburban Philadelphia.

The Heydenberks have published a related textbook, *A Powerful Peace: The Integrative Thinking Classroom*, Allyn & Bacon, 2000, along with related research articles. ([www.heydenberk.com](http://www.heydenberk.com)).

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# “The Case of Mrs. C.” How a School Board Ombuds Must Invent His Function

Patrick Robardet

## The story

The main actors are Mother (Mrs. C.), Student (her son), and Principal. Student is an 11 year-old in Grade 6 at a regular school (School A), run by Principal, where Student, having been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), attends a special class. In recent months, Mother has often refused to send him to School A because she says it is unsafe for him, and has discussed her position with Principal and his professional staff. She has met with, or talked to, the local trustee, two officials at the local office of Social Services (Youth Protection), and the school board ombuds.<sup>1</sup> Mother wants her son to go to School B but Principal refuses: he argues School A is safe and provides adequate ASD services, which School B is not staffed to do. She complains to the ombuds that her son should be transferred to School B.

Mother and the ombuds discussed the situation and her options. He informed her she can ask under the *Public Education Act* for a formal review of Principal’s decision by the plenary Board, or seek an administrative review by the Division Head and, later, by the Superintendent, before the ombuds considers intervening. Mother applied for a formal review but the Board maintained the refusal and ordered that Student remains in School A. Mother continued to keep him at home intermittently. After more calls from her, the ombuds met with the Chair of the Executive Committee of the Board to express his concern there was a serious ethical issue in not affirming Student’s rights more vigorously, and suggested the Board ask Social services to intervene. They did so by sending a social worker to help Mother. The story ended with Student now completing Grade 6 at School A, until he is transferred next year to a different school.

## Analysis

In the Canadian context, an ombuds generally serves three functions: he provides information and advice, and he handles complaints and conflicts. Again generally, an ombuds is an office of last resort. He must then clarify his role to a visitor/complainant on two dimensions: (a) his role vs. the organization’s internal conflict-resolution or decision-making processes; and (b) options available to the visitor/complainant who, as a general rule, must first exhaust available remedies before an ombuds may intervene.

In the case of Mrs. C., the central issue was whether Principal’s refusal to grant a transfer from School A was justified. Conversely, was Mother’s position reasonable? Yet, all parties involved had stakes in the outcome and the process.

The student had a specific interest and ASD-related needs, apart from Mother’s legal and moral authority over his education as parent. The principal constantly founded his negative decision solely on Student’s needs and his school’s capacity to

provide ASD services; he underplayed his interest in maintaining his formal power to grant or refuse a transfer, yet he wanted to ensure respect for existing formal processes. Mother was upset Principal would not “budge” but refused to discuss her son’s behaviour and to seek help.

The School Board became involved at the instance of the ombuds twice. His ethical concerns engaged the Board into going a step further to “enforce” its formal decision.

Principal had repeatedly informed Social Services of Student’s frequent lack of school attendance but he achieved little success initially in having them intervene; their reluctance was confirmed to the ombuds. The latter had also decided not to bypass Principal who had to be part of the solution and to “stand by” as a last resort, initially.

## Bits of Theory: Governance and Metaphors

In this case, the ombuds almost acted as an advocate or a Defender of students, in promoting an intervention by the Board and by Social Services. Should he have remained more neutral? But how can the ombuds decide who, among him or some other person or authority in the organization, is best placed to treat an issue brought by a visitor/complainant? The matter can be answered by two governance principles: proximity and subsidiarity.

Proximity means it is best to deal with issues locally. Subsidiarity means that powers or authority should be allocated to the person or entity best placed to carry out a task. Joined together, the two concepts mean that it is best to confer authority to the local person best placed to deal with a task (OECD, 2001, pp. 194-195). This is the theory supporting the division of powers in a federal system of government, between local states or provinces and central authorities. In a school board environment, a principal would be best placed to deal with a local issue than a superintendent or the full board. Similarly, an ombuds is a last resort mechanism. Proximity and subsidiarity regulate, and explain, the functional capacity to operate (“Am I the best person to intervene in this case?”) as can be shown by three metaphors.

A metaphor is a cognitive tool. It triggers symbolism and implicitly compares the qualities associated to a known object or activity with those of the object or activity under study. Canadian ombuds practice is characterized by diversity, dynamism, and adaptive design (LeBaron, 2009). Three metaphors serve our purpose.

To illustrate the “over-determination of functionality by symbolism”, Meirieu (2004), an education scholar, quotes the story of Swiss soldiers lost in 1942 at the border with Austria who found their way back to their village by using a section of a map, found in a pack: that map, in fact, described part of the mountains separating France and Spain! Importantly, the “wrong” map provided the soldiers with a sense of orientation

<sup>1</sup>In this article, the more gender-neutral word “ombuds” is preferred to ombudsman or ombudsperson. Yet, as the ombuds involved in the case discussed is a male, the words “he” and “his” are used to identify activities or actions done by “him”.



and place, thanks to familiar symbolic referents a map contains, such as directions, roads, rivers, etc (Meirieu, 2004, pp. 15-16; Meirieu, 2009). By analogy, fairness, iconic symbols and images (“Watchdog”, White Knight, etc.), standards of practice and codes of ethics from professions or ombuds associations (USOA, 2009; IOA, 2009) serve as steering referents to an ombuds.

The second metaphor is that of the “free electron” borrowed from quantum physics. The early models of the atom represented the electron as a ball, rotating around the nucleus at fixed distances on determined, circular orbits, then later, as balls travelling in elliptical orbits. Quantum physics define the electron as both a particle and a wave (or cloud), not as a specific form but as a cloud of probabilities about its forms. The electron is “unstable,” yet it may be located when it interacts with an object because it then condenses in a form. The TV set screen provides a familiar illustration: the electron hits the screen, behaves like a particle and becomes a point on the screen - many points on the screen form an image. The “collision” implies a trajectory towards a target. Metaphorically, ombudsing would “condense” and take a form under a “collision”, or interaction, with his environment given his mandate, the constraints bearing upon the range of means and actions available to him, the basic tenets of ombudsing, the roles of other actors, and the nature of the case. Shifting from a stable model to an “unstable” cloud of probabilities awaiting a “collision” to take a specific form, means an ombuds constructs his form (state, structure, relations) and his practice contextually, in a governance mode. As Graham, Amos & Plumtre (2003, p. 2) put it, “governance is about the more strategic aspects of steering: the larger decisions about direction and roles. That is, governance is not only about where to go, but also about who should be involved in deciding, and in what capacity.” This mode accords with a last resort position.



A third metaphor to illustrate the notion of “larger decisions about direction and roles” in steering ombuds practice is offered by the position of Player Number Eight in rugby football. Known as *Number Eight*, he is the only player without a name because he has to be able to adapt to each situation in the game, to support other players and to

step in where necessary. A fellow ombuds who played *Number Eight* in college confirmed that other players know when a good *Number Eight* is not present! *Number Eight* is the position Boris Cyrulnik, a scholar of resilience, played in his twenties. Cyrulnik (1995) writes *Number Eight* possesses the broadest range of knowledge of the game and abilities to play it (speed, power, weight, precision, etc.); he adds one needs a broad range of knowledge, skills and abilities to be able to understand reality synthetically, not just analytically (Cyrulnik, 1995, pp. 10-11). This view applies to ombuds practice: a last resort position does not exclude stepping in where necessary.

## Conclusion

The governance notion of steering helps understand the practicality of decisions made by an ombuds about whether and when to intervene. The three metaphors used in this article capture the many facets of this task. Each response has to be tailored to the case at hand, albeit within a range of possibilities bounded by the mandate and values of the function, the immediate environment, and the principles of governance. The case used as an example shows that striving to be a free electron does not dispense with knowing one’s direction, even symbolically, and with mastering abilities to steer on orbits governed by open-ended principles, not by fixed forms or distances.

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## About the author

Dr. Patrick Robardet has been appointed as the first Ombudsman at the *Commission scolaire de Montréal* (French Montreal School Board) in May 2007. He returned to the practice of law, consulting and mediation in 2006 and 2007 after having served as University Ombudsman at *Université Laval* in Quebec City from 2000 to 2005. He was Legal Counsel and Director of Legal Affairs (1991-2000) at the Office of the Public Protector (Ombudsman) for the Province of Quebec. He has taught law and public administration at several universities in Quebec and at the University of Ottawa (Common Law Section) between 1988 and 2000. Dr. Robardet is a member of the Quebec Bar, and holds degrees from the University of Ottawa (LL.L.) and *Université Laval* (LL.D., 1987). He is a certified mediator in civil and commercial matters in Quebec. Dr. Robardet was President of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons in 2002-2004.

### Findings

In search of solutions, I conducted a study of the implementation of the South Carolina Safe Schools Act. The South Carolina law took effect in 2006 and was designed to address bullying, intimidation and harassment at the district and school levels. In this study, nine counselors from four schools in one district participated in a survey and interview to determine their perception of how well the law was implemented, and the extent to which best practices in bully prevention were used at their schools. As a result of the study I learned that because the law leaves it up to schools to develop and use bully prevention practices, its application was inconsistent. To make bully prevention more effective, leadership by a school official is necessary and where that support was missing, implementation was lacking. The entire staff needs to be adequately trained to recognize bullying and how to appropriately intervene when incidents occur. The use of data collected by the school's stakeholders is important in making prevention understood by all adults and children at the school. This is an important step in producing comprehensive implementation of bully prevention plans. The findings of this study can be applied in five steps that will improve existing plans.

### Conclusions

1. **Exert leadership to publicize bully prevention and make it a school wide effort.** Almost 90% of the counselors agreed that a definition of bullying was in place, appropriate behavior was defined, consequences listed, and that there were procedures for reporting and for intervention. Yet, only 67% responded that the district had a bully prevention policy and only 55% agreed that the district's policy was publicized. To align with best

**“The entire staff needs to be adequately trained to not only recognize bullying but also to intervene appropriately when incidents occur.”**

practices, all stakeholders must know that bullying is wrong and how to address it at the school. All of the schools included bullying in their handbooks and reviewed it at the beginning of the year without additional reference to it unless by an individual counselor or teacher for whom it was a "hot button." It was generally understood that it was, "probably covered in the classroom." One school stood out in its use of best practices through the principal's leadership in taking an aggressive stance on bullying. It developed in response to previous incidents of bullying at the school. As a result there was ongoing staff training, development of curriculum materials, requirements that all teachers lead a Teacher Advisor session on bullying using a common presentation, and use of a Bully Counseling form to refer incidents to counselors. The entire school focused on bully prevention and the counselors noted that incidents were properly referred, allowing them to assist the victim and address the behavior of the bully.

2. **Conduct an assessment of bullying.** An assessment is critical to learn the nature and extent of bullying from every person at the school. The resulting data can direct intervention efforts and measure progress. Counselors reported that an assessment was not used to develop the prevention plans for the district (55%) and school (22%). Bullying was included within other assessments or only conducted in specific grades. An assessment of bullying provides data for a group of the school's stakeholders to use in designing and improving prevention efforts and directing intervention to victims and bullies.

### About the Author

Gladys Coles is a certified civil and family mediator and education consultant with experience in counseling and school administration. As a middle school principal, she worked with staff, parents, and students to reduce interpersonal conflict and promote an environment of cooperation. Dedicated to understanding more about conflict management, Gladys earned a Masters Degree in Human Behavior and Conflict Management studies at Columbia College in 2008. At the college she completed



a project on bully prevention. She reviewed research-based best practices in prevention and implementation, and conducted a study of the South Carolina Safe Schools Climate Act, which was designed to prevent bullying, intimidation and harassment.

Gladys earned a B.B.A. degree from Hofstra University, a M.Ed. in school counseling from the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, and M.A. from Columbia College.

Gladys served as president of the board of the Community Mediation Center, actively participates in other community organizations, and volunteers to assist students. She is a member of the Association for Conflict Resolution and Mediators Beyond Borders.

- 3. Train and support the staff to appropriately address incidents of bullying.** An important finding was that although 67% of counselors reported they agreed or strongly agreed that all adults had been trained to recognize bullying, only 44% agreed or strongly agreed that all adults had been adequately trained to intervene in a bullying situation and 11% strongly disagreed. Stephenson and Smith (as cited by Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004) found that "many teachers ignore bullying because they believe they lack adequate skills and training to intervene" (p.260). The need for adults to effectively address the problem of bullying is crucial in providing a safe environment for learning.
- 4. Collaborate.** Collaboration is a recommended best practice. In the survey, only 44% of the counselors agreed that the bully prevention plan was developed through collaboration by representatives from all segments of the school's community. Additional responses were that 44% neither agreed or disagreed, and 11% disagreed. A collaborative effort is

needed to ensure school wide knowledge and application of bully prevention programs.

- 5. Include bully prevention in the curriculum.** Counselors saw a need for teachers to incorporate sufficient coverage of bullying and prevention into the curriculum. At one school the counselors purchased bully prevention materials for hallway displays to alert students to bullying. One counselor expressed interest in addressing the staff about bullying but recognized that for teachers, the focus is on the use of instructional time.

Bully prevention requires ongoing, direct attention and even a state law may not be sufficient. Bullying must be given specific attention, bully prevention must have the support of school leadership and be understood and practiced by all stakeholders. When adults adequately address bullying, all students, whether victim, bystander or bully, are helped. All children deserve this.

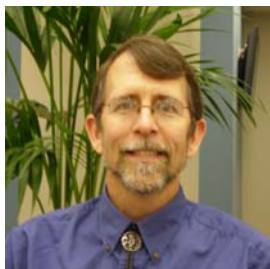
## CREducation

Bill Warters

### NEWS AND HELP REQUEST FROM THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION EDUCATION CONNECTION.

We invite readers to visit the CREducation website at: <http://www.creducation.org> to review a growing collection of conflict resolution resources for educators. For example, workshop presentation slides, handouts, and our wonderful catalog of close to 600 full-text resources, including lesson plans. On the website, you can access a copy of our 2009-2010 Conflict Resolution Teachers Calendar, complete with links to many adaptable resources for use in the classroom, here at: [http://www.creducation.org/cre/lo/teacher\\_calendar/](http://www.creducation.org/cre/lo/teacher_calendar/)

The website is designed to be user-friendly and interactive. For instance, CREducation.org has put together a fun set of online games with conflict resolution content appropriate for different age levels. The games can be used in the classroom in conjunction with conflict resolution concepts taught in your curriculum. Visit the game site here: <http://www.creducation.org/cre/crday/games/>



Escape and Write! Create an account on CREducation.org

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and the doors open for you to participate in posting Blogs on topics related to conflict resolution in educational contexts and/or about your special projects.

Remember us & contribute! Every great initiative needs help and feedback. In addition to welcoming reviewers of website material, the team at Wayne State University would welcome your input to help develop online learning topics, to contribute materials and assist in the development of modules for Pre-service Teachers. Please contact Kathleen Doyle, the Web Project Manager with your questions and ideas at: [kedoyle1@gmail.com](mailto:kedoyle1@gmail.com)

If you are just dropping by the site to cruise around, be sure to visit the posting of the many inspirational poems from this year's Conflict Resolution Day Poetry Contest:

[http://www.creducation.org/cre/forms/poem\\_view/](http://www.creducation.org/cre/forms/poem_view/)



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