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Torch (December 2013)

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Civil Rights Team Project

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THE TORCH (CRTP NEWSLETTER) DEC '13



Hey, Civil Rights Team Project community! Enjoy the December edition of our bimonthly newsletter, *The Torch*. Here's what you'll find inside:

On Our Radar: Major events and happenings that are on our radar screen.

From the Teams: News and information about your civil rights teams and affiliated groups and what you're doing to address issues of bias in your schools.

The Civil Rights Team Project in the News: Media coverage for the CRTP.

From the Office: News from Brandon and Debi and what's happening with the CRTP.

From Edmodo: Information about and from the CRTP group at Edmodo.

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This newsletter is written and distributed by the Civil Rights Team Project, a state-wide program under the auspices of the Maine Office of the Attorney General. The mission of the Civil Rights Team Project is to increase the safety of elementary, middle level, and high school students by reducing bias-motivated behaviors and harassment in our schools.

Janet Mills—Attorney General

Debi Lettre—Civil Rights Project Administrator

Brandon Baldwin—Schools/Curriculum Coordinator



On Our Radar:

Here's everything we've got our eyes on in the next three months...

Martin Luther King Day (January 20)

No Name-Calling Week (January 21-24)

- Information available at: www.glsen.org/nonamecallingweek

CRTP Midseason Check-Ins (due in January):

- Form available [right here!](#)

African American History Month (February):

Information available at: www.africanamericanhistorymonth.gov

Be Yourself Week (February 2-7 for middle level schools)

- Information available [right here!](#)

Be Yourself Week (February 24-28 for elementary schools)

- Information available [right here!](#)





From the Teams:

At Greely High School... the civil rights team sponsored a successful Mix It Up at Lunch Day event. Advisor Peter Scott estimates that 65% of the student body participated. The team wrote a message to faculty explaining the event, visited classroom teachers to distribute event materials, and actively encouraged adults to participate, too.



Hey, Greely High School civil rights team: Good job identifying the important role that adults play in making your events successful. You equipped them with good information and made them feel invested in what was happening, even encouraging them to participate themselves. (And thanks to their advisors, Peter Scott, Heather Perkinson, and Brianna Robbins, for sharing.)

At Katahdin Elementary School... the civil rights team felt like they needed to follow up their anti-bias scarecrow with another display. They came up with the idea of a turkey featuring an individualized feather from every student in the school. The team's advisor and school counselor Jaide Berry collected the student-created feathers during classroom lessons on celebrating individuality. The team then put together the display. (Picture included below.)

Hey, Katahdin Elementary School civil rights team: what a great idea! Individuality is something worth celebrating, and your display shows how we can create something wonderful when everyone adds their own unique contribution. Sometimes the best ideas come from the students. (And thanks to advisor Jaide Berry for sharing.)





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At Saco Middle School... the civil rights team made a great anti-bias scarecrow. The team conducted interviews with staff members to gather information and help them focus on specific bias behaviors, including racial slurs and judgments. They also included the positive statement that “everyone deserves to be safe + welcome + respected.” This great message is prominently featured where all students will see it on their way to lunch. (And “Fred” is pictured on the previous page.)

Hey, Saco Middle School civil rights team: You are one of our newest teams, and you’re off to a great start in your anti-bias work. Your anti-bias scarecrow is focused, positive, and prominent. (And thanks to their advisors, Thomas Partridge and Jessica Benway, as well as two of their students, Sara and Sabrina, for sharing.)

At South Portland High School... the civil rights team worked with the Gay-Straight-Trans Alliance and sponsored a successful Ally Week specifically focused on issues of sexual orientation and anti-LGBT harassment. They sold over 100 “I am an ally!” bracelets, accompanied with cards describing what it means to be an ally and a few easy ways to respond to bias-based language. The team promoted the event with posters and daily announcements over the PA system. Advisor Sarah Gay reports that the student body was mature and respectful in their response to the week’s events.

Hey, South Portland High School civil rights team: Way to announce yourselves to the school. You are also a new team this year, and this event effectively communicated who you are and what you do. Your Ally Week event frames your work perfectly. (And thanks to advisor Sarah Gay for sharing.)

The Civil Rights Team Project **In** the News

Read about the Gorham High School civil rights team and [here](#) and [here](#) (just scroll down to page 9).

Let’s follow the GHS civil rights team’s lead and get some positive press!



From the Office:

New Teams!

We have seven new participating schools in the Civil Rights Team Project, including:

- An elementary level civil rights team at Wentworth Intermediate School in Scarborough
- Middle level teams at Buckfield Jr./Sr. High School, Hichborn Middle School in Howland, Mountain Valley Middle School in Rumford, and Wells Junior High School
- A high school affiliate group, Diversity Team at Medomak Valley High School (Waldoboro) and a civil rights team at Penobscot Valley High School in Howland



Student Trainings: Finally Over

The busy fall training schedule is finally over: 12 sessions, 121 schools, 1662 registered participants. How does this compare with last year? Last year 124 schools attended with 2019 registered participants. The number of schools is comparable. The decrease in registered participants is the direct result of the cap we put on the number of students you could bring this year.

About that cap... while some of you expressed dissatisfaction over this restriction, it allowed us to do community circles and keep the trainings more student-centered and engaging. It was all done for a reason, and hopefully you'll agree that these limits made for a better overall training experience.

Your Feedback

How was the overall quality? According to you... these trainings were very, very good.

Asked to rate the overall quality of this year's elementary trainings, you said:

- Poor, 0%
- Adequate, 0%
- Good, 0%
- Very good, 44.4%
- Excellent, 55.6%



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Asked to rate the overall quality of this year’s middle level/high school trainings, you said:

- Poor, 0%
- Adequate, 2.4%
- Good, 7.3%
- Very good, 29.3%
- Excellent, 61%

With both the elementary and middle level/high school trainings, then, you rated the overall quality somewhere between “very good” and “excellent.”

With every one of our trainings, we want participants to leave feeling educated, engaged, and inspired. Our #1 goal this year was increasing student engagement. Success!

The following table is based on the online feedback you provided for the 2012 and 2013 trainings. You were asked if your students were educated, engaged, and inspired. The numbers represent the average score on a 1-4 scale, where 1=not really, 2=somewhat, 3=yes, and 4=YES!

Were your students:	educated?	engaged?	inspired?
2012	3.58	3.21	3.23
2013	3.58	3.66	3.53

Notice that the numbers stayed the same for “educated” and went up for “engaged” and “inspired.” So... we did it! We increased student engagement without sacrificing educational content.

Expect a similar format next year: mini-presentations and community circles. Our goal is to keep the engagement scores high *and* increase the other scores. Our standards are very, very high at the Civil Rights Team Project; we are always striving to do better.

Elements of the Trainings Now Available!

Of course I’m always happy to share any and all of what we do at the trainings. After honing my skills on the Thanksgiving turkey, I’m carving up the students trainings and making individual activities available on Edmodo and through Dropbox.

One note of caution, though: the activities require context. You and your teams are welcome to use them, but they have to mean something.

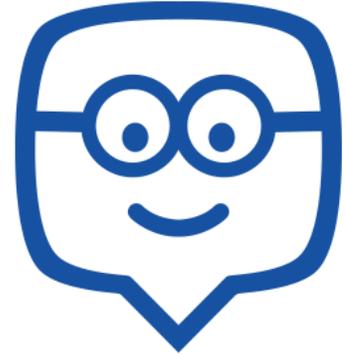
You can access the activities through Edmodo or this Dropbox folder: [Student Trainings 2013](#). (And if you can’t find what you’re looking for, let me know. I’ll share!)



From Edmodo:

Most Viewed Content:

1. Noreen Nasir's "I Was the Only One" video (57 views), [see it here](#)
2. Poll question on if you receive a stipend for your civil rights work (51 votes), [see it here](#)
3. (tie) Ill Doctrine's "The Last Word on That Word" video blog (26 views), [see it here](#)
3. (tie) "Rigged Game" poetry slam video (26 views), [see it here](#)



My Take: You do like videos, don't you? Unfortunately, Edmodo is not a great platform for storing video content. I need to figure out a way to make these videos available to you when you want them. (Also, only about 1/3 of you receive a stipend for your work.)

In Case You Missed It:

Here I'm highlighting great content from the last two months that I wish had gotten more clicks:

- *NY Times* article, "Conversation about Race Has Not Brought Cultural Consensus" (only 18 views), [see it here](#)
- John Franklin Stephen's Special Olympics blog post, "An Open Letter to Ann Coulter" (only 20 views), [see it here](#)
- *The Oatmeal's* long comic on Christopher Columbus and Bartolomé de las Casas (only 17 views), [see it here](#)

It's Coming... Soon

In our last newsletter I shared the good news that we have permission to open up Edmodo so that you can post content. We have been carefully considering the best way to make this happen.

Our decision? We will be launching a second Edmodo group where you can connect with other advisors, ask questions, and get/give advice. Look for it in January 2014.

You can access the CRTP Edmodo group by logging in at www.edmodo.com.