



open circle reach out to schools: social competency program

NEWSLINE

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Welcome aboard Starship ST303

by **Lisa Sankowski**
Associate Director, Open Circle

"OK everyone, enter the transporter," says Ms. Strother. Quietly and quickly, Lois Strother's third-graders get into line. When everyone is in place and the room is as silent as the vacuum of space, Ms. Strother says, "Beam down," and the children — or perhaps I should say "crew members" — file out of the classroom on their way to art class.

For the last eight years or so, Lois Strother, third-grade teacher at the Cabot School in Newton, MA, has organized her classroom around the theme of a Starship. Her class calls itself "Starship ST303," and her letters home to parents and families are "Captain's Logs." Work areas in her classroom have names like "Upper Deck" (she has a loft) and "Lower Deck," "Transporter Room," "Recreation Room" and "Science Library." Students' desks are "Crew Quarters," and they take on weekly jobs with titles like "Navigator" and "Transporter Chief" for students in charge of storage areas and moving through the corridors, "Archeologists" who take care of "consoles and scanning devices" (the computer area), and "Physicists" and "Cartographers" who care for games and the research area.



The covers of her students' learning journals say "Handbook & Personal Log of Officer _____," and hall passes are shaped like helmeted astronauts.

Although she's never really been a Star Trek fan, Lois was inspired by the idea of "Reaching for the Stars." This theme also connects to reaching for the "Rs:" the 3 Rs of academics; the Cabot School 3 Rs of Respect, Responsibility and Rights; and other critical Rs including Reaching for the next level, taking positive Risks, Relying on your strong side, and Relatedness. In Ms. Strother's class, "Mission Impossible" becomes "Mission Is Possible."

When Lois was trained in Open Circle in 2000-2001, she saw many ways to integrate it with the unique culture of her classroom and also with other approaches that she has come to rely on in her 30+ years of teaching. When they come to third-grade, most of her students have already had Open Circle for at least two years. This solid grounding gives Lois an opportunity to be playful with the ways she uses Open Circle in her classroom.

Here are just a few of "Captain Strother's" adaptations:

- All starship crews need passwords. ST303's passwords are please, excuse me, you're welcome, may I, and thank you.
- Student's wear a "communicator" (clip-on badge) in Open Circle. They press their communicators when they have something to say and want to be recognized. This is their most important non-verbal signal.

- Annoying behaviors are also known as "shock waves" and students begin to handle them by dealing with "static," that is calming down so they can sharpen their focus and identify the problem. Their first strategy is to put
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Captain Strother of ST303 in the Cabot Frontier.

Starship ST303

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up their Force Fields and ignore little things that aren't serious. The next step is to Lock Phasers On, i.e. discuss the shock wave and problem solve with fellow crew members. If this doesn't succeed, the situation goes to Yellow Alert and they try again. Red Alert is a Double D, and the crew members notify the Captain.

- Lois also provides a problem solving box and "breakdown slips" so that when there is a "total breakdown in communication," the students involved can call on the expertise of their fellow crew members to help solve the problem at their next Open Circle.
- * The class has a compliment box too, and special compliment slips that ask for the submitting officer's name and the stardate, and say "Recognition of _____ for _____."

This lively theme is a lot of fun for her students, and an effective organizing principle for Lois, full of opportunities for positive metaphors about striving for excellence, the value of exploration and curiosity, and embarking on an adventure into uncharted territory. And in particular, it underscores the importance of teamwork, interdependence and community. Captain Strother has truly made Open Circle her own.



The Crew of ST303.

From the Executive Director

Making it your own

by Pamela Seigle

Executive Director, Open Circle

"The work of a teacher—exhausting, complex, idiosyncratic, never twice the same—is at its heart an intellectual and ethical enterprise. Teaching is the vocation of vocations, a calling that shepherds a multitude of other callings. It is an activity that is intensely practical and yet transcendent, brutally matter-of-fact and yet fundamentally a creative act. Teaching begins in challenge and is never far from mystery."

From *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher* by William Ayres

The complexities of teaching are astounding. When we bring forth the best in ourselves, we touch the intellectual, emotional and spiritual lives of our students.

Open Circle encompasses both the practical and transcendent. The teaching of specific social skills and practice in using them become transcendent as students truly bring themselves to the classroom community and make meaning of the social and emotional dimensions of their school experience. The power of creating trustworthy space for these conversations is palpable whether it's about teasing on the playground, friendship problems, or frustration with an academic task.

After recently hearing a talk by Rachel Simmons, author of *Odd Girl Out*, a book about girl aggression, I was reminded of an Open Circle in a fifth-grade classroom. Two girls came to Open Circle eager to share their conversation of the night before when one of the girls had gone on and on and on, leaving no space for her friend to respond. The other girl was able to refer to the discussion on listening they had in Open Circle, and they both agreed to be more careful about giving each other time to talk and time to listen. They were so proud that they were able to talk about it openly with each other. The teacher's ability to focus on the skill of listening as well as relating it to the students' experience had a powerful impact on the ability of both the girls and boys in the classroom to deal with conflict in an open and direct way.

This year we've been working on revising and enhancing the *Open Circle Curriculum*. As we've had the opportunity to solicit input from teachers in both urban and suburban schools, we've been impressed with the many wonderful ways they have built on the Open Circle lessons and brought their voices to this work. We look forward to incorporating many of their adaptations and ideas into the *Open Circle Curriculum*, and in this issue of *Open Circle Newsline*, we share some of their stories and ideas with you.

As we begin 2003, I want to express gratitude to the talented and committed Open Circle staff and to all of the dedicated educators we have the privilege to join in this work. As William Ayres says, "Teaching is the vocation of vocations." Thank you for the work you do, "shepherding a multitude of other callings."

Open Circle Newsline is published by the Reach Out to Schools: Social Competency Program, based at The Stone Center, Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA. We welcome contributions of articles and photographs for this newsletter from teachers, students and others in the school community.

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Lisa Sankowski, Editor

Open Circle's Mission

We work with school communities to help children become ethical people, contributing citizens and successful learners. By helping schools implement the unique Open Circle Curriculum, we foster the development of relationships that support safe, caring and respectful learning communities of children and adults.

The link between bystanders and violence: a talk by Dr. Ronald Slaby

On October 29, 2002, Dr. Ronald Slaby spoke with Open Circle teachers at the Wellesley College Club about his research on how helping young people recognize the power of their role as bystanders can help prevent bullying and youth violence.

Ron Slaby is both a Senior Scientist at Education Development Center (EDC) and a Lecturer on Education at Harvard University, where he teaches “Growing Up in a Media World” and “Preventing Violence in America.” A developmental psychologist, Dr. Slaby has more than 30 years of experience investigating and applying innovative strategies to prevent youth violence and to enhance children’s social and cognitive development. He has helped to shape our national agenda on violence prevention and educational uses of media through his work with the Centers for Disease Control and the American Psychological Association, and has helped to initiate several national programs to disseminate effective violence prevention strategies to educators, health professionals, and criminal justice agents.

In his presentation, Dr. Slaby spoke about his multilevel “bystander approach,” designed to prepare our youth to become active agents of violence prevention. His curriculum for young adolescents, *Aggressors, Victims, and*



Dr. Ron Slaby speaks about his research to teachers at an evening talk in October.

Bystanders, written with Renée Wilson-Brewer and Kimberly Dash, focuses not only on social and emotional skill building, but also on helping young teens change their “habits of thought.” He argues that by adolescence, kids’ reaction to violence is automatic. They need help thinking of new, better ways to look at handling problems. If youth have learned habits that support violence as a way of responding when provoked, they need help thinking of alternative ways to respond, of being “more cool-headed than hot-headed.” The curriculum addresses not only problem solving skills—how you think—but challenges beliefs and values—what you think. Students engage in

conversations around common beliefs like “If I don’t fight back, people will think I’m a coward” or “People are basically mean.” This leads to conversations that challenge hostile beliefs and provide more peaceful alternatives. And plenty of role play gives them practice in being non-violent problem solvers so that they are more likely to make non-violent choices when they ultimately face real situations at school, home or in their neighborhoods.

Also, bullies count on the passive acceptance of bystanders, or in some cases, on their active encouragement or “egging on.” Victims become unable to see their options or look for support from those around them. Dr. Slaby wants students to embark on a “Hero’s Journey” (inspired by the work of Joseph Campbell) to learn to recognize what is wrong in society, to reject it, and to return to teach others about a better way to live and be. Students are introduced to the “Think First” model: keep cool, size up the situation, think it through, do the right thing.

For more information about *Aggressors, Victims, and Bystanders: Thinking and Acting to Prevent Violence* for grades 6-9, contact the Education Development Center at 1-800-225-4276.

A new twist on show-and-tell for kids and adults

When Margaret Doyle began this year as the new principal of the Brophy School in Framingham, she wanted to find a fun way for all the kids in the school to get to know all the grownups—teachers, custodians, social workers, teaching assistants, specialists, librarians, nurses, everyone.

Now every Friday at the end of the day, Brophy has an all-school meeting. In preparation on Friday morning, three adults who know it’s their turn that week bring Ms. Doyle an object from home that has significance for them and that they are willing to tell a story about. The objects often reveal something about them that the children and their colleagues may not

know, and they have included everything from their own artwork to snowshoes.

When everyone gathers for the meeting each Friday, they wait in anticipation as Ms. Doyle calls the three adults up to the stage and then brings out the three objects they have brought. The fun begins as Ms. Doyle asks the children to vote by show of hands on the person they think most likely to have brought the first object, which Ms. Doyle hands to the winner. Then they vote on the second object, and the final object is given to the empty-handed person. Ms. Doyle then asks her audience, “Do you think you got it right?” Inevitably, there are cheers. Then Ms. Doyle asks the first adult if he or

she is holding the right object. Almost as inevitably, he or she is not. Groans of dismay ensue, and they go through the process again, voting and changing until they get it right. For the older kids, this process quickly becomes a logic puzzle; younger children, of course, have more difficulty finding their way to the solution by deduction. But eventually each adult has his or her own object in hand, and then they take turns telling their stories.

This much-anticipated weekly event has been a wonderful way to have fun together as a community and to get to know a little something about every adult who helps make the Brophy School a safe and productive place to learn.

Specialists are key to carryover

by **Sallie Dunning & Jennifer Dirga**
Trainers and Consultants, Open Circle

As we all know, specialists play a key role in the creation of the culture of any school. The relationships they form with individual students can make all the difference in someone's day. Who among us doesn't have a wonderful memory of a nurse, art teacher, music teacher, lunch teacher or classroom aide who connected with us in a unique way? We at Open Circle have always valued specialists and continue to offer them training so that they can get involved with Open Circle in ways that make sense to them.

This year we have heard a new theme expressed during our specialist trainings, which we want to share with you. This theme relates to a problem that grade-level teachers cite on a regular basis, "My students know what to say and how to act in Open Circle, but I don't see as much carryover to other situations as I'd like." Specialists can offer help in this area in several ways.

Throughout the four days of training of grade-level teachers, we talk about the challenge of carryover—the application of Open Circle skills outside of Open Circle. Kids are often so concrete, they don't see a connection between their behavior in one setting (e.g. the school listening look during an Open Circle) and their behavior in another (how to act during a school assembly) unless their teacher uses the language consistently in both places. Specialists who know and understand Open Circle vocabulary can make a huge difference in students' application of those skills and concepts.

What seems to have the biggest impact is having a specialist come to a grade-level Open Circle session. When the kids see her or him sitting in the Circle, that visual association helps them later on to connect the specialist with Open Circle behaviors back in the art room, cafeteria or media center. Otherwise, as one specialist put it, "Before I sat in on one of their Open Circles, when I used Open Circle vocabulary, they looked at me as if I'd made a mistake!" Investing a little bit of time with a specialist to plan a visit to an Open Circle, decide on key vocabulary you'll both use, and brainstorm possible joint projects will pay off in the long run. Kids will get the message that you'd like to see those behaviors not only outside of Open Circle, but even outside your classroom and with other adults. Most importantly, they'll get a chance to practice cooperating, including, listening and calming down with other critical adults in their lives. As educators, we know that consistent and regular practice of any skill is the only way to improve.

Along with that new emphasis, we have gotten lots of ideas from specialists on how to connect their world to Open Circle, and vice-versa. Here are just a few:

- Specialists can display Open Circle vocabulary in their rooms.
- Specialists can sit in on an Open Circle and be interviewed by students so they can get to know them better.

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Training workshop on March 6, 2003

Open Circle Introductory Workshop for Specialists

This spring, we will offer a one-day Open Circle Introductory Workshop for specialists (e.g. special education, art, music, foreign language, physical education, health) from schools that actively use the *Open Circle Curriculum*. The workshop will be on Thursday, March 6, 2003, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Wellesley College Club.

This workshop will provide an overview of the Open Circle Program, an understanding of Open Circle concepts and vocabulary, and a discussion of specific ways specialists can use these concepts and vocabulary to enhance their own work and connect with grade-level teachers. *(Please keep in mind that this workshop is an introduction only. Teachers who want to facilitate the Open Circle Curriculum in the classroom must attend our four-day New Teacher Training.)*

The cost for this workshop is \$100. Space will be limited to 25 participants.

To register, please complete the form below and return it along with a check or purchase order for \$100 payable to "Open Circle-Wellesley College." Mail to Reach Out to Schools: Social Competency Program, The Stone Center, Wellesley College, 106 Central Street, Wellesley, MA 02481-8203. The final deadline for receipt of registration is February 21, 2003.

Registration Form

Yes, I would like to attend the **Open Circle Introductory Workshop for Specialists on March 6, 2003, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.** at the **Wellesley College Club, Wellesley College.**

Name _____

Specialty Area _____

School _____

School Address _____

Home Phone _____

Please complete this form and mail it, with a check or purchase order for \$100 made payable to "Open Circle-Wellesley College," to the Reach Out to Schools: Social Competency Program, The Stone Center, Wellesley College, 106 Central Street, Wellesley, MA 02481-8203. **Final deadline for receipt of registration is February 21, 2003.**

R.I.S.E. - Respect, Inclusion, Safety, and Encouragement at the Hardy School

An example of a school that has made Open Circle its own is the Hardy Elementary School in Wellesley, MA. When Gayle Vonasek became principal of the Hardy School seven years ago, she found that Open Circle was already an integral part of the school. But as she dug deeper—feeling, she says, “a bit like an archeologist”—she uncovered lists of different rules for the playground, for the lunchroom, for the hallways and bus. Gayle decided that rather than have these multiple lists of rules, she would engage the faculty in identifying a list of the common values they prized most highly, values that had their roots in social competency and Open Circle. She wanted these values to be meaningful to all members of the school community, especially children. Together, the faculty created “R.I.S.E.,” which is an acronym for Respect others, Include all, show Safe behavior, and Encourage everyone to participate and solve problems. R.I.S.E. has become a framework that everyone in the school understands, and it complements and encompasses Open Circle, which is taught in all classrooms.

Early in the school year, R.I.S.E. is explained to students and their parents and caregivers. Teachers refer to R.I.S.E. regularly and find that the values it represents are flexible enough to encompass all developmental levels. For example, kindergarten students talk about safety in terms of no pinching or hitting. Fifth-grade students talk about safety at a more complex level that might include dealing with teasing or exclusion. Fifth-graders, who have had Open Circle for several years, start the year by talking about what R.I.S.E. means to them as 10-11 year olds. In this way, their teachers acknowledge and respect their emerging adolescence and their role as active learners, but they also help them understand that these values are still relevant to them; they’re not something they will outgrow.

Open Circle and R.I.S.E. provide a universal language that anyone can learn easily. The values they represent are nonnegotiable; they are the core values all strive toward at Hardy School. Whenever there is a problem, students have learned

to identify the part of R.I.S.E. involved. They then use the Open Circle problem solving steps to think about ways to resolve the problem fairly, develop solutions, and make a plan to try out their ideas.

Sue Bright-Belanger, a fifth-grade teacher at Hardy School, says that Open Circle promotes open communication and caring. As an example, she offers the story of an inclusion special needs child in her classroom last year. Open Circle and R.I.S.E. created an environment where all the children in the class celebrated their classmate’s efforts and showed her affection and love. Sue would regularly hear the other students include her, saying, “Please join us in our group,” or “I’m glad you’re a part of the group.”

“Kids grow into the expectations and standards, and that frees us up to be better teachers and risk-takers in all aspects of our work. . . . We preserve time for instruction by proactively teaching social competency skills and having high and clear expectations for the behavior of both children and adults.”

As the year went on and the fifth-graders began to contemplate the realities of middle school, Sue used Open Circle as a forum for them to talk together about a growing awkwardness some students were feeling toward their classmate. They ended the Open Circle with the hope that, in middle school, they would have the courage to acknowledge their former classmate and continue to recognize her as part of their peer group. “It was a real exploration of humanity,” Sue says.

Open Circle and R.I.S.E. give teachers a framework to address challenging issues with students. It’s an investment of time and it requires emotional energy, but the rewards are great. “The practice of Open Circle has empowered me to take on these challenges,” Sue says. “Kids grow into the expectations and standards, and that frees us up to be better teachers and risk-takers in all aspects of our work. If you’re not tied up in behavior management, you’re free to grow in your practice. We preserve time for instruction by proactively teaching social competency skills and having high and clear expectations for the behavior of both children and adults.”

Having the foundation of Open Circle and the framework of R.I.S.E. allows every member of the school community to respond with consistency and increases their sense of connectedness to each other. There are still challenges. Gayle has her “oops book,” and children who come to talk with her about a problem write about it there and include their ideas about how they will handle the same problem next time. But Gayle is seeing fewer “oops” entries all the time. She’s also found that parents are benefiting from learning about Open Circle and using its concepts at home. This has positive results back at school.

Principal leadership and positive adult relationships are critical to making this work, and the respect that adults in the Hardy School community show to each other is palpable. Marcia Robinson, School Psychologist at Hardy, compliments Gayle for the way she models respect and appreciation for her staff. And Gayle welcomes Marcia’s coaching when she’s handling a difficult situation. Gayle says, “I work with talented, brilliant people, and I want them to appreciate each other’s gifts.” Kids at Hardy see the respect their principal and teachers have for each other, and they also regularly see the adults helping, collaborating and supporting each other. Encouragement of each other is a priority among faculty and staff at Hardy. At a recent staff meeting, teachers had a chance to write about their visions for the

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Courage to Lead 3-Day Retreat for School Leaders in March, 2003

Under the guidance of Parker J. Palmer, author of *The Courage to Teach*, (Jossey-Bass, 1998) the Fetzer Institute created the Courage to Teach program, piloting an approach to vocational development called “teacher formation.” This approach is rooted in the belief that good teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher. The formation process invites educators to reclaim their wholeness and vocational clarity and makes connections between the renewal of a teacher’s spirit and the revitalization of public education. Whether in day-long, weekend, week-long or multi-year experiences, formation work is conducted in retreat settings with reflective energy and pace.

Courage to Teach retreats are designed with the following in mind:

- To provide needed time for silence and solitude
- To explore questions of meaning, purpose, calling, service, and the inner life
- To provide a unique opportunity to explore the intersection of “soul” and “role”
- To create a context for deep connection with others that honors difference
- To nurture identity and integrity, honoring our gifts and discerning our own authentic responses from the pressures and projections of others

Please consider joining us this March for a **Courage to Lead 3-Day Retreat for School Leaders**. The retreat begins in the evening with dinner on March 6 and continues until noon on March 8, 2003, at the Wellesley College Club, Wellesley, MA. Pamela Seigle of Open Circle and Chip Wood of Responsive Classroom will facilitate the retreat. For more information, contact Sadie Fischesser at 1-800-360-6332 or sadie@responsiveclassroom.org.

Specialists

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- Specialists can sit in on an Open Circle and problem solve with students and their teacher if the class is having issues during the special.
- Art teachers can make posters illustrating key language and concepts.
- Music teachers can make up songs to go with certain concepts and use songs that relate to themes.
- Aides can use vocabulary and concepts in small groups and read some of the books listed in the Open Circle Literature Connections.
- Librarians can order books in the Literature Connections and create an area where those books can be found and used by teachers.
- Lunch teachers can set up visuals and posters with Open Circle language in the cafeteria.
- Everyone can decide on a few whole-school non-verbal signals.
- Schools can recognize that specialists, because they often see every child in the building, can play a unique role in building community.
- Specialists can develop non-verbal signals for specialty areas or use nonverbal signals from a specific classroom.
- Specialists can discuss with students the social skills they’ll need to succeed in a particular activity (e.g. a cooperative group activity) and afterwards debrief with students the skills they used and evaluate how they did.
- Media specialists can ask students to create a compliment page on the computer.

If any of these ideas interest you, whether you’re a grade-level teacher or a specialist, please get in touch with a colleague and try one out. We’d love to hear about your experiences!

Open Circle registration begins in February

In late February, we will mail out registration materials for Open Circle teacher training in 2003-2004. If your school has not received a registration packet by early March, please contact Lisa Sankowski at 781-283-2861 or lsankows@wellesley.edu, and we will mail a packet to you. The deadline for registration is May 2, 2003.

R.I.S.E.

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students in their classrooms this year, and they reflected on these visions by thinking about ways each of them could help his or her colleagues achieve their goals.

The Hardy Elementary School’s success demonstrates that when a whole school community makes the value of respect the cornerstone not only of its vision, but also of the practical, day-to-day way that adults and children—and adults and adults—work together, children benefit and learn.

Each year at the Hardy School, graduating fifth-graders write about their experience there. These writings are gathered together in a book that is shared with new Hardy students and their families the following year. Our goal for all school communities is that each student will be able to describe his or her elementary school experience as this fifth-grader did: “[Hardy School is] a place where everyone is Respected, Included, Safe, and Encouraged. A unique environment, which has responsible adults. Where teasing and bullying are not allowed and when it happens responsible adults will help take care of the situation. The bully and the victim will both get help. The environment is friendly and whether you are learning about the ABC’s, the 123’s, or pre-algebra and spelling, Mexico or Ancient China, you will be encouraged, never put down. In recess you will be included in all games, and safe when playing games in recess. The teachers will respect you and will always listen to your ideas. In other words, the school follows R.I.S.E.”

Problem solving meets literature connections

by Peg Sawyer

Program Consultant, Open Circle

When Open Circle asked me to revise the Literature Connections lists for the *Open Circle Curriculum*, I thought, "What a huge task. This could be a problem!" As I drove home from our meeting, I came to a traffic light, and then I remembered what to do . . .

1. **Calm down.** First, I'll find a place that makes me feel calm, like Sophie does in *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry*, by Molly Bang.
2. **Identify the problem.** Sometimes I feel frustrated because there are so many books to choose from and so little time to read them all!
3. **Decide on a positive goal.** I will try to find the best children's books to support and enhance the *Open Circle Curriculum*. I will look for stories with plots and characters that "ring true" with children, like *Lily and Her Purple Plastic Purse* by Kevin Henkes.
4. **Think of several solutions.**
 - Close my eyes and choose the first 100 books I touch in the library.
 - Camp out at Barnes and Noble.
 - Search libraries, websites, consult the experts (school librarians and the teachers who use *Open Circle*).
5. **Evaluate the solutions.** Solution #3 will yield the best results.
6. **Make a plan and try it.** Ask the experts, collect information, comb library shelves, identify and visit appropriate websites, research the best books published in 2001-2002, READ. Share books with teachers and librarians.

So far, I think my plan is working. Thanks to librarians at the Hardy School in Wellesley, the Lilja School in Natick, the Chestnut Hill School in Newton, the Pierce School in Brookline, the Chickering School in Dover, and children's librarians in the Boston and Minuteman Library networks, the list of books that will enrich and extend Open Circle lessons is growing. Here are a few of the stand-outs so far:

Understanding Feeling Words

Sometimes I'm Bombaloo! by Rachel Vail, Scholastic, 2001 [grades K-1].
When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry, by Molly Bang, Blue Sky Press, 1999 [grades K-1].
Whoa Jealousy! by Woodleigh Marx Hubbard, Putnam's Sons, 2002 [grades 3-5].

Teasing and bullying

The Recess Queen by Alexis O'Neill, Scholastic, 2002 [grades K-5].
Bully by Judith Casely, Greenwillow Books, 2001 [grades 3-5].

Recognizing Differences

The Big Bad Wolf is Good by Simon Puttock, Sterling Publications, 2002 [grades K-5].
Horace and Morris Join the Chorus (But What About Dolores?) by James Howe, Atheneum, 2002 [grades 3-5].

Interviewing/Getting to Know One Another

Enemy Pie by Derek Munson, Chronicle Books, 2000 [grades 3-5].

Leadership

Hunter's Best Friend at School by Laura Malone Elliott, HarperCollins, 2002 [grades K-2].
Courage by Bernard Waber, Houghton Mifflin, 2002 [grades 3-5].

The search continues! Have you used books that should be added to the Literature Connections list? Please e-mail suggestions to MSawyer510@aol.com. I am eager to talk to more teachers and librarians to exchange book ideas. Please call me at 617-325-8193 to arrange for a meeting.

Look below for a notice of a workshop on "Using Children's Literature to Enhance the *Open Circle Curriculum*," coming this March.

Free after school workshop on March 3: Using children's literature to enhance the Open Circle Curriculum

Please join Peg Sawyer on Monday, March 3, 2003, at 3:45 p.m. at the Solarium at the Stone Center, Wellesley College, for a two-hour workshop focusing on how children's literature can be used to enrich and extend Open Circle lessons. In addition to viewing a collection of children's books with strong thematic ties to the *Open Circle Curriculum*, you will receive a list of the books and ideas for book-related activities that support Open Circle concepts.

Space is limited, so if you would like to attend, RSVP to Lisa Sankowski at 781-283-2861 before February 24, 2003. We hope to see you there!

Problem Solving on Wheels

Here's an innovative idea from Andrea Chick, second-grade teacher at the Happy Hollow School in Wayland, MA.

Andrea has developed the idea of an "Open Circle Cart," a collection of select multi-grade resource materials to enhance carryover of social competency and diversity skills beyond the classroom. Andrea has received a grant of \$650 from her school's PTO to create the cart, and it will include books, posters, educational games, activities, videos, audio tapes and computer software. This collection will be housed in a mobile cart so that it can be shared by all classrooms in the school.

If you would like to learn more about the cart, please email Andrea at andrea_chick@wayland.k12.ma.us.



Open Circle named a "CASEL Select Program"

Open Circle has recently been chosen by the Collaborative for Academic, Social & Emotional Learning (CASEL) as a "CASEL Select Program," one of only 22 in the country. CASEL conducted a comprehensive evaluation of hundreds of school-based programs that promote children's social and emotional development. CASEL writes, "The purpose of the review [titled *Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs*] is to provide educators, program developers, scientists, policy makers, and the general public with a description of the key components of quality SEL programs and a summary of the degree to which available programs incorporate these components." This recognition helps us demonstrate that we've made the cut as an "evidence-based" program. To learn more, visit CASEL's website at www.casel.org.

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