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NEWSLINE

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based at The Stone Center, Wellesley Centers for Women, with support from Roche Bros. Supermarkets, Inc.

Pat & Barbara Roche extend their gift to Open Circle

By Pamela Seigle
Executive Director
Open Circle

On a recent visit to the Edison Charter School for Applied Technologies in Buffalo, NY, I had the pleasure of visiting several classrooms using Open Circle for the first time. Students in Dimitria Naskos' fifth-grade class wrote me letters about their experience in Open Circle and posed questions about how Open Circle came to be. One fifth-grader wrote, "How did you think of the idea for Open Circle? I think it's a brilliant idea." This student's question prompted me to consider the collective "brilliance" and encouragement that has informed the ongoing development of Open Circle and made our work possible. I'm so grateful to the talented Open Circle staff who continue to pursue the best ways to support teachers and schools as they implement Open Circle. Our Advisory Board members give us gifts of their experience and expertise to broaden our perspective. Teachers, principals, support staff and parents constantly expand our thinking and understanding about this work. Our colleagues in the field of social and emotional learning are generous in sharing their research and new understandings. And our funders share their resources with us generously.

Patrick and Barbara Roche, and their family business, Roche Bros. Supermarkets, Inc., have been shining examples of this inspiration and generosity. My relationship with



Patrick Roche, Pamela Seigle, Rick Roche and Barbara Roche.

Roche Bros. Supermarkets and the Roche family began in 1987 and since that time, I have been inspired by the example of the Golden Rule (their corporate mission) in their lives and in the culture of their company. Their ongoing financial support of Open Circle has made it possible for us to continue to evolve in a way that is responsive to the needs of the schools we serve. We are deeply grateful to Pat and Barbara who have pledged to extend their financial gift to us—originally \$1 million paid over five years—to \$2 million paid over ten years.

At our fall Open Circle Advisory Board meeting, we expressed our appreciation for their generosity in song.

A Song in Honor of Pat & Barbara Roche

to the tune of "My Favorite Things"

*Family and children and Roche Bros. markets,
Colleges, high schools,
The City of Boston,
Humanity, kindness, giving Open Circle its wings,
These are a few of their favorite things.
Observing the golden rule, Roche Bros.' Mission.
Living life quietly, keeping the vision.
Teaching good values
By actions, not words.
We wish Pat and Barbara could rule the world!*

*We can't tell you
All the good deeds
They are involved in.
There's nobody like them.
Their kindness just soars.
They keep giving more and more!*



From the Executive Director

Teachers' awesome power for good

By Pamela Seigle

Executive Director
Open Circle

When I speak about Open Circle, I often start by talking about my passionately high regard for the role of teachers in our society and the enormous impact they have on both the intellectual and psychological growth of students. When I begin a talk in this way, I feel grounded, because my words come from a deep belief. Recently I heard a gifted teacher say, “. . . but I’m only a teacher.” I found it painful to hear, but I know it’s not an unfamiliar refrain.

Being asked to address education students as part of the graduation ceremony at Northeastern University last spring, Jean Krasnow, a faculty member in education at Northeastern and a member of our Open Circle Advisory Board, spoke to the students about the awesome power of the teacher. Jean’s words need to be appreciated not only by teachers entering the profession, but by all of us.

Open Circle Newsline is published by the Open Circle 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, parents and others in the school community.

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

For information about the *Open Circle Curriculum* or training for teachers, administrators, specialists, other school staff and parents, visit www.open-circle.org or call (781) 283-3277.

Open Circle Newsline
The Stone Center, Wellesley College
106 Central Street
Wellesley, MA 02481-8203
(781) 283-2861—voice
(781) 283-3717—fax
lsankows@wellesley.edu
www.open-circle.org

Lisa Sankowski, Editor

Teachers have the power to create the social environment of their classrooms.
—Jean Krasnow

In her speech, Jean began,

I would like to talk to you about the power—the awesome power—that you will have as a teacher. Power is not a word that is often associated with teaching. Teachers don’t often see themselves as powerful. When we think of teachers, we are more likely to think of caring, nurturing, sometimes selfless individuals, and when we think of powerful people, we think of individuals with sweeping authority, great resources—decision makers in politics or the media, or in private industry.

But today, instead of applying our “standard definitions,” I would like you to think with me about teachers and their power—your power—because teachers have awesome power.

Teachers have the power to create the social environment of their classrooms. Through their actions they establish the roles and expectations in a classroom, a tone of respect or intense control; the dress and the speech, the fundamental rules governing conversations that are acceptable. You have all been in classrooms that are hospitable, welcoming and open to new ideas. You have also been in classrooms that lack rules, and others that are bounded by rules—rules that create trust and the possibility for learning.

Teachers establish expectations for relationships among students; they decide how much time is devoted to learning relational skills, and how much time is taken to stop and talk about how people are treating each other in the class. Teachers define who is in and who is out—who are the winners, who are the losers in a classroom, and whether the environment is highly charged with competition or feels more inclusive and collaborative.

If a student can trust the classroom environment, he or she can become a learner. The newest data analysis on scores on standardized tests indicates a high correlation between attending school and passing standardized tests—not surprising—but often what gets a student into the classroom at all is the nature of the relationships with the teacher, and with the other students in the classroom.

People of any age will reject learning from an individual they dislike; they will also reject learning from an individual who dislikes them. What children and young adults see about themselves in your face—“the social mirroring effect”—plays a huge role in their motivation and achievement. It is very powerful stuff.

The power to create the social environment in the classroom isn’t the only power of the teacher, but it is the foundation on which everything else depends.

Open Circle’s power as a vehicle for creating a positive social environment is dependent on the teacher using his or her power to model caring, compassion and empathy and to share power with students, trusting in their ability to participate and take responsibility in creating a learning community and in being conscious of their power as models.

Jean ends her remarks by saying that when the challenges seem overwhelming, “. . . go for a run, visit a friend, cook a great meal, or go work out at the gym and then, refreshed, with new perspective, start again—building relationships and using your power for good.”

In his book, *The Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer writes, “We cannot know the great things of the universe until we know ourselves to be great things.”

The two of us

By Nancy Carey & Linda Chelman
*Teachers at the Jefferson School
 Franklin, MA*

Our story comes from the two of us—Nancy Carey and Linda Chelman — because we have been one voice throughout a journey that began eight years ago when we left the Wellesley College Club as two newly trained, enthusiastic Open Circle teachers. Our passion for, commitment to and belief in Open Circle has led us to become Open Circle Trainers ourselves for the Franklin Public Schools.

Jane Hyman, Principal of the Jefferson School in Franklin, MA, had a vision for Open Circle that included us. She urged us to become consultants for newly trained teachers in our building, which was the next step on our journey. When Jane witnessed our “take charge” approach, she then suggested we apply to become actual Open Circle trainers in a new Open Circle pilot initiative known as the “train-the-trainer” program. Our former Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Richard Warren, considered this a significant step for the Open Circle Program in Franklin. This past spring, having completed a three-year training program, we “graduated” as Open Circle trainers.

As we reflect on the past three years, our relationship with each other has been the key to our success. After each training day, we would share all our thoughts and feelings on the ride home. We debriefed, evaluated and reworked each piece for the



Linda Chelman and Nancy Carey

next session. This entailed hours of working together, which always resulted in a better presentation. We did not always agree, but appreciated each other’s perspective. Words like honesty, trust, humor, perseverance and acceptance define our friendship. How appropriate that we share a commitment to Open Circle, which embodies these guiding principles. Often our trainer colleagues at Wellesley commented on our ability to support each other in a nurturing way. It is more than support. We expect each other to reach and go beyond what is easy or natural. In responding to this expectation, we are there to challenge, persuade, encourage and guide each other.

Our new Superintendent, Dr. David Crisafulli, has pledged his support for Open Circle in Franklin. Nancy Sprague,

workers, bus drivers and custodians. These components are crucial to a whole school initiative, which means all students, teachers, support personnel and parents will understand and use the vocabulary, strategies and problem-solving steps put forth in Open Circle.

We are classroom teachers; we know Open Circle skills are not mastered in two twenty-minute sessions each week. As trainers, we have the unique opportunity to interact with many of the adults who influence our students throughout their day. Working together, we can strengthen the carryover of skills introduced in Open Circle. The vocabulary and strategies must be consistent in order to help students create and live in a caring, cooperative community. The expectations are enormous; however, the outcome is immeasurable.

Curriculum Director for the Franklin Public Schools, acts as the Open Circle liaison, overseeing administrative details within the district. To date, ninety percent of all elementary teachers as well as the Solutions Staff (our before and after school program) have been trained. Our goal is to offer workshops for parents, instructional support personnel, specialists, cafeteria

“No Name-Calling Week”—March 1-5, 2004

Over 30 education, mental health, youth advocacy and social justice organizations have joined forces to address the problem of name-calling and verbal bullying in U.S. schools. During the week of March 1-5, 2004, schools across the nation will take part in a week of educational activities aimed at stopping name-calling and creating safer and more affirming schools for all students.

For more information about how to observe the week in your Open Circle meetings, visit the Teachers section of our web site at www.open-circle.org.

Lydia, oh Lydia, have you met Lydia?

By now you have probably seen the name “Lydia Kirchthurn” listed as the contact person on most Open Circle registration materials, letters, post cards, in Newsline, and on our web site. We decided that the time has come to tell you more about the important person behind the hard-to-pronounce name.

Newsline: What is your name, job title, and will you please share one thing about yourself both professional and personal?

Lydia: My name is Lydia Kirchthurn. I am Open Circle’s Training Coordinator and Program Administrator. I am a former computer teacher, and I am passionate about technology and antique jewelry.

What does your position entail?

If you think of the Open Circle Program as a school, I am the registrar, accounts receivable clerk, computer help desk, and student/faculty support services all rolled into one. I am the point person for all inquiries, especially questions concerning registration, billing, logistics and technology. My goal is to aid Open Circle school teachers and principals and Open Circle staff members in every possible way.

What do you like best about your position?

I love the spontaneity and variety of my work. On any normal workday, I can be under a desk installing computer hardware, singing an experimental energizer with Pamela, searching the internet for peacock feathers and children’s books, designing a cake to look like a farm, or—would you believe—finding an array of orange foods for a special “orange-themed” training event.

I also love people. Every day I get to talk to wonderful Open Circle teachers, principals and other school staff. I also have a wonderful boss, amazing colleagues and my beloved work-study students. Don’t get me wrong—my position can be stressful and challenging—but I have a lot of fun. I can say with all honesty that I laugh at work every day, usually four or five times a day. The Open Circle office is a nice place to be.

Why do you feel Open Circle’s work is important?

This may sound like a cliché, but I honestly believe that our program changes people’s lives and in turn makes the world a better place. In my opinion, people have simple needs. We need to feel like valued, productive members of a group.

as equals, and taught me that all people are valued individuals—a huge lesson for a 7-year-old and one that was reinforced by my parents, especially my Mom. Being the daughter of English professors, I was exposed to many students from different cultures, economic backgrounds and experiences. My parents always opened



Lydia Kirchthurn and her son, Dylan.

This group can be a family, a group of friends, close-knit colleagues, or in the case of Open Circle, a classroom where maybe one teacher makes one child feel listened to and special. That teacher may inspire that child to dream new dreams, bigger dreams, or perhaps have the realization that he or she is worthy of having dreams at all. That’s powerful stuff.

What motivates you to do this work?

I was raised in a family of educators who instilled in me a strong sense of social responsibility. My Nana, a former French teacher, spent her retirement years volunteering at a state school for mentally challenged adults. When I was a little girl, I used to go with her, and I’ll never forget the first time I watched her interact with them. From my perspective as a child, they acted funny, and said weird things, and I was amazed that she played and sang with them the same way she did with me. She wasn’t afraid; she loved them all

their homes and lives to their students, especially ones far from home.

We also were very involved with the church, volunteered, raised money for charities, and even went to a protest or two. We talked about current events, politics and culture. I basically grew up influenced by strong, dedicated, independent women and men who believed that we are all responsible for each other and held accountable for ourselves.

What did you do before coming to Open Circle?

I worked for years with mentally and physically challenged adults in residential and vocational settings. We had many adventures together, never a dull moment, and lots of laughter. They were wonderful years.

My first official teaching position was as a computer teacher at a school for learning

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Lydia, oh Lydia

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disabled children and adolescents. I fell in love with my students, the technology, and the culture of the school. My forte was working on their self-esteem issues, aiding in community-building and fostering compassionate friendships. Did I mention it was a boarding school? Conflict resolution and problem-solving were constant dialogues. But I also discovered that actual classroom teaching really wasn't the right vocation for me.

I also mentored teenaged moms and worked at an educational software company before joining the Open Circle team.

How long have you been with Open Circle?

I have been on the team for four years. I plan to work for the program until I retire, or at least until I receive a 25th year Wellesley College chair.

We've learned that you are well-respected and popular with all of your colleagues. In fact we asked them to give us words to describe you, and the responses included: clever, creative, efficient, enthusiastic and humorous. We also heard gossip that you are madly in love with a younger man?

Yes! I am ferociously in love with my 13-month-old son Dylan. He is an amazing little person, and my husband Dave and I are blessed to have him. Dylan is a laid-back, happy little guy who really enjoys people and loves to laugh and smile. He radiates delight and enthusiasm in everything that he does. The pure joy he experiences by banging pot lids together really helps me keep life in perspective.

What do you love to do outside of work?

I am pretty busy these days. I work full-time, have a husband, a baby, a house, a dog, friends and family. What do I love to do for that free hour a day? Sorry, I can't tell—that hour is just for me.

One last question. How DO you pronounce your last name?

Kirchthurn is easy if you break the word down into two syllables. "Kirch" like "birch" and "thurn" like "fern." Kirch-thurn.

Going beyond the core curriculum: Meeting a broader agenda of student, teacher and school goals

By Colin Gibney

Third- and Fourth-Grade Teacher
South Shore Charter School, Hull, MA

In our school community, Open Circle is seen as more than just a social competency curriculum. It has become a forum for accomplishing a broad range of purposes. Over the past few years, I have started using the circle to fit our class's everyday needs and the broader goals that my students or I may have, whether they are related to social issues or not. Open Circle's shared vocabulary, protocol and familiar circular formation of chairs, give students (and teachers) a better chance at communicating with and understanding each other, whatever the issue. When we enter into Open Circle, the circle itself signals to students that it's a place for important conversations and decision-making. Once students become comfortable with the ground rules, thoughtful approach and tone of Open Circle, they seem more capable of applying it in other ways.

One way is the use of Open Circle as a forum for making real group decisions of all types. Each year, once everyone is familiar with the format of Open Circle, we use it to choose our class's home reading goal. Students share speaking time as they vie for what they believe to be an agreeable number of pages for the class to read at home over the course of the year. It is interesting to see how, even early in the year, students begin to recognize how individual differences (in this case reading ability) should be accounted for as the group decides what to do. Circle time has a compassionate tone, different from a simple "class meeting," which seems to engender this kind of consideration. By the year's end, I adapt the Open Circle lesson on "Reaching Consensus" and let the class decide the location for our year-end field trip. As we go through several meetings dedicated to this goal, students have the chance to practice socially valuable skills such as cooperation and compromise, which they have been learning all year. They are also making a group decision that has an authentic outcome (we do indeed take the trip the group chooses) and also some consequences (not everyone will get their way).

I have also found that Open Circle helps me accomplish goals I have for my students related to my school's educational mission and culture. At the core of our multi-age model is the expectation that younger students will learn from older students. Cooperation among students is viewed as essential to academic success. In this context, Open Circle's lessons and role-plays foster cooperation and help improve teaching and learning among students. Having multi-age classes also helps Open Circle carry over more successfully from year to year as veteran fourth-graders teach incoming third-graders how Open Circle works.

The system of student governance at our school also connects with Open Circle. One of the tenets of our mission is that students will have a voice in decision-making for the school. Because it is often the place where students first take responsibility for solving their problems by raising them to a group, Open Circle is, in effect, the front line of student government. Open Circle is the place where students, with teacher guidance, distill problems and find the appropriate forum for their redress. At our school, an issue or request can take one of two channels if it is not resolved in Open Circle. Class representatives can take the issue to a regular meeting to work out a solution. Or, an issue with wide-ranging implications may be brought up at Town Meeting. We've also had meetings that combine elements of our Town Meeting with Open Circle (often held over lunch) for students interested in addressing a specific issue, such as how to run football or soccer games in a more inclusive, "sportsmanlike" and rule-abiding way. Regardless of where an issue ends up, Open Circle plays an important role as a forum where students can begin to understand how to be active participants in their school democracy.

Sustainability: Keeping the Open Circle flame alive

By Jim Vetter
Program Director
Open Circle

The energy is often palpable as teachers new to Open Circle return to their schools, excited and invigorated from their first days of training. Many feel eager, if a bit nervous, about using Open Circle lessons and approaches. But with the many demands of the classroom and the school, will Open Circle become another “flavor of the month” initiative that soon fades? How can you help Open Circle and social and emotional learning flourish in your classroom and school over time?

Over the last three years, we have been engaged in a project, funded by The Dubarry Foundation, to explore ways to ensure that schools that invest in Open Circle are able to sustain it. Drawing on the experiences of Open Circle educators, combined with some of the best research from around the country, we are learning that once a school has chosen a research-based program with a strong curriculum and training support, a number of approaches can contribute to long-term use. Classroom teachers, administrators, student support staff, and other members of the school community all have important roles to play. Key principles include:

- pace yourself
- collaborate and integrate
- keep conversations alive
- share leadership
- orient newcomers
- reflect on your success

Pace yourself

Particularly in the early stages of using Open Circle in a classroom or school, it’s important to remember that the change involved in using a new program takes time—both for students and for school staff. When you are new to any particular curriculum or teaching approach, it may take a while to be comfortable enough to be at your creative best. Look for signs of your success accordingly.

Initial signs of success in the classroom may be that you are holding Open Circle

meetings regularly, you see students use Open Circle skills while in the circle, and you begin to hear them use Open Circle language at other times of the day. Larger shifts in student behavior and classroom and school climate are more likely to happen over a longer period of time, as more people in the school—students and staff alike—become involved and familiar with the approach and start using Open Circle lessons and strategies more consistently.

If you’re involved in designing an Open Circle plan for your school, be sure to include opportunities for staff professional development and support that extend over time, not just during the first year a staff member is becoming involved.

Collaborate and integrate

As Open Circle gets up and running smoothly in a classroom or school, it becomes increasingly important to tie social and emotional learning to other parts of the school day. Experienced Open Circle teachers often start to collaborate with one another, swapping ideas and developing cooperative projects among classrooms.

Over time, educators make deeper links between Open Circle and other areas of their curricula. For example, you might keep the problem-solving steps posted in your classroom and other areas of the school. Use the steps as a framework to explore an important problem discussed in social studies or a conflict portrayed in a piece of literature.

If you are an administrator, you can help facilitate this process by providing opportunities for collaborative planning at staff or grade level meetings.

Some schools begin to integrate key Open Circle concepts into the school mission and goals and write social and emotional learning into their school improvement plan. Bulletin boards around the school building remind everyone of Open Circle skills and concepts. As their work with social and emotional learning

expands over time, schools reach out to a wide range of staff and parents and include them in the initiative. Some schools also reach out to system-wide administrators and community partners to involve them in the effort and gain their support.

Keep conversations alive

The more often people have the opportunity to talk about their experiences with Open Circle, the more they tend to feel rejuvenated in their efforts. When chatting with colleagues at your school, include social and emotional learning as a frequent topic of conversation. Even a brief conversation in the teachers’ room or hallway can help people feel that others are interested in and support what they’re doing in Open Circle. At staff meetings, put Open Circle on the agenda regularly. For example, try using one of the team-building activities to get staff talking to one another at the beginning of the meeting.

Share leadership

Schools with the strongest use of Open Circle over time are typically ones in which there are clearly identified leaders for the effort and in which people in a variety of positions play leadership roles. An enthusiastic core of committed teachers is key to having Open Circle accepted widely throughout the school. At the same time, the support of the principal is often critical to having the work grow and last. In some schools, a guidance counselor or school psychologist may be the driving force behind spotlighting the ongoing need for social and emotional learning.

While a dynamic individual may launch the effort, others need to get involved to ensure longevity. The best situation is to have a specially designated Open Circle team that meets periodically to coordinate development of the school’s social and emotional learning goals and plan activities. A strong team would include teachers, the principal and other staff.

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Upcoming Institute helps you sustain and deepen Open Circle

The Open Circle Institute for Sustaining Social and Emotional Learning in Schools will soon accept applications from school teams for its 2004-2005 program.

Imagine gathering with colleagues and an administrator who is truly supportive of your ideas to make Open Circle a part of your school culture. Imagine working across grade levels to hear what is going well and what is challenging with Open Circle—being able to honestly express your excitement or your doubts about the program’s effectiveness, what’s happening in classrooms and what might not yet be happening on the playground. Imagine working together with specialists and paraprofessionals so that everyone is on board. Imagine time to discuss your ideal school where staff and students treat each other with respect and appreciation.

Three years ago, the Open Circle Program was awarded a grant from The DuBarry Foundation to develop and pilot a leadership training program to help teachers sustain and deepen the use of Open Circle in their schools. A teacher advisory group helped us to recognize that increasing the impact of Open Circle and making it part of the thread of a school requires the efforts of a team of teachers with a variety of roles in the school and a supportive administrator committed to social and emotional learning. Beginning last summer, we offered our first leadership institute, working with school-based teams to sustain and deepen the use of the *Open Circle Curriculum*. Teams from the Loring School in Sudbury, MA, the Memorial School in Hopedale, MA and the Hardy School in Wellesley, MA were selected to participate.

We now look forward to inviting more schools to join us in next year’s Institute, which will help school communities achieve and maintain broad and deep use of Open Circle throughout the school day and beyond. The Institute

helps schools enhance classroom and school climate—creating a positive environment for students and staff alike—and helps students more fully develop and more consistently use important social skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Over the course of the Institute, participants will:

- build relationships with team members and colleagues from other schools committed to social and emotional learning (SEL)
- learn key concepts and practical strategies to help Open Circle and SEL grow and flourish over time
- develop a common vision, goals, and plan for Open Circle in their team and school
- develop and conduct specific activities tailored to the needs and resources of their school
- reflect on their accomplishments and plan for the future

Participating school teams will take part in a two-day summer seminar followed by additional gatherings through the school year. Teams will also have access to a special Open Circle sustainability web site, receive telephone and email consultation, and benefit from an onsite consultation visit at their school.

Development of the Open Circle Institute for Sustaining Social and Emotional Learning in Schools was made possible by generous support from The DuBarry Foundation and through the creative contributions of a range of educators experienced with Open Circle.

For more information about how your school can participate in this next year’s Institute, return the form below or contact Jim Vetter at 781-283-2819 or jvetter@wellesley.edu.

Please send me an application for the 2004-2005 Open Circle Institute for Sustaining Social and Emotional Learning in Schools as soon as they become available.

Name: _____

Title: _____

School: _____

School address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Best time to reach you: _____

Comments:

Please return this form to Jim Vetter, Program Director, Open Circle Program, Stone Center, Wellesley College, 106 Central Street, Wellesley, MA 02481 or fax to 781-283-3717.



Sustainability

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Orient newcomers

If you are among only a few teachers in your school who have been trained, look for opportunities to talk about your experiences with others who are interested in becoming involved. Invite colleagues to sit in the empty chair and observe an Open Circle lesson.

Once a large number of staff members are familiar with Open Circle, it can be easy to forget that new staff members will need support in getting involved. Develop a plan for keeping track of who has been trained and provide training for new staff as time and funding allow.

Teachers experienced in facilitating Open Circle can play a key role in providing advice and encouragement to new teachers, especially in situations where the new teacher may have a class full of students who have been involved with Open Circle for years. If almost all teachers in your school have been trained, consider partnering with a teacher who hasn't yet been trained and conducting Open Circle in your colleague's class.

New administrators may also need support in becoming familiar with Open Circle. Arrange for opportunities for a

new principal to learn Open Circle concepts, sit in on Open Circle meetings, and hear from experienced staff members about the positive effect Open Circle has had at your school. Some schools also reach out to orient new system-wide staff such as the superintendent or health coordinator as well.

Reflect on your success

With the day-to-day demands of life in schools, it's often difficult to step back and reflect. Sustained use of Open Circle benefits from taking the time periodically to take stock of what you've accomplished. In addition to providing regular opportunities for students to reflect about how they and their classmates are using Open Circle skills and concepts, some teachers build in time on their own or with a colleague to think about their own goals for supporting social and emotional learning, how their students have responded, and about the ways in which they live Open Circle concepts and skills in their own lives.

An Open Circle leadership team at a school may check back several times a year to see how the school's plans are unfolding, make necessary mid-course corrections, and consider new goals. Schools can also benefit from conducting more formal evaluations, such as surveying staff members about their use of

Open Circle, assessing school and classroom climate, and keeping track of changes in students' displays of caring and their use of peaceful problem solving and conflict resolution skills.

By pacing yourself and setting reasonable expectations, reaching out to other staff and community members, working to apply social skills and build community throughout the day, having regular conversations about Open Circle, developing a leadership team, orienting newcomers, and reflecting periodically, you can keep Open Circle alive and vital. The rich, sustained social and emotional learning that results can, in the end, help ensure that your students become ethical people, contributing citizens, and successful learners.

We gratefully acknowledge research and models developed by Gene E. Hall and Shirley M. Hord and by Maurice J. Elias and Patricia Kamarinos that contribute substantially to our understanding of sustainability.

Jim Vetter can be reached at jvetter@wellesley.edu or (781) 283-2819. For additional tips and research on sustaining social and emotional learning, visit the teacher or administrator areas of the Open Circle web site at www.open-circle.org.

Free lunchtime seminar on sustainability on April 22

Educators and program developers spend millions of dollars and countless hours each year on school-based programs designed to address social and academic issues. But all too often, these programs are never fully implemented or are discontinued not long after they begin.

"Off the Shelf and Into the Classroom: Successfully Implementing and Maintaining School-Based Programs Over Time" is the topic of a free seminar on Thursday, April 22, from 12:30 p.m.-1:30 p.m. The seminar will be held at the Cheever House Library, 828 Washington Street (Route 16), Wellesley, MA. This event is part of the Wellesley Centers for Women Brown Bag Lunchtime Seminar Series. Jim Vetter, Jillian Kalen and Catrin Davies, all from Open Circle, will be the presenters.

In this lively, interactive presentation, participants will explore research and theory on what contributes to successful, sustained program implementation and will discover concrete, practical strategies developed through the Open Circle Project for Sustaining Commitment to Social and Emotional Learning, funded by The DuBarry Foundation. Come find out how to help good programs last over time.

For more information and directions, contact the Wellesley Centers for Women at 781-283-2500.

Save the Date for our Open Circle Reunion!

Please mark your calendars now for our Open Circle Reunion Conference for experienced Open Circle educators on **Tuesday, June 8, 2004**, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Wellesley College Club. We are planning a day-long series of workshops on new innovations in Open Circle and opportunities for you to meet and share your ideas and experiences with other teachers and Open Circle staff members. It will be an exciting day full of new ideas, time for reflection, and fun!

Preceding the conference, on the **evening of Monday, June 7, 2004**, we will also host a special event and hear from kids and experts about how kids are interacting socially online—how it can be positive, how it can go awry, and what parents and educators need to know and do to support children as their social and academic world expands into cyberspace.

We will send you a conference program and registration materials this spring. You can also check our web site at www.open-circle.org for details as they develop. We hope you will join us for both of these events.

Searching for keys to sustaining new initiatives in schools

By **Catrin Davies**
*Wellesley Class of 2004
 & Stone Center Morse Fellow*

In 2003-2004, I was awarded the Morse Fellowship at the Wellesley College Stone Center. As the Morse Fellow, I have been working as a research assistant for Open Circle since September, primarily analyzing the results from teachers' evaluations of this year's Open Circle training sessions. My new project in 2004 will be to examine the factors that contribute to Open Circle's sustainability in schools. We hope to find out the level to which schools continue to use the program after implementation and why they continue using the program.

So far I have examined research from sustainability studies in order to discover how others have measured sustainability of school programs. In thinking about how to measure sustainability, I have been exploring such seemingly simple questions as "What is Open Circle?" and "What is considered 'use' of Open Circle?" My next step will be to create a questionnaire aimed at identifying sustainability-friendly



Catrin Davies, Wellesley Class of 2004 and Open Circle's Morse Fellow

features of schools. I will be mailing the questionnaires to principals, teachers and staff in schools that have used the *Open Circle Curriculum*. The questionnaires will basically ask who's using the curriculum, to what extent, and what makes this all feasible. I personally don't know what to expect concerning level of Open Circle use over the years. Through research I've done and in reading about teachers' concerns in training evaluation

surveys, I expect that administrative support and limited time will be major factors. We'll have to wait until around April 2004 to see.

I hope that our findings will be applied beyond Open Circle to answer larger questions concerning the ineffectiveness of social change efforts in schools due to lack of commitment and upkeep. Previous research has found that increasing pressures on the time and resources of school staff have resulted in shifting priorities—emphasizing different issues in rapid succession of one another and allowing for limited focus on any one program. Invention, evaluation and implementation of programs promoting pro-social behavior in children prove useless without ongoing use and fail to positively affect school environment as intended. In order for programs like Open Circle to successfully enact change, factors influencing sustained use must be identified.

I look forward to sharing the results of this work with you.

Literature connects to multicultural awareness

By Peg Sawyer

Literature Consultant
Open Circle

What do Suki, Molly, Yunmi and Nadia have in common? They are all characters in stories that connect to the Open Circle skills of Recognizing Differences, Including One Another, Teasing, and Understanding Feelings. The characters also struggle with the same problem: how to acknowledge and honor their cultural heritage while still fitting in with their peers. Books such as *Nadia's Hands*, *Suki's Kimono*, *Molly's Pilgrim*, *Ugly Vegetables*, and *Halmoni and the Picnic* not only support core Open Circle lessons but also help to build multicultural awareness.

In *Nadia's Hands*, young Nadia has her hands decorated with intricate designs in preparation for her aunt's traditional Pakistani wedding. Nadia is proud to participate in the cultural traditions of her family, but she worries about being teased when she returns to school.

Ugly Vegetables tells of a little girl who wants to grow "normal" plants like everyone else in her neighborhood, not the ugly Chinese vegetables that her mother insists on planting. When the neighbors taste a soup made with all the Chinese vegetables, they want to grow *torng hau* and *sheau hwang gua* along with their peonies and petunias.

Yunmi and her grandmother are the central characters in *Halmoni and the Picnic*. Yunmi wants to help her Korean grandmother, Halmoni, adjust to life in the United States. When Halmoni is invited to chaperone a class picnic, Yunmi is afraid that her classmates will laugh at Halmoni's strange dress or refuse to eat the kimbap that Halmoni prepares for the picnic.

In *Molly's Pilgrim*, Molly, a Russian immigrant, is teased by her classmates about the way she talks and dresses. Molly wants nothing more than to be accepted by the girls in her class. Molly's situation only grows worse when she brings in the wrong kind of pilgrim doll for a class assignment. Molly's pilgrim wears the dress and scarf of a Russian peasant. Fortunately, a sensitive teacher points out how perfectly the peasant doll fits in with the theme of the Thanksgiving holiday.

Suki's Kimono tells the story of a girl who truly embraces her Japanese heritage. Suki's older sisters warn her not to wear her kimono on the first day of school. "People will think you're weird." As predicted, Suki is the target of teasing and taunting on the playground and in the classroom. But when she proudly demonstrates a dance her Japanese grandmother taught her, classmates stand and applaud.

These books are rich with opportunities for discussion of Open Circle concepts in a multicultural context. Talking about these books using Open Circle vocabulary highlights what children from all cultures and backgrounds have in common: a desire to be respected. Here are some possible discussion prompts:

- What do Yunmi's friends do to make Halmoni feel included and welcome?
- How does Suki show leadership in this story?
- What do Suki and her grandmother have in common?
- How do Suki's classmates react when she wears her kimono and gets to school?
- How do Suki's classmates compliment her after she performs her dance?
- Find a picture that shows a good example of the school listening look.
- How do you think Molly feels when Elizabeth teases her?
- What would you say to help Molly?

Sharing these books in the classroom will encourage students to tell their own stories of what happens when someone feels different and wants to be included and accepted.

The following is a list of the books mentioned in this article, plus some additional titles with similar themes.

- Ada, Alma Flor. *I Love Saturdays y domingos*. Atheneum, 2002.
- Ada, Alma Flor. *My Name is María Isabel*. Atheneum, 1993.
- Cheng, Andrea. *Grandfather Counts*. Lee and Low, 2000.
- Choi, Sook Nyul. *Halmoni and the Picnic*. Houghton Mifflin, 1993.
- Cohen, Barbara. *Molly's Pilgrim*. HarperTrophy, 1998.
- English, Karen. *Nadia's Hands*. Boyds Mills Press, 1999.
- Lin, Grace. *The Ugly Vegetables*. Charlesbridge Publishers, 1999.
- Meyers, Christopher. *Wings*. Scholastic, 2000.
- Uegaki, Chieri. *Suki's Kimono*. Kids Can Press, 2003.

Free after school workshop on March 10: Using children's literature to enhance the Open Circle Curriculum

Please join us on Wednesday, March 10, 2004, 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 Lydia Kirchthurn at 781-283-2847 before February 27, 2004. We hope to see you there!



Training workshop on March 26, 2004

**Developing Multicultural Awareness
a Workshop for experienced
Open Circle Teachers**

In this workshop, we will use Open Circle facilitation and community building skills to deepen our sensitivity to the ways in which “dimensions of difference and similarity” including race, culture, gender, socioeconomic background and sexual orientation impact social relationships within the classroom and the school community.

Using a range of experiential activities, case studies and videotapes we will: (1) explore the roles our social & cultural backgrounds play in shaping our beliefs and values; (2) heighten awareness as to how we can be more responsive to the needs of children across difference in our classrooms; (3) learn some specific strategies to help build inclusive, respectful and safe learning environments.

This workshop will be facilitated by Shoshana Simons of Open Circle and Trang Nguyen, Project Staff/Community Relations Coordinator for Viet Aid. The workshop will be on Friday, March 26, 2004, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Wellesley College Club. The cost for this workshop is \$100 and 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 Open Circle Program, The Stone Center, Wellesley College, 106 Central Street, Wellesley, MA 02481-8203. The final deadline for receipt of registration is March 12, 2004. If you have any questions, please call Lydia Kirchthurn at 781-283-2847.

Registration Form

Yes, I would like to attend the **Developing Multicultural Awareness Workshop for experienced Open Circle teachers on March 26, 2004**, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the **Wellesley College Club, Wellesley College.**

Name _____

Title _____

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 Open Circle Program, The Stone Center, Wellesley College, 106 Central Street, Wellesley, MA 02481-8203. **Final deadline for receipt of registration is March 12, 2004.**

**Open Circle offers expertise
to Great Britain**

In November, Shoshana Simons, Open Circle’s Director of Special Projects, met with The Right Honorable Graham Allen, Member of Parliament for Nottingham at the House of Commons in London to talk about the Open Circle Program. Mr. Allen is spearheading a Parliamentary initiative to have “pro-social behavior training” for primary school-aged children as a component of the United Kingdom’s national curriculum. Shoshana has been invited to join an internet-based consulting group that will be developing ideas for the implementation of this initiative throughout Great Britain.

**Stone Center announces
Empowering Children for
Life Awards**

The first awards have been made under the Stone Center’s Empowering Children for Life: Robert S. and Grace W. Stone Primary Prevention Initiatives Grant Program. This program supports doctoral and postdoctoral research that advances understanding of the role of relationships in fostering child and adolescent well-being and healthy human development. One of the proposals selected for funding is “The Relational Health Indices: A Study of Girl’s and Boy’s Relationships,” submitted by Dr. Belle Liang at Boston College. Open Circle classrooms will be part of this study. We look forward to sharing the results with you.

**Open Circle Assembly
Program under development**

School-wide assembly programs featuring Open Circle language, concepts and skills can be a fun and lively way to keep social and emotional learning alive and vital for students and staff alike. During the winter and spring, we will be developing and piloting new Open Circle assembly program activities designed to achieve these goals.

If you are interested in having an Open Circle assembly program at your school, have ideas to contribute, or would like to be considered as a pilot site, please contact Jim Vetter at 781-283-2819 or jvetter@wellesley.edu.

Celebrating Teachers and the poetry that has inspired them

Tuesday, May 4, 2004, at the Boston Public Library, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Please join us on Tuesday, May 4, 2004, from 7:00-8:30 p.m. at the Boston Public Library's Novel Restaurant, operated by Sebastians, 700 Boylston Street, Copley Square, Boston, for a public reading from the anthology *Teaching with Fire: Poetry that Sustains the Courage to Teach*. This event, which celebrates Teacher Appreciation Week, is co-sponsored by the Open Circle Program, the Northeast Courage to Teach Collaboration, Facing History and Ourselves, and the Boston Public Library Foundation.

- Inside this issue:***
- Sustaining Open Circle in your school
 - Children's literature recommendations
 - Upcoming professional development opportunities



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The Stone Center
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Open Circle: getting to the heart of learningSM

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