

Partnering with the City of Somerville

When Joe Curatone was elected mayor of Somerville last January, he found the city's youth involved with drugs, in gangs, and struggling with a rising suicide rate. In response he commissioned TE to assess the situation and then invited us to bring in our programs to help address the needs. This fall the newest TE site opened in Somerville.

"I'm confident that we will be able to have a positive effect on these problems," said TE's Somerville Program Coordinator, Andy Haydu. "I can't say just how we will frame the issues. That is for the youth organizers to decide." The strength of the TE Model is that it surfaces issues young people themselves consider important. The Model also digs down to the root causes of such concerns, at a social and individual level, answering the question, "What is going on in this community to bring about this gang/drug/suicide problem?"

Andy and Craig McClay have established TE's new location at the Somerville Community Youth Center and discussed issues facing Somerville with 77 young people from East Somerville and the Mystic Housing Development. When asked how he brings youth to these meetings, Andy said, "I go out on the streets. I find out where young people hang out and go there. I walk up to groups of them on the street and hand out TE flyers. I also make lots of phone calls." He knows from past experience at English High School that meeting four days a week with youth organizers is what keeps him as current as possible on youth needs and aspirations in the city. Natacha Montana joined the staff in October.

TE staff had follow-up discussions/interviews with 37 of these youth and, out of these meetings, selected 10 youth organizers who will work for 10-12 hours/week until June. They identified peer pressure and self esteem, especially in relationship



Youth organizers at TE's newest site in East Somerville: Sara Aranen, Natacha Montana (staff), Alisha Greene, Matthew DellaSola, Sedeline Joseph, Hector Andrade, Leticia deSouza, Israel Mendez, Ashley Styles, Omar Rivera, Marianne Bobick, Craig McClay (staff), Mark Wairi.

to drug use and suicide, as local issues that they want to address. They are also planning a youth-police dialogue. In addition to programs planned by youth organizers, TE will host a community forum to discuss the assessment of youth services in the city.

"The goal," says Stanley Pollack, "is to create a network of youth leaders. We hope to expand our program in the future. Somerville is a small enough city that we can have a real impact, lowering rates of violence and engaging the talented youth of the city as stakeholders in their community."

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Greetings from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As you can see from this edition of our newsletter, there is a lot going on at TE. Opening a new site in Somerville has been a big undertaking. We are also expanding our work with teachers as well as students in Boston schools. The Rochester site is launching its second year of citywide youth programming. We have a terrific staff, and I am glad to introduce some of them to you in the article on the back page. *All* of our staff members bring extraordinary energy, intelligence, and heart to their work. Of course, we need your support to keep going. If you can contribute any of the items on our gifts-in-kind wish list, or host a house party, or mail us a check, we would really appreciate it.

We couldn't do it without you!


Stanley Pollack

TE Techniques Building Community

When the Boston Public Schools announced that West Roxbury High would be split into four smaller schools by September 2006, many of its 1,500 students were concerned. They soon learned, however, that the process would include student input. That's where TE Consulting and Training Coordinator Sapna Padte came in, to help build trust in the process and create a way for student voices to be heard.

In September Sapna held focus groups with West Roxbury High students. First she discussed with them the decision to split the school, giving them the opportunity to express their feelings and come to grips with their sense of loss and anxiety about the unknown. "We had to start by dealing with emotions. Otherwise, they would never be able to give input into the design," says Sapna. The second part of each session was structured to elicit critiques of the five proposals under consideration for the four small schools and gather the students' ideas for improvement of the designs.

The focus groups have been very successful. After 22 sessions (in just two weeks!) Sapna has a mountain of ideas, criticisms, and suggestions from students to pass on to the design teams.

Equally important, 350 students have had a chance to deal with their concerns and become engaged in designing the future of their community. In the coming months, Sapna will continue to work with the design teams and the students and teachers of West Roxbury High as they plan the opening of their new schools.

Autumn Highlights

- At Madison Park Technical Vocational High School the new youth organizers identified for their focus this year issues of sexuality, relationships, teen pregnancy, and diversity, centered on the theme of respect. Their action strategies will involve the whole school.
- At Economics and Business Academy in Dorchester TE has designed a new student government structure and is facilitating meetings for each grade level to build relationships among peers.
- The Rochester, NY, program received a grant from the Wilson Foundation, opened a well-located site, and is hiring new staff.

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Teachers and students had fun at the Second Annual English High School Field Day, coordinated by TE.

Planning for the Future

TE has grown significantly over its 13-year life. The question is how to go to the next level. TE has many opportunities for replication, publication, and consulting and training. Now we need to develop a formal business and strategic plan to move forward. With support from the Barr Foundation, we are hiring a consulting firm to help us identify opportunities, analyze them to choose the most appropriate for TE, and create a comprehensive plan to take advantage of them and contribute to our financial stability.

Know Thy Neighbor 'hood, co-hosted by TE on July 31st, brought together over 200 South End residents, who had the opportunity to break down stereotypes, establish new relationships, and enjoy great barbecue.

Soon to be published!

Moving Beyond Icebreakers®

TE'S PRACTICAL GUIDE TO GROUP FACILITATION

This book is for anyone who runs groups, meetings, or classes, large or small, with participants of any age or demographic makeup. If you facilitate groups (teaching, organizing, leading others towards productive goals), this book is for you—that is, if you want the sessions you run to be lively, creative, interactive, and effective.

To be notified about publication, contact us: mary@teenempowerment.org

Party! Party! Party!

Want to have fun and help TE at the same time? Host a house party!

House parties are an easy and effective way to share TE's powerful message in a warm and intimate setting. Join our house party campaign by hosting a brunch, dinner, cocktail reception, or coffee hour in your home for your friends and colleagues. TE adult and youth staff will conduct a lively and interactive presentation describing our innovative programs.

The house party campaign will replace TE's Celebration of Hope and Caring as our fall fundraiser this year and is a new way to raise both funds and awareness. Help us reach the campaign's \$50,000 goal.

The more parties the better! If you'd like to host or attend an event, please contact Stephanie Berkowitz at 617-536-4266 ext. 304 or stephanie@teenempowerment.org.

Former TE Youth Take Staff Positions

We have reached a milestone. Half of the 14 members of our program staff in Boston are TE “graduates.” Most have been youth organizers (YO). Some have finished college and are full time employees, and some are part time here while they work on getting their college degrees. All of these young professionals bring their incomparable experience to our staff.

- *LaTia King*: YO at Madison Park High School '95-98, traveled with staff on consulting trips, graduated from UMass Boston in 2002, now at Madison Park full time.
- *Craig McClay*: goes way back, worked with programs using the TE Model even before TE was founded in the early '90's, now media coordinator at TE and will graduate from UMass Boston in 2005.
- *Marlon Ramdehal*: YO at English High School '97-'98, worked with TE one summer during college, graduated from Wheaton College, returned to English High School full time.
- *Frenia L. Cuff*: YO at Madison Park High School '97-'99, now at Quincy College, has worked at Dorchester and Madison Park, and is now part time at English High School.

“What a great demonstration of the success of our Model!” says executive director Stanley Pollack.

- *Demetrius Jackson*: YO '99-'01 at South End/Lower Roxbury, now in college at the New England Institute of Art, class of '05, and part time staff at SE/LR.



Marlon Ramdehal, TE staff member and former YO, told English High School students at their Field Day, “Being a Teen Empowerment youth organizer was one of the major building blocks in my life.”

- *Marquis Tucker*: YO 2000-03 at Dorchester High School, now at UMass Boston, and part time TE staff at Madison Park High School.
- *Gina San Inocencio*: YO at SE/LR '04, graduated from Boston High in '03, now part-time staff at the Economics and Business Academy at the Dorchester Education Complex.

We can expect the number of former youth organizers on the TE staff to grow. There are now four TE grads in college who have maintained a connection and work with TE during vacations. This looks like a successful trend.

Gifts-in-Kind Needed

- Office equipment, such as rolling desk chairs and computer peripherals
- Computers (PC pentium IV or Mac G4, with ethernet capability)
- Media equipment, such as TV, VCR, or DVD, in good condition
- Piano repair
- Musical instruments
- Bookcases or shelving
- Folding chairs
- Movie passes, retail gift cards – things to be used as raffle prizes

If you can give new or good quality used items, please contact Alex Ocasio, 617-5364266, ext.301 or alex@teenempowerment.org.