



The

TRANSFORMER

Supporting and Celebrating the Facilitators of AVP Workshops

AVP Goes to School

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The Tale of Three Schools

AVP has had a chance to be an experiment in three Philadelphia schools during the past couple of years. This issue of *The Transformer* focuses on the experiences and what was learned in the process.

First, you will read about The Memphis Street Story of turning around a failed school, September 2012 to 2013, starting with a Basic Workshop for all staff and administrators, followed by Advanced Workshop sessions on six Saturdays for faculty and administrators. This was the school featured in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

After the success in reducing violence at the **Memphis Street Academy** last year, the American Paradigm Charter School asked AVP-Philadelphia to train teachers and students in two of their high schools (**Tacony Academy** and **First Philadelphia**) at the beginning of the school year. Teachers completed Basic and Training for Facilitators Workshops in August, and 450 students experienced AVP from



September 9 to 12, 2014. There were 27 workshops, with 70 outside facilitators working with 40 teachers to accomplish this. Volunteers came from California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virgin Islands, Washington, Washington, DC and Northern Nigeria.

The purpose was not to “turn around the school” but rather to develop students as “ambassadors of peace,” taking into their homes and neighborhoods

their skills as agents for peaceful change. An enthusiastic plan was developed, seeking to apply the Memphis Street model: empower the teachers first. Over the summer, the teachers would experience the Basic as participants. Then, they and AVP teams, would offer 27 Basic Workshops



the schools made a remarkable “volunteers.” Teachers were called in from their vacations. Some of the teachers completed the Basic, and some of them completed the Training for Facilitators

and Training for Facilitators Workshops experienced facilitators, together in to students in the 9th through 12th grades. **It was a rocky road.** Although

commitment at the administrative level, neither the teachers nor the students were “volunteers.” Teachers were called in from their vacations. Some of the teachers completed the Basic, and some of them completed the Training for Facilitators

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Three Schools...

just days before school opened. Team building happened at the last minute or not at all. We had hoped the first-draft Basic Workshop agenda would be seasoned by each team. It was a whirlwind experience--sometimes profound, other times challenging and even chaotic, but never boring. This workshop was unlike a usual AVP workshop because the school made it part of the curriculum, so it was not a completely volunteer experience. Facilitators and students had a mixed reaction to this component of the workshop. Nonetheless, experienced facilitators came from all over. They held debriefing sessions each evening to share experiences and give ideas about what worked and didn't work.

At the end of the workshop, **participants and facilitators were asked to provide feedback** about their experience. Three hundred ninety-seven students responded. Forty-two per cent responded positively to the idea of going forward with AVP, either through further training or in an after-school club. Considering the challenges faced by all, this was a very good result. See page 11 "Facilitators' Experiences in Philadelphia High Schools." The clubs have started meeting, with AVP facilitators serving in support roles. The students are concerned about tense relations between Tacony and First Philadelphia students and among the four grade levels. After brainstorming about building community, an ice cream social is being planned, with some AVP exercises. What is heartening is the students are assuming leadership roles. AVP organizer Carolyn Schodt writes, "I find it hard to explain that AVP worked at all, and yet contained in this issue are kernels and nuggets and questions and a refocus on bringing AVP to schools. As Nadine Hoover reminds us: AVP was originally designed for youth."

This Transformer issue is one to save as a reference for your first experience in working within schools. Be sure to read "Facilitator's Experiences" on page 11.

A teacher tells her side of AVP and Memphis Street

I had some extra time to write down my thoughts. Thank goodness for two days of instruction next week!! AVP has been very beneficial in my homeroom. It not only offers the students opportunities to reflect on their behavior and resolve conflicts more positively, but it has given me an opportunity to develop close relationships with my students. Often, the need to teach as much as possible supersedes the time I wish I had to talk with my students; however, AVP has given me and the students much needed bonding time to develop positive relationships within the classroom. Because they are heard by me as well as fellow students, they are less likely to seek that attention in negative ways. Furthermore, during a time in their development when they are increasingly judgmental about outward appearances, AVP has helped the students *reach for what is good in one another* and think critically about their perceptions of others. As a result, there is less conflict as well as less resistance to my position in the classroom. In addition, my students are much more receptive to being corrected, and they are proactive when disruptions occur in the classroom. My only wish, as a middle school teacher, is that we could have an AVP workshop with my other three classes.

Teacher at Memphis Street Academy



Turning Around a Troubled Middle School: An AVP Intervention at the Memphis Street Academy

News Headline Story: May 2013

An American Paradigm Charter School in Philadelphia had been awarded the contract for the former John Paul Jones Middle School which had been closed by the School District of Philadelphia in June 2012 due to excessive student violence and abysmal reading scores. The incidence of weapons, drugs, assaults, rape and consensual sex were at a disturbing all-time high. One year later, the occurrences dropped dramatically! The same students, same parents, same neighborhood... How did it happen?

The Memphis Street Academy Story

In August 2012, the school was being painted and refurbished. A totally new staff was hired. The bars on the windows and the metal detectors were removed against the advice of the local police precinct. "Engagement coaches" replaced armed security guards. These were courageous and visionary actions for this newly-named Memphis Street Academy. Stacey Cruise, CEO of the American Paradigm School, contacted the local AVP chapter, saying: "Something more is needed. Can you bring AVP to the students?"

"Sorry, we are not prepared to work with the students, but we would like to empower the adults," answered the local AVP chapter. In short order, a call went out and 20 AVP facilitators from Pennsylvania and neighboring states volunteered to lead AVP Basic Workshops for the entire staff on September 5-7, 2012, prior to the opening of the school year.

The primary intention was to create community. Support personnel, maintenance workers, professional staff and all administrators were participants in the workshops. They were all new to the school and to each other. Thirty per cent of the teachers were first-time teachers. They faced the challenge of the school's opening the following Monday. The hallways were a job site of scaffolding and plaster dust; workers were installing new lockers; the new desks were in boxes. Twenty facilitators arrived in the cafeteria on a Wednesday morning and, after a hearty welcome and counting off by six, facilitators and school staff headed to the six available rooms. Most of the facilitators had had a chance to meet each other and brainstorm a workshop agenda the previous day or through email.

School staff came expecting in-service sessions. On the first day, the workshop evaluations were very mixed: "Do you have any handouts?" "Pick up the pace!" "I have to get my classroom ready." On the second day, the evaluations were similar though they appreciated the adjustments we made. On the third day, with the role plays, the change in atmosphere improved a great deal. In the end, the averaged rating of the workshops, on a ten-point scale, was 9.3 (an "A").

Participants left with a sense of connection--the beginning of a sense of community--with their workshop companions. A number of teachers immediately used the experiences from the workshop in their classrooms, including listening and observation skills, trust-building activities and making decisions together.

After the workshops, a number of facilitators committed to follow up with teachers and administrators during the year. A significant number of participants indicated interest in Advanced AVP Workshops and becoming facilitators. Six advanced-level AVP sessions were offered on Saturday mornings to interested teachers and administrators. Teachers came on their day off, without remuneration, after a demanding week. Attendance did drop over the course of the year. Those who attended four of the five-hour sessions received an Advanced AVP Certificate; others received a Letter of Appreciation.

How to Explain the Results

The School District of Philadelphia reported the following data on serious incidents for the last year of the John Paul Jones School, compared to the first year of Memphis Street Academy:

John Paul Jones School, September 2011-February 2012, had 138 serious incidents.

Memphis Street Academy, September 2012-February 2013, had 15 serious incidents.

The school had become a place of learning. AVP played a critical part in the intervention without ever meeting a student. The school was blessed with innovative leadership, a considerable investment in the physical plant and, most importantly, an educational philosophy which valued creating community, caring for one another and the potential of each person. A novel approach was focusing on the adults first.

Lessons Learned

This was a unique opportunity—the start-up of a new school, the school's agreement to include the whole staff and administration and the response of AVP facilitators volunteering. Some of the lessons pertained to the clash of the culture of AVP, a volunteer organization, with that of American Paradigm Charter Schools, a top-down bureaucracy. Other lessons involved learning again what we already knew.

1. Stick with what we know: workshops for adults--a resounding success.

2. The school will likely ask AVP to work with the students. In this case, AVP found a more effective route in



Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

Troubled Middle School...

working with the entire staff of the organization. Bringing AVP to students can mean that students experience dissonance on return to the classroom where different “community agreements” are used. AVP goes out the door with student graduations. Bringing AVP to an institution means all who come in the door may experience AVP practices modeled by staff, faculty, administration and students.

3. The transformation of relationships was central: including teacher/support staff, teacher/ administration, teacher/ teacher, teacher/ parents and teacher/student. We hoped a community of adults would create respectful environments for students, ones in which adults model respect of self and others, cooperation, appropriate sharing of power and creative handling of conflict.



4. Spend whatever time it takes to build community. Each workshop and subsequent session needed to focus on building community to create a safe place for sharing authentically and risking new behaviors.

5. The program developed peer relationships in an otherwise hierarchical system.

6. The teachers loved visual aids. Our posters, including anger thermometers, trees with roots and fruit and mandalas were captured on I-phone photos.

Trust the organic process. Not everyone who takes a Basic Workshop will want to continue with the Advanced and become a facilitator. We need only a small number of interested participants to keep the process going.

Closing Comment

This account is the story of turning around a dysfunctional school. The cost? Modest, when volunteers are committed and receive reimbursements for only out-of-pocket costs. Housing and food were covered mostly by area friends of AVP. The challenge for AVP is to have the capacity to respond to more than an occasional request. The Memphis Street Academy story is still being written.

Confident Carolyn Schodt, with help from Genuine John Knight, Realistic Ron Barnes, Terrific Toby Riley and Idealistic Irv Friedlander

Status Today in Memphis Street Academy (MSA)

MSA staff continued to train in AVP after we gave a Basic Workshop to the entire staff in the Fall of 2012. By the Fall of 2013, two teams of Memphis Street staff facilitators, accompanied by experienced facilitators from the local AVP community of volunteers, delivered two Basic Workshops for new MSA teachers.

The main innovation introduced to the school was a series of 90-minute workshops presented to scholars on alternate Wednesday mornings. A sample agenda was developed with the leadership of Melinda Kellogg (mkellogg@ap-schools.org). This mini-workshop model was quite well

received; the students are clamoring to have AVP every week.

Additionally, in the spirit of AVP, after-school clubs have been established. These clubs have carried out several neighborhood clean-up projects and are considering implementing a peer-mediation program.

The potential of doing more workshops between teachers and parents has not been activated. Given the presence of 12 trained facilitators on the teaching staff, we hope this will change. It is being held up because of issues relating to teacher/facilitator compensation.

Building Caring Villages

Three observations by teachers in the Memphis Street project provide useful insight into the potential of AVP in schools:

1. One Memphis Street teacher told of being in a school where two first-grade teachers took every opportunity to demonstrate their dislike of each other. They were role-modeling destructive behavior, as the Memphis Street teacher saw it, but he felt unauthorized to intervene. He concluded that the community spirit engendered in an AVP workshop would have given him a context in which to approach the feuding teachers and advise that all teachers are responsible for role-modeling a mutually supportive community.
2. Another teacher strong on academics at first expressed concern on seeing the emphasis the workshop model placed on character-building. After participating in the workshop, she stated she now could understand the importance of values in presenting a context for “facts.”
3. Most of the Memphis Street teachers saw the greatest benefit of AVP to be the bonding of the teachers. Schools focus on academic content and teaching techniques, but there is no avenue devoted to building community among school staff.

If one believes that “it takes a village to raise a child,” it follows that without attending to their internal village, schools will have difficulty raising children.

John Knight



The 2014 AVP/USA National Gathering

May 23 - 26, 2014

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

www.avpusaconference.org



THEME: The New Underground Railroad

Rerouting the Highway from School to Prison, and Welcoming Our Returning Citizens Back Home

Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow*, calls for "a new underground railroad" – a network of families, faith communities, and organizations dedicated to providing desperately needed support and love to people at risk of incarceration, families with loved ones behind bars, and people returning home from prison. AVP, born out of the civil rights movement and with our 40 years of prison-based workshop experience, is being called to "get on board" this effort.

Come discover and share how AVP can contribute: breaking barriers; creating new relationships; empowering youth and teachers; aligning with re-entry programs; enlisting youth and returning citizens on every community facilitating team.

Featured Plenary Speaker: J. Jondhi Harrell. A returning citizen of 20 years incarceration, now CEO of The Center for Returning Citizens in Philadelphia, an outspoken advocate in Decarcerate PA, a MSW student at Temple University, and an AVP facilitator. Mr. Harrell will share his remarkable experiences and vision as "conductor". Look for updates at www.AVPUSAConference.org.



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PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS:

The Pre-Conference Workshops on Thursday and Friday carry out the theme of the conference, The New Underground Railroad.

Thursday May 22. 9am to 3pm.

AVP One-Day Workshop: Restorative Justice Practices and AVP.

Location: Graterford-SCI. Bus departs at 7am, returns at 4:30pm.

Facilitated by Graterford State Correctional Institution residents who have been working with AVP and RJ for 20 years. Bus leaves Temple University 7am promptly on Thursday May 22. Out-of-town registrants encouraged to check-in after 3pm on Wednesday, May 21, to assure early departure. Security Clearance Request must be submitted by March 21; email Anne Swoyer at swoyera@yahoo.com to begin the process ASAP.

Workshop fee = \$50 plus Temple University room and board charge.

Friday May 23. 9am to 3pm.

AVP Goes to School.

Location: Temple University.

A panel of Philadelphia teachers, high school students and AVP facilitators will share their learnings from the September 9-12, 2013 beginnings of AVP.

Workshop fee = \$50 plus Temple University room and board charge.

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We are looking for a few (dozen, hundred, thousand?) good facilitators...

It's that time of year! Planning is underway for the 2014 AVP/USA Annual National Conference, and we need YOU to help make it great! Since your insights and experiences are the heart of an AVP national gathering, please consider sharing your ideas with others and facilitate a workshop or dialog at the conference.



WHAT: Create a 75- or 90-minute experiential workshop to be offered by your team of facilitators for other facilitators at the AVP/USA Annual National Conference.

WHEN: Memorial Day weekend, May 23-26, 2014

WHERE: Temple University, Philadelphia, PA

WHO: Any facilitator planning to attend the conference is invited to submit a proposal or team up with others. A good way to start is to put out a call for team members on the AVP-L email list around a subject you want to explore or recruit folks from your region to be a part of your team.

HOW: It's a good idea to make your breakout sessions interactive, like an AVP workshop, and to facilitate in teams using the AVP model. Explore your greatest challenges and triumphs in AVP. Share creative ideas and new exercises. Or consider a session that relates to the theme for this year: "The new Underground Railroad: Rerouting the highway from school to prison and welcoming returning citizens home." We are happy to work with you on developing participatory methods.

Submission Of Proposals/Ideas:

Email enovек@monmouth.edu or call 732-988-0998 to brainstorm ideas.

Or, fill out the Proposal form below and email or snail mail it to:

Eleanor Novек
121 Woodland Ave.
Neptune City, NJ 07753

DEADLINE for IDEAS: January 20, 2014
We want to list your workshop in the registration materials, which will be sent out early February to entice people to come to the AVP/USA Conference this year.



----- PROPOSAL/IDEA FORMAT -----

___ I have a specific idea for a workshop. My topic: _____

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Contact person's phone, email and snail mail address, please: _____

Team members: _____

NOTE: Please address inquiries regarding the gathering's keynote programs and committee meetings to: Carolyn Schodt, AVP Community Coordinator for Greater Philadelphia carolynschodt@lycos.com
Mailing address:
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20 East Mermaid Lane
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Lessons Learned at Tacony in Philadelphia: A Facilitator's Notes to Herself

Musical Martha (Baer)

When I saw the first email from Carolyn Schodt asking for AVP facilitators in Philadelphia, I was excited at the prospect of translating AVP into a format that would work for high school students. Indeed, it was exciting as well as more challenging than I expected.

I co-facilitated in a classroom of 22 ninth-grade students who had been together for about a month when we arrived. Laughing Liza, my co-facilitator, and I were blessed to work with two teachers who had been through AVP training themselves and were "believers."

Throughout the program there were highs and lows, lots of questioning of ourselves: what we were doing, challenges to our principles of voluntary participation, multiple revisions of plans, exhaustion and glimmers of success.

Here are some of my reflections:

Some things I learned:

- Consider start with a Gathering rather than an Agenda Preview or lots of talking.
- Start the first several Gatherings with easy sentence stems that make it hard to pass (e.g., my favorite color). Then, do a second round asking for elaboration (e.g., my favorite season and why). For the third round, use a stem that requires a little risk (e.g., I know I am angry when...).
- Let the students know that some of the Light & Liveliess (L&Ls) may seem silly at first, but they will be fun as we go along; it helped that a teacher confirmed this.
- Students responded well to the concept of escalation of anger as a thermometer.
- "Choice," that is, *choosing* between violence and non-violence, was a new but important concept for the students; don't assume they see non-violence as a viable option. Frame the "Guidelines for Transforming Power (TP)" and "I Messages" as part of a "tool kit" for changing a potentially violent situation into a non-violent one.
- We changed some things based on student suggestions: for example, we used a Gathering idea they came up with: "Where I live and what I like or don't like about it"; we did charades (modified) at their request; we went outside.
- Students resent it if they think you are talking down to them. Affirm their knowledge and experience. Ask questions, don't teach.
- Be clear in articulating to the students that practice and the ability to imagine a different future is essential to learning to do things differently. Point out that sports figures do this to succeed.

Some things I would change:

- Consider changing the process for guidelines to have small groups brainstorm on "safety," "respect," and "good listening" with a facilitator in each group. Report back and draw the guidelines from that conversation.
- Creating a "safe" environment is essential for learning; be explicit about the power of words.
- Do more with the "building blocks" of non-violence: consider having an explicit focus on a different building block each day.
- Do more with creativity: possibly getting students to write a rap or read a poem. (Ask them: "What phrases speak to you in the poem?")
- Hold "A problem I solved non-violently is..." until later in the workshop.
- Focus on how they experience anger in their bodies.
- I think it would have helped to have them do the Gathering: "What I would like to get out of the workshop is..."
- Ask with the youth to come up with their own role play scenarios.

Some things I would do again:

- Consult the *AVP Youth Manual*. It was very helpful in simplifying directions, estimating timing and reflecting ideas for some of the basic exercises.
- Divide into small groups more often. Have a facilitator work with each group.
- Present concrete examples of non-violence tools working in real life.
- Include Creative Construction: using creative materials, give out as much tape as they want.
- Tell them the first day that they will be writing an affirmation for each of their classmates at the end; it motivates them to look for the positive in others.
- Make Life Beliefs a forced choice (not continuum) exercise and have facilitators/teachers join the groups to share with each other why they came to the conclusion that they did.
- Use Hand-pushing as a way of showing how non-violence can throw off an aggressor. We used it after Transforming Power guidelines.
- Include skits with the teachers as the actors. We used them to illustrate TP (books in the park) and then had students identify the TP tools they saw. Skits worked well for aggressive, passive and assertive, too. We could have followed it up with more conversation about the advantages/disadvantages of each. They loved seeing the teachers "act out" with each other.
- Crossing the Line: the students had done it before and were able to handle serious topics (e.g., LGBT) by day 3.
- Charades: the teacher made this up. We started with charades to express verbs (shooting basketball) and then distributed a page of picture feelings which we had worked with the day before, having them act out the feelings... An introduction to role plays later that day.

 Continued on page 10

Status of AVP in two High Schools

The Philadelphia high schools Tacony and First Philadelphia are continuing to develop their AVP-like programs with regular club meetings. In December, First Philadelphia, offered its first advanced. 28 students attended, 14 in each group, and one of their teachers volunteered for three days to facilitate. Two students voluntarily withdrew.

Each school has assigned a teacher and a meeting time for the clubs. Tacony staff has committed to meet with our volunteers once each month with an eye to preparing for the AVPUSA annual meeting in May. Approximately, thirty teachers in these schools have completed Training for Facilitators in these schools, we are hoping to mobilize that community.



Continued from page 9

Lessons Learned...

- Just the Facts: the teacher made up a story about a woman being followed by two men, with a twist at the end that one of the men was giving back some papers she had dropped; students were quizzed on the "facts" of the story with one question about how the woman was feeling at the end. A contrast was drawn between listening in class and listening for feelings. Students received this well.

Clearly, the talents of the teachers and their familiarity with their students made a huge contribution. I continue to appreciate their remarkable dedication to their students.

Musical Martha is a facilitator at the Maryland Correctional Institute-Jessup (MCI-J) and has volunteered with several community-based AVP initiatives with youth.

"Violent"

The words that come to my mind when I think of "violent" are destruction, blood shed, broken family, unhappiness. All that comes together and creates sorrow, mourning, grief, hatred for each other and guilt for not being there to help; but the community keeps silent while mothers cry and crunch down like a baby and fathers are feeling less of a man for not being there when they were supposed to be.

Yet, we still keep silent and watch each other die quietly in the storm.

As I sit and listen to the elders near at hand, this is what they have to say:

"Back in the day, we as a neighborhood helped raise each other's children," but now we have mothers who are not ready to be mothers and fathers who are not ready to be fathers, raising their children with no help because of fear--you can't trust anyone nowadays--there are bad people out there.

Being brought up in a world with no rules, no respect and no boundaries could create violence in the world I see.

I realize that life is too short; every giving day is a blessing.

The world is not violent; it is we, the people, who have become violent. I ask myself: how can we as a community, a school, a neighborhood and as kids of the future bring back the peace, happiness and love that the world once had.

Although some have given up on us, others still believe in us.

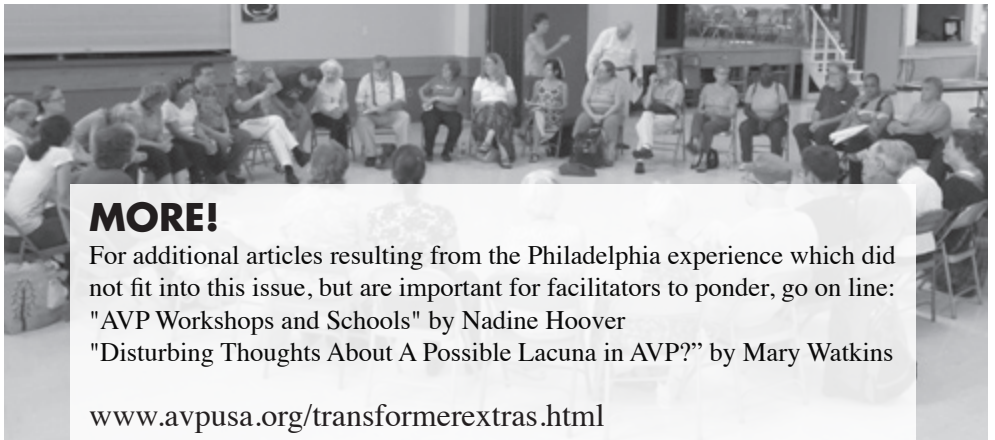
We are being watched even when we don't think we are; they are waiting to see what we will, can and should do.

It starts with lending a helping hand, fixing a conflict without getting physical, being friendly, getting an education and being ourselves.

This is our world, our generation, our life, our future! It starts with us; let's stand up for what we believe in, and let's make a difference.

Eccentric Eve

11th Grade, Tacony High School



MORE!

For additional articles resulting from the Philadelphia experience which did not fit into this issue, but are important for facilitators to ponder, go on line: "AVP Workshops and Schools" by Nadine Hoover "Disturbing Thoughts About A Possible Lacuna in AVP?" by Mary Watkins

www.avpusa.org/transformerextras.html

Facilitators' Experiences in Philadelphia High Schools

Following the Basic Workshops in Philadelphia high schools, Genuine John Knight collected answers written by the facilitators to 10 open-ended questions using MonkeySurvey.com

Here's the gist of the responses received:

- **Following the AVP process is absolutely necessary.** When we strayed from the fundamentals, we felt the pinch.
- **Make participation voluntary.**
- **Keep the workshop size manageable** i.e., less than 20 participants. Students in a 26 person workshop complained about boring gatherings. We adjusted by splitting into two groups for gatherings. The smaller gatherings did not last long enough to become boring. However, the workshop lost some of its cohesiveness.
- **Maximize diversity among participants.** We grouped by home room rather than random selection. Tensions already present in classroom dynamics were imported to the workshops wholesale.
- **Preparation of participants is vital.** Many facilitators commented that the students were expecting to be in class and were surprised by the workshops. Facilitators were not prepared to explain AVP in appropriate detail to participants who had never heard of AVP.
- **Teamwork is the heart of AVP.** We assumed pick-up teams of experienced facilitators with a prototype agenda would suffice. Many of the teams met for the first time on Sunday for workshops starting on Monday. Better preparation could be achieved by forming teams having longer time for planning.
- **Consider authority issues on workshop teams.** We put teachers through the Basic and Training for Facilitators Workshops. Many teachers were gung-ho for AVP. These teachers were an asset to the program. Other teachers found the AVP-style facilitation to be incongruent with teaching. *Teacher buy-in is essential!*
- **Be clear with the administration that the AVP process will be protected.** We did not allow observers, but we were open to participants as equal members who accept our confidentiality guidelines and planned to report their experience later.
- **L&Ls saved the day.** Expect to do many.
- **When doing adjective names, a list of potential adjective names is useful** for keeping the focus on practicable aspirational attributes.
- **Gathering and concentric circle questions set the workshop's safe atmosphere.** Some that worked for us:
 - How did you get to school today?
 - What time did you go to bed last night?
 - What did you do in the hour before bed?
 - If I could invite three people to dinner, who would they be and why?
 - I know I am getting angry when ...
 - Something you don't know about me ...
- **Deeper questions improved engagement.**
- **Adjust your presentation to feedback from the students.** Ask for evaluations at the end of every session, and modify future sessions to conspicuously incorporate the participants' feedback.
- **Be open to the cultural background of participants.**
- **Be aware of the comfort and acoustics issues in the working space.** Several of our workshops were in overheated rooms with poor acoustics. Check the spaces in advance and plan alternatives. We had to move to the cafeteria, spending some time in hallways and on the playground.
- **Schedule down and connect time for facilitators.** Expect some facilitator negativity and plan for it.
- **Insure lines of communication for facilitators.** Most of our facilitators stayed in the same motel. We had debriefing meetings for two hours each evening. We had one large meeting. Perhaps a number of smaller meetings would have worked better.
- **Snacks for the students during the workshop** were helpful. In our case, teachers and facilitators provided the snacks.
- **We saw many potential facilitators in the student body.**
- **Take care to ensure there are only positive comments on affirmation posters.** For example, one comment was: "Now I know where you live." Also consider whether to require all affirmations to be signed.
- **Students responded when asked to reflect on their experiences.**
- **Crossover the line exercise, presented early in the workshop, is an ice breaker.**
- **Boredom, in itself, has value as a topic for processing.**
- **"I messages" and role plays were useful, but** be sure to discuss the application of these. For example, students commented that using "I messages" with their parents during an argument might be risky.
- **Self-disclosure, on appropriate topics,** helped people open up.
- **Bullying is a difficult but important topic to present.**
- **One fun exercise involved toilet paper.** A facilitator passes a roll around the circle, asking each participant to take as many sheets as they like. The gathering question was: tell us one unique thing about yourself for each sheet.

Conclusion: Returning to high school was a shocking experience. Working in some schools feels like working in a coercive environment that we as adults do not experience normally. One purpose of secondary school is to funnel adolescent energy into socially useful endeavors. By its nature, this can be coercive. We are in a position to reduce the coerciveness of schools. *In 1991, Genuine John began his retirement by spending several years as an AVP facilitator in Jessup MD. Since then, he has participated in occasional workshops. John has been devoted to the Philadelphia project.*



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