The Youth Violence Project

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY & SUPPORTING LITERATURE
Addressing need, areas of focus, methodology and curriculum design

INTRODUCTION

EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

While a graduate student in the School of Education at Harvard University, Project Director June Mack was trained in experiential pedagogy, specifically constructivist educational theory, which suggests that students should become physically and emotionally involved in their work, in addition to being mentally engaged, for long-lasting learning and personal change to take place. "The object enters into dialog with the learner only after being transformed by him or her. In fact, it is the set of significant units organized by the learner and the relationships that he or she constructs between them that constitutes the cognitive object that, in turn, constitutes knowledge." (A. Henriques, "Experiments in Teaching," from E. Duckworth, J. Easley, D. Hawkins and A. Henriques (1990) Science Education: A Minds-On Approach to the Elementary Years. Erlbaum)

Film is very useful as an experiential/constructivist pedagogy because of its ability to draw persons inside the film world, affording emotional, mental, and vicarious social engagement.

AN INNER-ACTIVE APPROACH

To extend this concept in the context of youth violence education, we propose that the experience must be an internal one, that self-reflection and identification must precede a person's decision to change his/her life. Once this step is taken, the odds of long-term rehabilitation are greatly enhanced by external support and encouragement.

There is no guarantee that this "inner work" will result in a changed life, but there seems to be no doubt that self-examination followed by self-determination are the only steps that may succeed in breaking patterns of violence in young people.

THESE CONCEPTS APPLIED TO "THE YOUTH VIOLENCE PROJECT"

It is important that participants in these workshops be encouraged to place themselves in the stories of the characters that are presented in the films. Workshop Leaders and Facilitators should create an environment conducive to allowing participants to:

See themselves in another person's story
Identify their own stories
Re-write their personal stories
NEED


JUSTIFICATION FOR CHOSEN AREAS OF FOCUS: COMMON THEMES

Since absolute realism was essential to our creating an authentic subjective experience for viewers, we began our project by interviewing over 50 persons involved in youth violence. We then studied these interviews to isolate basic themes around which to create composite characters and storylines. We distilled the issues into 3 major areas of focus: 1.) violence begets violence, 2.) followers and leaders, 3.) boredom and addiction. These 3 themes provide the unit topics for the curriculum used in our workshops. Current youth violence literature supports our themes as major causes of and contexts for youth violence.


METHODOLOGY: WORKSHOP CONSTITUENCY AS PEDAGOGICAL TOOL

The constituency of the participants on the 2nd day of our 2-day workshops will represent all related areas of the problem: at-risk youth, parents, teachers, psychologists, law enforcement and government officials, youth and family social workers. This manipulation of the "classroom" constituency effectively creates a life-teaching environment as all of the many persons involved in youth violence become teachers and learners together.

An article published in the March, 2006, edition of *The Journal of Aggression and Violent Behavior* compiles existing research on child sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect. The article suggests that "multiple factors within the child’s social ecology relate


**CURRICULUM DESIGN: TEACHING MODELS**

We are offering 2 teaching models to communities that we visit. One is a model for a novel educational approach to youth violence (subjective-objective-internalization processing). Another is a model for a community project utilizing local community personnel and resources.


The concept of an arts-related community project has long been a successful exercise in communication among diverse populations. (Diamond, David (2007). *Theatre For Living: The Art and Science of Community-Based Dialogue*, Victoria, B.C., Canada: Trafford Publishing) This type of exercise has direct application to youth violence education as a vehicle for self-expression that can lead to increased self-esteem and tension release through the experience of "being heard". Supportive literature includes: