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(Subject to further revisions)

**A Report on the Leadership and Democracy Education Program
At Roberto Clemente Middle School**

And the Selected National Issues Forums to Facilitate that Practice

Held on October 30, 2002

February 11, 2003

March 20, 2003

By

Steering Committee of
The National Capital Region Public Issues Forums

With

Roberto Clemente Middle School

And

The Center for Community Leadership Development and Public Policy
at Montgomery College

By

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Introduction

The Leadership and Democracy Education Program of the Center is intended to cultivate grass roots leadership skills of youth in Montgomery County, Maryland and the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan region. This year's forums are a continuation of the work begun in the 2001-2002 academic year between the Center and Roberto Clemente Middle School (RCMS). In the previous academic year, the Center and the RCMS staff and administration worked with approximately 55 select students. The issues forums for the 2001-02 academic year were *Public Schools: Are They Making the Grade?* and *Racial and Ethnic Tensions: What Should We Do?* The students are also the national student participants in the annual *A Public Voice* taping held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. *A Public Voice* at spotlighted the national issues forum: *Racial and Ethnic Tensions: What Should We Do?* The forum practice and *A Public Voice* experiences are so well received by the RCMS parents, the PTA, the school faculty, the students, and the school and MCPS administrators that there is unanimous support to continue and expand the practice at RCMS.

At the beginning of the academic year, the school decided to take an ambitious course and teach the entire school deliberation as a skill and tool for leadership. The plan is to first teach the eighth grade students, next the seventh grade students, and finally the sixth grade students.

Ultimately, the Center's goal for this program is to get RCMS to the point of self-sufficiency where the teachers, administrators and students can teach new students and teachers the skills of deliberation and for this to become a practice in their school and communities. The program expectations include these students moving on to high school, many of them carrying deliberative dialogue to their new environments.

Preparation for Forums

School faculty and administrators chose *Violent Kids: Can We Change the Trend?* for their first two issues forums for the seventh and eighth grade students. The school felt this was a relevant issue to their school and the communities they serve. Before each forum, orientations were held at the school and in the community to prepare moderators and recorders for the forum. Issues books

and moderator's guides were distributed to the moderators and recorders at the meetings. There was some anxiety among the new moderators and many felt they needed to refresh their newly acquired skills, as well as, review the issue book and moderator's guide. A pre-forum orientation was conducted at RCMS with select students to review the recorder's role and basic points of effective recording. The student moderator/recorders were given issue maps to help them prepare for the forums. One of the RCMS teachers reviewed the issue book and pulled from it vocabulary that he thought might be challenging to the students. Then he created a list of vocabulary words with definitions for distribution to and review with the students prior to the forum.

The week prior to the first forum, the RCMS principal, the Center director and associate director and two students videotaped an introduction to the forum along with an explanation of the ground rules for deliberation. This tape was aired on the school's closed circuit network before each of the first two forums. The final tape also included the starter video and the next step reflections, which were recorded the day after each forum.

In preparation for *A Public Voice*, a third forum was held on March 20th, 2003. The 2003 focus of *A Public Voice* is *Terrorism: What Should We Do Now?* This forum was held in the evening and included students from all grade levels, parents and school faculty.

Framework for Deliberation

The first forum, for 275 eighth graders, was held on October 30, 2002. It was a half-day for the school and the forum was held in the morning from 8:00 AM-Noon. The Center drew upon its National Capitol Region Public Issues Forum Steering Committee and participants from its first Public Policy Institute (PPI) seminar *Communities Finding Common Ground for Action* for moderators and recorders for this forum. Thirty-one RCMS students were chosen to record for the ten groups that were deliberating. Included in the recorder cadre were six RCMS students who participated in the previous year's forums at Clemente.

Overview of the October 30th 2002 and February 11th, 2003 Forums

Overall, school administrators, faculty and the Center's moderators/recorders deemed these forums successes. Thirteen of the moderators were novices in moderating. In spite of their inexperience, all quickly grasped the concept of recording and performed well. The ten classroom groups presented diverse environments for conducting the forums. Two classes were comprised of

“gifted and talented “ students. Students with special needs were integrated into several other classes allowing them to participate in the experience. These were challenging experiences for most of the moderators since only one had previous experience teaching or working with middle school students.

In the debriefing sessions following the forums, the adult moderators were complimentary towards the RCMS students on their capacity to quickly learn the deliberative process and their ability to articulate their thoughts so clearly and maturely. Teachers new to the forum experience expressed approval with the process of deliberation and how it encouraged students to think and express their thoughts.

Attending that day were several observers from the Montgomery College, and the Montgomery County Board of Education including, one area superintendent and one member of the Board of Education (See Appendix A).

Working Through The Approaches: Overview of the October 30th 2002 and February 11th, 2003 Forums

Eighth Grade Results

Personal Stake

- Listen to violent music
- Warning labels protect kids from bad games
- Parents direct if kids are violent
- Games not realistic
- Music, games, TV, etc. influence violence in children
- People should know difference between right & wrong
- Parents are responsible
- Knows right from Wrong
- Treated unfair because of age (child)
- Know what they want to do, is there own choice, not music
- Makes people scared, but more aware of surroundings

- Creates images of a scary world
- Makes people feel bad
- Minds their own business (fights) because they are stupid
- Doesn't think fights are important
- Doesn't think it's fair that people should have to be afraid to come to school because of fights
- People picking on people feed in to violence
- Feels bad about jumps but doesn't really mind
- Makes out burst later
- Depends on how certain situation turns out, maybe people will learn from mistake
- Disrespect and how certain reaction turn violent
- Thinks communities should work harder on stopping problem before it starts
- Can't involve kids in community events
- Makes harder for people to live, restriction always thrown on people
- Takes some violence out, not all
- Taking something away makes it wanted more
- Taking it away doesn't do anything; they'll waken it anyway
- Some can be taken away because it influences actions
- Little kids should be banned from it because they believe it more
- Violence doesn't make a big influence on people
- We should think about who's the real-life criminal
- Don't expose children to toy gun/violent objects
- Parents make the biggest factor on the kids' actions to violent things
- Children are influenced by older siblings
- If you're not exposed to the truth, you won't feel the full affect and you take it less than it really is
- There should be limits by selling violent products, but they should be still exposed to the truth
- Gangs fight
- Drug-dealings-mix-ups
- Shootings-disruptive
- Use of alcohol

- Peer-pressure
- Bullying + teasing
- Words used
- Spreading of rumors
- Self-destruction
- Common sense prevents violence
- How you can handle violence
- Follow good role models
- Don't want to talk about it
- Common sense
- Parent control
- Difference between real life and fantasy
- Who's responsible for buying
- Keep open mind
- Cannot eliminate all violence
- What actions will be taken???
- People get hurt
- Like exciting video/games/movies-fake
- Real violence is worse (scary)
- Don't like to see violent acts
- Can get worse if it doesn't change
- Parents should talk to kids about violence
- Would not want someone you know to get hurt
- Sad to see innocent people get hurt
- Experiences
- Gang in neighborhood –feel threatened
- Parents-more aware of kids
- Sibling fights (kid wanted to fight brother, mom got involved and got hit)
- Bro has temper, takes meds-ADHD bothers family members, sister worried that she'll become violent
- Sniper attacks
- Bros friends got separated on Hallo. Met collage kids got beat up-intensive care

- Scared-disruptive
- Starts w/rumors
- People feel unsafe
- It spreads
- Verbal abuse
- Threatens
- Cause nightmares
- Influences from home
- Instigators
- Racist/sexist remarks
- Mad/sad
- Safety and resources for youth
- Choice of performing a violent act is their own
- Youth should be charged
- When involved in violence should be treated
- Youth should be monitored
- Youth should be charged as adults
- Having weapons are crimes
- Youth should be charged with all weapons
- All people should be held to any actions
- Toys are used for playing, not harmful (such as water guns)
- What things do parents teach children about right and wrong
- Not lie
- Take responsibilities for actions
- Not steal
- Respect others
- Don't use bad words
- "Learn more about it, violence in the neighborhood"
- "Friends who are violent"
- "Sister's friends in the house that are violent"
- "Family members violent"
- "Flare ups over minor stuff"

- “Cousin goes off on something small”
- “A look”
- “Family members in jail, makes mad”
- “Survival”
- “Feelings get hurt”
- “Cousin get shot”
- “Brother’s friends were violent, it affected him”
- “Neighbor was involved in criminal violence”
- “Dad abused dog”
- “Domestic violence”
- “Seen violence Teachers/safety (Personal)
- Not concerned until a problem starts
- Could be anyone (Someday)
- Consequences (Car accidents etc...)
- Influence to do violence
- Relatives
- Patterns continue through family, then they do it”
-

Individual Reflections

- Violence in the media effects children
- Always though all 3 points were important
- Violent video games are used to make soldiers less timid in war
- More concerned about child discipline
- Community should help and give more attention in single-family homes
- Everyone has different opinions; more people don’t care and encourage violent media
- There should be more restrictions on violence
- Violent people can get help
- People are not born violent
- Surprised many people get spanked
- Option 4 has the most “thing” ideas we like we like about the forum
- We see violence when we walk home

- Other kids: punch, drugs (leads to violence), aggressive behavior, use of dogs, old students intimidate
- Adults can interfere with and cause violence
- We need a resource for children
- Support everyone
- Combination of choices not a specific solution
- Not willing to ban violent entertainment altogether
- Freedom is important
- More law enforcement officers
- Voice concerns without judgment
- More service projects
- Support groups- “rehab”
- ASC needs to be changed provide service to school
- Keep open mind
- Cannot eliminate all violence
- What actions will be taken???
- More non-violent issues on the news
- Labels on CD’s/movies/etc.-larger
- Counseling for kids should be encouraging
- Jobs should provide daycare
- Pay attention to physician warnings of abuse
- Kids should have a choice of where they want to live if you can’t live w/parents
- Kids should do chores, but not unfair chores
- Kids should have spending money and some choice over what they can buy
- Guidelines about how parents are treated if kids screw up
- Acknowledge maturity in kids
- The videogames don’t have big of an impact
- Parents should monitor what children see (especially young children)
- Parents don’t always listen or change your words
- Parents are probably trying to do the best they can
- Some parents are overprotective
- The rule “Treat elders with respect,” should be changed to “Treat everyone with respect.”

- Some would give up violent video games
- Ban some internet sites
- Would give up some TV shows
- Would give up some violent movies
- We (kids) should try to get our voices heard because someone will eventually listen
- We feel good because we now know that others feel the same way and would support our decisions
- Our entire group feels that choice 2 was the best if we had to pick (this is before combing. Ideas to make a choice)
- Definition of violence
- Different points of view-pros + cons to each decision
- Need to talk to police, parents, lawmakers, counselors and criminals
- Pledges for non-violence
- Deeper cause than what originally was
- Really need to clean up the environment
- A more deeper understanding through a personal connection
- Surprised at the students' reaction to violence in media
- Parents are strict as an act of protection
- No matter what; kids still see violence
- Violence is both glamorized and portrayed negatively

Group Reflections

- Think parents should take more responsibility
- Combined all three choices
- Does not entertainment limited (censored)
- Parents want you to be grateful
- Some people choose not to follow popular culture
- Parent get on kids nerves because they don't get any freedom then become rebellious
- Act like people they see when they were little
- If parent are strict kids might get scared to talk to them about stuff
- Parents want their kids life to be better than theirs
- Didn't talk enough about Domestic violence

- Combination of ideas

Next Step Reflections

- Class being able to teach civic responsibilities
- More time to discuss
- Include parents
- Teachers in school should have more authority
- Role modeling by other students
- Project on making a song on how to do the right thing
- Ad campaign on early warning signs of violence, and where help is available. Maybe billboards and short stories told by celebrities
- Videos didn't affect as much as music
- Tension-whether or not we need parents to guide us
- Tension-Personal Stake
- Personal Stake-get more info about the situation
- Not want to be searched through metal detectors
- Don't want to ban violent movies + video games

Eight Grade Conclusions

Seventh Grade Results

Personal Stake

- You might be a victim of youth violence
- Your entertainment might be taken away
- Youth violence isn't all the fault of the youth who commit the crimes
- Innocent bystanders could be hurt
- You could be hurt or killed if you make fun of someone
- Peer pressure affects how kids act
- Parents influence us on how we act
- Aren't monitoring their children
- Parents don't know or have control over their children

- People who invent video games and music are responsible
- Access is easy to get violent games
- Some parents are scared of their children
- Kids are doing what they want to do
- Cousins doing drugs
- Stealing money
- Friend having a anger problem
- Living in a bad neighborhood with drug dealers
- Kids in the neighborhood who stole and were sent to D.A.R.E. because of this
- Field trip cancelled
- Violence in national news constantly
- Violence in movies are copied and voted about
- Violence-sniper shooter terrorized families
- Resources available to learn to be violent
- Code red drills
- A house in neighborhood had drugs, bombs and weapons
- Brother fight
- 8 years old, fight, disagreement
- 2 boys fought over a girl
- Friend jumped/attacked
- Fight over basketball, game broke window
- Friend almost beat up, hit with back pack, threw down steps
- Fought over basketball
- Teacher said something bad to student
- Sister fought guy about us
- Kids are getting more violent
- T.V. shows are getting more violent
- Music lyrics/video games are violent
- In community people have guns
- Students opposed to violence in schools
- Teasing leads to violence
- Drugs lead to violence, makes you not think straight

- Violent kids affect us because we're in school—violence in school
- Some kids have violent feelings
- Prevents bullying – you can't concentrate, absences, can't get education; because of death
- Kids grow up as uneducated people; bad society
- Community gets bad reputation – no one lives there; decrease of profit
- Develop habits of drug use, peer pressure
- More fights – influence to fight, teachers can't teach no money's worth
- Stealing
- Lack of communication with parents and teachers – kids become un-responsible parents
- Gangs, more police, more taxes
- Cursing- start using words – unpleasant atmosphere
- Sniper attacks by 17 year old boy
- All a sudden normal kids become caught with a gun
- People who are bullies become intimidated to become violent
- Assault charges
- Personal feelings (family)
- Jail time (family)
- Gang fight
- Child abuse
- Murder
- Gun charge
- Wife abuse
- Affects everyone/everyday
- Very important
- It could get worse
- Solve it now
- Affects our future
- Generations that follow
- Affects friends/family
- Community
- Safety
- Change now

- Money spent
- If a weapon is use
- Hate weapons
- What's my personal stake in the issue?
- What helps me feel safe?
- What would I do to make a sister or brother feel happy?
- If I went to the UN or CNN, would I tell adults that kids need help?

Individual Reflections

- Pass on the information from today on friends and family
- Use what you learned today on yourself
- Hand out these 3 choices to everybody
- Meet again
- Understand your parent's actions
- These are bad influences in the media (games, movies, CDs)
- Why do people commit violence?
- Why do black people kill other black people?
- What makes parents abuse their children?
- How do underage people get guns?
- www.Newgrounds.com - a website with games that have violent themes
- Clone High, a show where they make fun of important people
- Everyone should put what we learned in our heads and never forgetting it
- Support others who have the same beliefs as you do.
- We didn't talk about child abuse
- We can change out actions
- We know some reasons why people act violently
- Not everyone thinks the same
- How some kids don't have morality
- Good and bad points 2 both
- There's a con to every pro
- The violence issue can have more then one solution

- Everyone has a point of view: all are right
- People see abuse as totally different than others
- Seeing others views opens minds
- Other ideas are sometimes better
- We will all agree on some things and not others
- Adults don't understand sometimes
- Violence is bad/not right
- We have more learning to do about violence
- We were mostly against the choices, no choice was perfect
- Violence is everywhere, we don't care on a scale
- Opened eyes to effective violence
- Taught about responsibilities of parents and kids
- Little kids shouldn't play video games
- Little kids won't understand everything
- Better understanding of classmates' opinion
- Realizing children can be part of the solution
- Violence has more meaning
- Fact that we care about the issue
- Participation
- Comprehension
- Demonstration or maturity
- Violence touches us in some way every day
- Schools "cracking" down on violence
- Most people changed their opinions from today
- We didn't work through the money
- Parent training is bad because many parents don't have time
- Anger lets out on children
- Physically ill-after being at work, parent-training
- No support
- Respectful
- Own ideas
- Violence is a big issue

- There are a lot of causes to this issue
- There is no simple answer or solution
- Violence has some meaning
- Get more strict with parents
- Mostly between the parents and kids
- Don't take away freedom
- Do more research and tests to see what works best
- Make a choice 4
- Set up more discussion group
- Maybe we should take away weapons
- Should have started violence control
- You should get your money back
- Games give kids something to do other than killing
- Limited number of items
- Keep a record of items bought
- Keep track of sales
- Keep track of what you buy
- Kids could fake their parents name
- Take stuff from each choice
- Video games
- Kids at risk
- Media
- Stopping kid violence
- Set up a system to stop kid violence
- Apathy
- Many ideas are hard to put together
- The definition of at a risk child
- Permissive homes raise kids with no moral compass, which can lead to risky & inappropriate behavior
- Educate parents to use more strict discipline
- Teach character skills
- Tighten school rules

- Hold parents accountable for young behavior
- Teach right from wrong
- Use praise punishment
- Violence in media & popular culture contributes to young & kid bullying, fighting, stress & violence
- Clean up culture
- Provide healthy alternatives
- Ban marketing to young
- Boycott some advertisers
- Invest in public TV
- Expand youth activities
- Puts others in danger
- Not right for kids to be exposed to violence
- Yes, to discuss unfinished business
- Yes, to share our feelings about this topic and keep it from staying inside
- Yes, to find ways to help abused kids

Group Reflections

- Government should provide more help
- If you're taught the right thing at home it won't matter outside the house
- Punishing parents doesn't do anything good to the kids
- Kids need more discipline by the parents – counseling
- Combined choices 2 and 3
- Kids need discipline as well as help
- Help parents be more effective in discipline area
- Children act on video games, TV, music
- Limit the child's viewing and listening to different things by the parent
- By not copying games proves that you know right from wrong
- Violent kids need more attention
- Suspended kids must have lots of work
- Programs to score them – taste of reality
- Limit violence to young people around 10-12

- Violence controlled by parents (movies)

Things we didn't discuss

- Didn't hear what type of abuse or drugs, we should have talked about it more
- Talk about why they're violent
- Didn't talk about consequences of being violent\
- How violence gets started
- How to help angry kids
- How we can stop it ahead of time
- What are the side effects of violence

Things we agree on

- Parents shouldn't be held accountable for their kids' actions
- Not the games that make them violent
- Parents need to spend more time with kids
- Only offender should be punished
- Need some discipline, not super strict
- Kids are crying out for attention and that's what we should give them
- Don't give up on failing kids
- Kids use anger management techniques
- Kids need some privacy, but parents need to check up on them
- Some parents should decide about violent video games

Next Step Reflections

- Make sure you don't engage violence
- Make sure you keep fantasy and reality
- Don't encourage violence
- Watch out for warning signs of violence
- Report violent things to a help resource
- Help friends to not participate in violence
- Help each other/classmates participating and involved in violence report to school help or a guidance helper/family

- Penalties
- Punishment
- Money
- Government/laws. Freedom of rights
- Meet again and discuss – clubs with issues to talk about
- More access to talk to law makers
- More control – be heard – speak out – meetings.
- Survey US.
- List the media problem
- Prioritize your problem
- Behavior or the root cause of the problem
- Use a checklist for at risk children
- Prevention
- Talk about different methods to calm yourself down
- Help the parents communicate with their kids
- Could have parent/student conference
- Parents should teach morality and practice it
- Video games has less effects then movies
- Kids, our age (10-13), can sensor themselves
- Every child should be taught good moral discipline
- Too much discipline is not good
- Talk 1st, discipline later
- Don't ban violent media
- Hold kids responsible for kids
- Some kids are influenced by violence
- Your smaller siblings look up to you, set an example

We need stronger social & education systems to reach troubled families & kids

Create system to id kids

Rescue kids in abusive situations

Advertise warning signs

Expand foster care

Strengthen services

Get help to trouble kids

Seventh Grade Conclusions

Family related problems

- Parents don't know or have control over their children; sometimes they're scared of them and do not monitor their kids enough
- Cousins doing drugs or stealing money
- Brother fight
- Sister fought guy about us
- Lack of communication with parents and teachers – kids become un-responsible parents
- Wife/Child abuse
- Personal feelings (family)
- Jail time (family)

Violence in Community affects everyone/everyday

- Living in a bad neighborhood with drug dealers
- Kids in the neighborhood who stole were sent to D.A.R.E. because of this
- A house in neighborhood had drugs, bombs and weapons
- Students co exposed to violence in schools
- Violent kids affect us because we're in school—violence in school
- Prevents bullying – you can't concentrate, absences, can't get education; because of death
- Kids grow up as uneducated people; bad society
- Sniper attacks by 17-year-old boy

- All a sudden normal kids become caught with a gun
- People who are bullies become intimidated to become violent assault chargers

Impact of violence on society

- 8 years old, fight, disagreement
- 2 boys fought over a girl
- Friend jumped/attacked
- Fight over basketball, game broke window
- Friend almost beat up, hit with backpack, threw down steps
- Violence in movies are copied and voted about
- Community gets bad reputation – no one lives there; decrease of profit
- Resources available to learn to be violent

Who to blame?

- People who invent video games with easy access and music are responsible
- T.V. shows are getting more violent and so does music lyrics/video games In Community people have guns
- Violence in national news constantly
- Youth violence isn't all the fault of the youth who commit the crimes

Highlights from the pre-forum questionnaires:

Highlights from post-forum questionnaires:

Paraphrases from the Personal Stakes: October 30th 2002 and February 11th, 2003 Forums

- My personal safety.
- Concerned about snipers.
- We were on lock down.
- See violence in community and school.
- Know friends and family that have been affected by violence
- Know people that have hurt their families using drugs
- Know people that need social services because they were angry or violent
- I don't want anyone taking my video games or music from me

Excerpts from the Choice Deliberations: October 30th 2002 and February 11th, 2003 Forums

Choice One: Kids Need a Nonviolent Popular Culture

This choice generated the most controversy in this population of forum participants. Many students felt that violent popular culture was cathartic and reduced tensions within them. Several said that taking away of violent video games would actually make the youth violence problem worst. There were some students in support of this choice but, with limits. During deliberation of this choice, many students began to bring into the deliberation points relevant to choices two and three.

Many students commented that the repetitive and irresponsible broadcast of violence on television news contributed more to violence than games, CDs and movies/entertainment television. Some, not most, thought games, movies and CDs could influence children. Others were adamant that games do not have that kind of influence over young people.

Choice Two: Kids at Risk of Violence Need More Help

During deliberation of this choice, students revealed an awareness of these kinds of issues present in their families, communities and school. They were fully aware of the Montgomery County Department of Social Services and the types of services available. There was a consensus that until a person committed an act they should not be labeled thereby avoiding unfairly stigmatizing a person.

Choice Three: Kids Need More Moral Discipline

A great many of the students supported this choice but none indicated this addressed their lives, i.e., they all said they knew right from wrong. Many students did acknowledge they knew young people for whom this choice did apply because they had difficulty telling right from wrong. Also, many felt that young people who committed serious crimes should suffer adult punishments.¹

Excerpts of Reflections

Individual Reflections:

Group Reflections:

Hardly any of the students were satisfied with the choices as presented to them in the issue book and decided they needed a fourth choice.

- Many students felt there should be easier access to childcare services for working parents including facilities at their place of employment. Also, there should be economic assistance for parents who cannot afford child car services.
- Parents should not be punished for what their kids do.
- People should not judge responsibility by age but by actions. (One student pointed out that an eighteen year old may have the maturity of a ten year old and vice versa.
- We should have role models to teach how to not be violent.
- People should look for signs of violence but not intrude on families' lives without good cause.
- We need more resources for kids.
- We need to mentor "Our little brothers and sisters."
- Kids and adults deserve mutual respect but adults don't respect kids.
- Treat students like real people and they will act like real people.
- We are not willing to give up our personal freedoms.
- Kids should be able to voice their opinions safely.

- Parents need to talk to kids.

Next Step Reflections:

Overview of the forum for *A Public Voice* and the *Terrorism: What Should We Do Now?* forum
This forum, *Terrorism: What Should We Do Now?*, was held on March 20, 2003 to prepare RCMS students to participate in *A Public Voice* at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on April 30, 2003. In attendance at the forum were RCMS students and parents.

The group was composed of 37 RCMS students, one parent, one teacher, an assistant principal and five Center staff and faculty. Dr. John Cavanaugh, Program Director-Kettering Foundation greeted the group upon arrival. Then we were escorted into the Edward R. Murrow Room in the National Press Club for a continental breakfast. The RCMS students were joined by a group of students from Sumpter County, South Carolina also participating in the Kettering youth component program for *A Public Voice*. While eating the group was introduced to two Russian dignitaries, Ms. _____, a member of the Moscow, Russia Duma and Mr. _____, a Russian cosmonaut. Both were open to questions from the students.

The panelists for this year's broadcast were:

Mr. Frank Sesno – host

Ms. Alison Bethel, *Detroit News*

Mr. Charles Bierbauer, University of South Carolina, School of Journalism

Rep. Marsha Blackburn, Tennessee

Mr. E.J. Dionne, *The Washington Post*

Dr. Richard Harwood, The Harwood Institute

Dr. David Mathews, President, Kettering Foundation

Rep. Anne Northup, Kentucky

General Dennis Reimer (ret.), Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism

Sen. Jeff Sessions, Alabama

¹ This was in the wake of the sniper shootings that shook the Washington, D.C. and Mid-Atlantic regions for three weeks in the fall of 2002. At the time of capture, one of the alleged snipers was

Sen. Debbie Stabenow, Michigan

Sen. John Sununu, New Hampshire

The panelists discussed the approaches presented in this particular forum as well as the citizen responses from people across the U.S. The forum participants from across the U.S. reflected similar tensions to those experienced in the forum at Clemente and other forums the Center has convened in Montgomery County.

Following the taping of the program, Ms. Alison Bethel, Mr. E.J. Dionne, and General Dennis Reimer came back to the Edward R. Murrow Room and engaged the students in a question and answer period. Most of the students expressed concerns regarding the perceptions of others towards the U.S, i.e., why do they hate us so much. The students were polite and well behaved. The RCMS assistant principal addressed the group expressing appreciation to the Kettering Foundation and Montgomery College for allowing this opportunity to their students and the benefits deliberative dialogue created in helping develop higher-level critical thinking skills. This was followed by a lunch provided by the Kettering Foundation.

Conclusions/Recommendations

The forum experience received mixed reviews from students. The majority found it interesting and uplifting. This echoed last year's experience with the smaller group of RCMS students. However, a number of students were unenthusiastic and turned off. It seems these students either were alienated from or unfamiliar with the democratic process and felt powerless or did not comprehend the facets of deliberative dialogue. It is important to keep in mind they did not represent the sentiments of the majority of the students.

In the Center's debriefing for the October 30th and February 11th, 2003 forums several concerns were raised:

- Concern that the forum was too long. We should make one policy choice per day and spread the forum over four days.

seventeen years old.

- Teachers should administer the pre-forum and other questionnaires in advance of the day of the forum.
- Issue maps should be distributed to students in advance of the day of the forum.
- Clemente teachers being present in the classrooms proved vital in keeping students on-task and disciplined.
- Concern expressed about the maturity level of the current seventh grade students in Clemente to perform the *Violent Kids: Can We Change The Trend?* Forum. It was later decided that only select seventh graders would be allowed to participate in the next forum.

The Roberto Clemente Middle School administrators and teachers have approached the Center to assist in “Naming and Framing” an issue forum on “Student Success”. They are concerned about student perspectives of how best to achieve student success in their school. The Center has agreed to help RCMS name and frame this issue over the summer of 2003.

What we can do regarding these concerns will be addressed in future planning meetings with the Center faculty and RCMS faculty/staff.

Appendix A

Comments from Observer of the October 30, 2003 forum

Marjorie Raley (unedited)

General

I visited three rooms to observe how students participated in the forum. The students were grouped by their 5th period classes, so they knew each other well, and they had been prepped the day before by their regular teachers. Overall, the students seemed focused, engaged by the topic, and comfortable with the deliberative process. These eighth graders felt their opinions mattered and were very willing to problem-solve. While the moderators began each discussion by reminding them of the ground rules, students did not seem to need it: They were uniformly respectful to each other and open to differing views.

The forum was moderated and highly structured, with a specific agenda and time frame. The pacing kept the discussion (and the students) fresh and focused. Since I stayed with each group while it discussed one of the three choices, I could see that the most critical element was the moderators' role. The moderators seemed well prepared. Generally, they defined terms, kept the discussion going, and encouraged participation by creating an atmosphere of uncritical openness. They reflected back what the students said rather than raise their own concerns. There were small differences in their approaches. One of the moderators asked students to read bullets from the placemats; another moderator read them aloud before asking students to comment. Two moderators allowed the students' discussion to range a bit more freely, while the third moderator structured the discussion more closely around the bulleted points. These methods seemed to work equally well in drawing students into the discussion. In all three rooms, the students talked directly to the moderators instead of their peers—an implicit recognition that the adult moderator was in charge. However, both students and moderators made efforts to build on comments with phrases like “I agree with what Joe said” or “Have any of you heard or seen what Joe is referring to?” I also noticed in all rooms that several students tended to dominate, while several others—usually girls—did not contribute to the deliberation. Moderators really tried to address this situation, and I felt that even those students who said nothing still appeared to be attentive and interested in what was being said.

Specific Suggestions:

I came away from the forum feeling very positive about it and its participants. Even so, I have a few suggestions, chiefly about running the discussions:

- The initial surveys took students quite a while to fill out. Could this be done the day before as preparation for the deliberative process?
- Could the moderators be offered a choice of icebreakers to use before each discussion? For example, to jumpstart the discussion about Choice 1, students could write on note cards one incident regarding a violent kid that they have actually seen or heard. Moderators could call on participants, especially the quiet ones, to read from their cards. As students read their cards during the discussion, they could post them up on the recorder's sheets. Or, alternatively, students could be invited to write a comment on a note card about one of the words on the word wall, which they had prepared beforehand.
- Could the students, after generating a list of causes or aspects in a full-group discussion, be broken into groups with a specific (interactive) task to work on for 6 or 7 minutes?
- Could a high school student or a college student be trained to moderate?
- Could the issue forum—as follow up--be tied into a specific essay assignment or classroom project for the students?