



Dealing with conflict in international schools

NCBI provides programs on community building, prejudice reduction, anti-bullying and violence prevention

The National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) has adapted its successful training models for the specific needs of international schools and is offering these programs throughout Europe and in other countries.

Students at these schools have special opportunities and challenges due to their international orientation: diverse colleagues, cultural differences, frequent change and mobility. International schools provide a powerful opportunity for these young people to acquire NCBI training in leadership skills that will benefit them in school, as members of their community and later in their professional lives.

NCBI is an international non-profit leadership training organization based in Washington, DC with regional offices in Zürich and London. NCBI assesses the local needs and trains a corps of leaders in an institution who learn effective bridge-building skills to resolve inter-group conflicts. These leaders work together as a resource team to build cohesion, reduce inter-group tension and prevent bullying.

NCBI believes that blaming people for their prejudicial views increases their defensiveness and prevents them from honestly examining their negative attitudes. NCBI creates a safe environment, where community members can address a wide range of diversity issues, including race, gender, socioeconomic status, age, religion, disability and sexual orientation.

By sharing and listening to personal stories of discrimination, participants increase their sensitivity and motivation to pursue constructive interventions. Through skill-building, participants develop the ability to shift prejudicial attitudes. They learn to respond effectively to abuse, resolve conflict and intervene productively in negative situations.

An incident leads to a diversity team

Saba Movahedi, 12th grader and coordinator of the Diversity Team at International School of Brussels, describes her experience with NCBI:

"I first became conscious of the presence of prejudice within my community when I witnessed someone hurt by another's words. Although one of my school's most noteworthy characteristics is the open-minded and tolerant atmosphere, seeing a close friend hurt by someone else's laughter made me realize that even in the most open communities, prejudice can continue to exist.

"This realization made me feel indignation, frustration, and hurt. I felt that someone needed to act. My first reaction was to speak of the incident with our headmistress, so that she would see to it that this would not occur again.

"However, she asked me what I would like to do about the situation. This question made me realize that I in fact wanted to act. Together with a teacher who was also interested in making my school an even more broad-minded and understanding community, we began to decide the next steps.



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"An NCBI workshop had already been conducted for about 35 11th graders. When I asked anyone who had attended, their facial expressions alone showed me that the day had held something special. I decided to continue working with NCBI. We brought together 25 students, faculty and staff to be trained as Diversity Workshop Leaders through a two-day NCBI Train-the-Trainers course in October 2007. This group would then be able to share their knowledge with the rest of the school.

"When I walked into the room on the first day of the NCBI Prejudice Reduction Workshop, there was a certain feeling of apprehension and hesitation. As we began to feel comfortable and open with one another the feeling of cooperation and tolerance born between us was indescribable – I had never felt anything like it. On the second day, we began practicing separate parts of the workshop ourselves, the first step towards passing on our message throughout the school.

"With the strong support of the administration, we are now working towards passing on the methods of prejudice reduction we have learnt and the appreciation for diversity which we have gained.

"Our first day-long workshop was planned for February, 2008 and we plan to continue working with students in the high school, middle and elementary schools. Moreover, I am happy to know that my goals will continue as two students plan on taking my place next year and continuing to strengthen the importance of tolerance at our school. Most importantly, many of the participants have told me of a moment where they have made use of their workshop training in their personal life.

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