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Overcoming Obstacles: A Program for Success

By Joe Giampiccolo

On August 28th and 29th, 2000, several members of the OES family were invited to participate in a professional development workshop entitled "Overcoming Obstacles." Held in Manhattan at the Federal Reserve Bank by the Community for Education Foundation, the program's aim is to train teachers to develop life skills in an academic environment. Through role-play and discussion, students will learn the necessary skills for effective communication, decision-making, conflict resolution, and goal setting. The "4th R"—Relevant Skills Instruction—is seen as a critical piece for the development of our youths and for addressing the problems of absenteeism, youth violence, gang involvement, apathy and dropouts.

The reaction of several teachers who attended the workshop was extremely positive. Kathy Lenahan, teacher at Richmond Terrace, states: "An excellent

and professional learning experience. I loved it. The atmosphere was pleasant and relaxed. Very specific examples were demonstrated and easily accomplished." Gail Goldstein, teacher at New Beginnings exclaims: "The best run workshop I've ever experienced. All of our supervisors should have been here. It was an opportunity to relate in both a professional and personal way. Great food too!"

The teachers who attended the Overcoming Obstacles workshop have introduced the program in diverse ways at their sites. One has created a daily course; others include it weekly as a separate course or integrate skills daily within the regular curriculum. They also get together to share and gain feedback from their colleagues.

If you are creative and enjoy challenges, contact Eileen De Meglio (extension 696) for information about becoming an Overcoming Obstacles teacher!

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STUDENT SUCCESS MOTIVATOR

By Linda Cousins

There was quite a controversy in the 70's regarding "subliminal seduction", a process whereby words and images were imprinted on movie screens, music was piped-in, and ads were flashed to subconsciously pressure consumers to make purchases or to refrain from undesirable behavior such as shoplifting. Although unapproved attempts to influence one's subconscious mind could be categorized as an intrusive infringement on one's freedom of thought, this practice could be used in a positive way by teachers as they sought to promote the self-esteem of students. A simple way in which "subliminal

self-esteem motivation" can be adapted is by giving spelling words. For example, in calling out the word "success" for students to spell, the instructor could follow up the word with a sentence like "Hard-working students who attend class regularly and punctually are preparing for SUCCESS" or "You have the potential for SUCCESS. I expect you to be SUCCESSful." For some reason, my students love those weekly spelling quizzes; they get absolutely excited about spelling. Maybe it's due to the bevy of "subliminal self-esteem motivators" that accompany the majority of the words.