

Changing Consciousness: Conflict Resolution, Emotional Intelligence, and Peace Studies for a One-World Government

*A report from the
Third International Conference
on Conflict Resolution Education*

By Mary Grabar



**Obama Education Department
Official Kevin Jennings**

Biography

Mary Grabar was born in Slovenia and escaped communist Yugoslavia as a two-year-old with her parents. She grew up in Rochester, New York, and moved to Atlanta in the 1980s. She earned her Ph.D. in English from the University of Georgia in 2002, and now teaches part-time on two campuses in and near Atlanta. She writes for such publications as *The Weekly Standard*, Pajamas Media, Minding the Campus (Manhattan Institute), Clarion Call (The John William Pope Center for Higher Education), CNS News, *The American Spectator*, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Big Government, and Townhall. Her poetry and fiction have been published in *Saint Ann's Review*, *The Pedestal*, *Ballyhoo Stories*, and other journals. She is a contributing editor to the *Chattahoochee Review* and has completed two novel manuscripts, one a satire about the sexual revolution and higher education, and another, a semiautobiographical literary mystery involving immigrants from communist countries.

Her previous reports for America's Survival, Inc. include *The Extreme Make-Over of William Ayers: How a Communist Terrorist Became a "Distinguished" Professor of Education*, *Did Bill Ayers Get His Teaching Job "the Chicago Way"?* and *Indoctrination without Apology: Social Studies Teachers Share Strategies on How to Mold Students*. They are available at www.usasurvival.org

Executive Summary

By Mary Grabar

Few would disagree with the idea of conflict resolution, or resolving conflicts in a peaceful manner, whenever possible. Few would question a community college hosting a conference for professionals, like police officers, mediators, and social workers, to further their education and brush up on their skills.

But what I saw and heard at the Third International Conference on Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) Building Infrastructure for Change: Innovations in Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) and Justice Initiatives at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio, March 24-27, 2010, indicated that such practical aims would not match the grandiose goals of the conference. The conference is one many often held at community colleges. I was seeing a part of a movement at community colleges and other schools to transform students into pacifist “citizens of the world.”

The fact that the conference is international in scope and has as kick-off keynote speaker Kevin Jennings indicates a much larger agenda at play. In 1999, Jennings wrote the foreword to a book titled *Queering Elementary Education*.

Jennings, now Assistant Deputy Secretary, Office of Safe & Drug Free Schools, entered public service as founder and leader of GLSEN (Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network), a group that promoted homosexuality in the schools. Jennings’ focus was on children who are bullied and taunted as “gay.” Part of his redefinition of “safe schools” now includes “social acceptance.” Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) sessions now dictate to children whom they should not reject socially (i.e., everyone needs to be a friend). Advocates of SEL, who have their own left-wing agendas or professional ambitions, promote “social acceptance” through disturbing group lessons.

The goal is nothing less than a re-education of children, but at the most fundamental level: emotionally. The psychologically invasive strategies used in the classroom by a slew of re-educated teachers and emotional intelligence entrepreneurs are frightening. Such re-educators are not shy or reserved in their roles that extend far beyond educating in the traditional sense of imparting knowledge and teaching skills. They believe that part of their job description is emotional reprogramming. They believe that students need to be reprogrammed in order to bring about a new international order that will ultimately subject the U.S. to a cooperative international order. Their utopian vision includes having future leaders employing the skills they have learned under the peace educators’ tutelage and solving international conflicts through mediation, On both an individual level in terms of each child and on an international level their vision portends disaster—emotional scarring for the child and vulnerability to the many leaders who will take advantage of pacifist American leaders.

Organizations promoting global citizenship and non-Western culture are major sponsors of these education initiatives. Sponsors for this conference included the international organizations Search for Common Ground and the UN-originated Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, as well as the National Peace Academy. On a local level, support was provided by the Global Issues Resource Center (motto: “We don’t have to share beliefs – just a planet”) headquartered at Cuyahoga Community College, and the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution & Conflict Management.

Community colleges—once seen as places offering opportunities for working class students to earn associate’s degrees in professions or credits for transfer to four-year colleges—now tout international education, mainly in Costa Rica, where the United Nations’ University for Peace is located. Schools that have become known for tragic incidents of violence on their campuses—Kent State and Virginia Tech—have especially active programs. Institutions of higher learning—supported with tax dollars—now actively promote and inculcate notions of American pacifism and rule by one-world government. They do this under cover of such benevolent sounding programs like “conflict resolution education.” The real agenda, however, was revealed at this conference.

Furthermore, proponents advocate teaching conflict resolution as soon as children enter school, preferably preschool. To advocates, it’s never too early to begin training in emotional and social intelligence, peer mediation, and peace studies. Children reeducated emotionally can then carry their new skills with them for life. Advocates cite Daniel Goleman’s 1995 bestseller *Emotional Intelligence* as the authoritative text. But Goleman mostly summarizes the already well-known effects of emotional abuse and neglect. He then posits the notion that resulting deficiencies in “emotional intelligence” (reacting appropriately to upsets, understanding emotional cues) can be alleviated with training in the workplace and schools. Goleman’s book is now cited by proponents as the bible on the subject.

The idea of being able to mold young people through emotion appealed to educators and social activists, who were inclined by ideological temperament to shun traditional rules of conduct and codes of discipline. Goleman had already launched the advocacy group CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning), even before his book came out. Now activists and educators look to CASEL, housed at the University of Illinois at Chicago, for “research” to justify their methods. CASEL now provides much of the “research” for advocates in schools, government, and the juvenile justice system. But the research comes from the promoters themselves. Still, consultants go into the schools, earning hefty fees. Educators incorporate the subject into the curriculum of teacher education schools, and in high schools—as a required course—on the same level as math and English. Some high schools already have such a requirement.

Certainly safety and order are big concerns for teachers and school administrators. But conflict resolution and peace education operate from the premise that traditional discipline and civics lessons are oppressive, ineffective, and unjust. Indeed, more than

one conference participant pointed to the disproportionate number of black males who are punished in schools. The *assumption* is that the system is fundamentally flawed and needs to be fixed. The efforts are thereby directed not to those individuals with problems, but are imposed on the group as a whole to alleviate “social injustice.”

The fact that an anti-American and anti-Western bias provides the impetus for this movement can be seen by an objective look at the history of Western civilization. A study of our history, politics, and philosophy reveals a progression of means to resolve conflicts nonviolently whenever possible. Traditional notions like free speech, reasoned debate, nondiscriminatory laws, freedom, and citizen rights all reveal a march toward a progressively less violent society. In the classroom, students were once taught such values through didactic and imaginative literature of the Western cultural tradition. They were taught the skills of debating both orally and in written form using logic and evidence. A common goal of truth informed the process. These lessons were reinforced by a classroom atmosphere of discipline and order in small neighborhood schools less subject to the educational bureaucracies and legal requirements of today. (Now, a few specially designated traditional schools, designed to meet the demand for parents who want that kind of atmosphere for their students, have appeared.)

But safety and civility are redefined in the brave new schools envisioned by Kevin Jennings and his boss, Education Secretary Arne Duncan. A new kind of citizen will be molded in Jennings’ “safe schools,” which through his re-definition means no student will be subject to “social rejection, uncivil behavior, verbal threats, and hate language.” Draconian methods are needed to dictate to children even their social choices.

The methods *are* scary, and involve such group activities as “truth sessions” and “trust exercises.” As I describe in my report such exercises invade students’ privacy and further subject them to emotional manipulations. Citizens, parents, and elected officials should be concerned.

The larger goal is to train the student in peace-building skills that he can carry over into adulthood as a “global citizen” and perhaps a global leader. In the attempt to achieve this goal American and Western values of justice, fairness, and lawfulness are shunned in favor of international law, cooperation, and global social justice.

The means used to produce such citizens complement the curricular and pedagogical efforts that I described in [my report](http://www.usasurvival.org/docs/Grabar_report.pdf)¹ on the National Council for the Social Studies Conference in November 2009, as well as on my reports on Bill Ayers’ educational methods. Educators, criminal justice officials, and consultants offer invasive emotionally manipulative behavior modification therapies in an effort to produce what they see as their model citizen: one who identifies not as an American, but as a global citizen, more concerned with peace than with justice or the American way of life.

I report on the following sessions, which I attended.

¹ http://www.usasurvival.org/docs/Grabar_report.pdf

Keynote Presentation: Collaboration Across (sic) Fields: Implementation and Sustainability of Conflict Resolution Education, Social and Emotional Learning, and Restorative Justice

Keynote Speaker Kevin Jennings, founder of GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network), and now “safe schools czar,” kicked off the event. While GLSEN’s activities in the schools are quite troubling, the participants at this conference gave Jennings a warm welcome. Jennings outlined for them the expanded role and increased federal funding for creating “safe schools” in a new, expanded definition as free from “social rejection, uncivil behavior, verbal threats, and hate language.” GLSEN still goes into the schools to promote anti-gay bullying.

Sitting on the panel were Molly McCloskey, Managing Director, Whole Child Programs; Mary Lou Rush, from the Ohio Department of Education; Mark Barth, “architect of the New York State Guidelines for Social and Emotional Development and Learning”; and Rachel Wohl, founding Executive Director of the Maryland judiciary’s Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO).

Workshop: “Preventing and Addressing Harassment in Colleges and Universities”

This workshop was put on by employees of the Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights and addressed federally mandated duties.

Keynote Presentation: The Power of Media to Promote Conflict Resolution: Sesame Workshop and Search for Common Ground

This presentation featured a representative from the Sesame Workshop, an international initiative that promotes the same ideals of the children’s program *Sesame Street* produced by Public Broadcasting: diversity, multiculturalism, and peaceful social relations. John Marks, founder and president of Search for Common Ground, which collaborates with Sesame Workshop, then gave a presentation of their films from various parts of the world.

Workshop: “Preventing and Addressing Bullying-United States Department of Education”

Attorneys from the department advised attendees about preventing and addressing bullying based on race, color, or national origins (covered by Title 6).

Workshop: “How to Develop Programs in Peace and Conflict Studies in Community Colleges”

This was a practical session presented by Jessica Zabla and Kathleen Catanese of Cuyahoga Community College, Barbara Thorngren of Nashua Community College (New Hampshire), and Gregory Rabb of Jamestown Community College (New York) about

writing proposals, organizing committees, making presentations, taking surveys, and making sales pitches to administrators whose concerns include only enrollment and cost.

Keynote Presentation: “Rerouting the Education-to-Prison Pipeline: Innovative Court/School Collaboration”

This panel focused on mental health and substance abuse treatment programs for offenders, as well as initiatives that substitute tutoring for court-mandated community service.

Workshop: “Teaching Emotional Intelligence: Strategies and Activities for Helping Students Make Effective Choices”

The workshop was led by licensed social worker Adina Bloom Lewkowicz who sells her services to schools. The participatory workshop that began with chairs in a circle simulated exercises she uses in schools.

Keynote Presentation: “Preventing and Addressing Sexual Violence Against Children: Global Challenges – Local Struggles”

The panel featured Jimmie Briggs, journalist and author of *Innocents Lost: When Child Soldiers Go to War*, two representatives from domestic violence programs, and Psychology Professor Bill Pfohl. But all of these panelists went beyond the scope of their projects: Briggs contextualized the forced recruitment of child soldiers and sex slaves in Africa to statistics about sexual assault in the U.S. military; the domestic violence programs incorporated goals that sweepingly redefined gender roles; and Professor Pfohl went beyond his role of teaching school counselors and discussed his role as president of the UNESCO-affiliated International School Psychology Association, whose goal is to expand the role of school psychologists in national and local leadership throughout the world.

Workshop: “Be the Change: Engaging Middle and High School Students in Human Rights and Transitional Justice”

Susan E. Oehler of the curriculum program, “Facing History and Ourselves,” simulating the classroom, broke participants into small groups to discuss various young “upstanders” who fought on behalf of social justice. She also made participants aware of the various curricular materials on the site that links historical events to current situations that need to be faced, like racism and sexism. The site is highly selective in its choice of “historical” materials that support contentions of white American discrimination; it features articles from Southern Poverty Law Center, for example.

Other Workshops

Plenary: Transforming Racial and Ethnic Conflict: Lessons from the Field by Hal Saunders, Assistant Secretary of State in the Carter administration and President of the

International Institute for Sustained Dialogue, and Director of International Affairs at the Kettering Foundation.

“What’s Wrong with Sexting” and Other Questions Kids Ask by the Office of the Ohio Attorney General about “principles of digital citizenship.”

Innovative School-Court Collaboration: Lorain County Juvenile Court’s School Truancy Program: a program that “combines a formal ‘truancy court’ process with mediation and other efforts to develop customized solutions.”

Community Engagement in Conflict Resolution: Connecting and Advancing Pedagogy, Research, and Professional Practice by representatives from the Program in Conflict Studies and Dispute Resolution at UNC at Greensboro, who “discuss their work including: a graduate level course in dispute systems design; research and service projects with local community organizations and a landlord-tenant dispute project partnership with local government.”

Virtual World Engagement: Enhancing Teaching and Learning Conflict Resolution Skills concerned “utilizing the virtual world of Second Life to teach mediation skills and perspectives to law students” and introducing “participants to virtual worlds as effective immersive environments in which to (1) enhance the teaching of conflict resolution skills and (2) advance social justice initiatives. . . .”

Panel: Methods of Dialogue and Community Building: The Israeli Palestinian Conflict by Seeking Common Ground’s *“Building Bridges for Peace (BBfP)”* program, a 15-year old peace building and leadership development initiative serving diverse Jewish-Israeli, Arab/Palestinian-Israeli, and Palestinian and American teens, and New Ground: A Muslim Jewish Partnership for Change regarding conflicts in Los Angeles.

State-wide Initiatives in New York and Ohio: Creating Positive Learning Environments by Mark Barth, New York Department of Education, and Mary Lou Rush and Cheryl Kish of the Ohio Department of Education

Advancing Conflict Resolution Education at the School and System Levels-Success Stories, Lessons Learned, Lives Changed, Disputes Resolved by Barbara Sugarman Grochal, Maryland Schools Conflict Resolution Education Programs and Rachel Wohl, Maryland Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO) on Baltimore City Schools programs, such as “the Daily Rap, My Baby’s Daddy family systems training, truancy mediation, and School Police conflict resolution training.”

Special Event: Closed for Government Representatives Only Policy Meeting: Implementation and Sustainability of CRE, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Peace Education (PE), and Civics Education (CE) Policies and Legislations

Adolescent Development Ohio Federation for Children’s Mental Health/Ohio Models for Change

From the Ground Up: Lessons in Growing the Central Michigan Restorative Justice Initiative by Nancy Schertzing, Michigan State University

Stark County Teen Court: How to Create and Improve Your Own Court Program

Incorporating Peace Studies/Conflict Resolution into Study Abroad by four community colleges that are “working together to develop a Troika Study Abroad program on the Social and Political Implications of Peace in Costa Rica through Community Colleges for International Development (CCID).”

Panel: Service Learning and Community Service in Higher Education “Service Learning in Graduate Level Conflict Degree Programs” and “Examples of Community Service in Virginia Through (sic) Environmental Initiatives.”

Mainstreaming Peace and Conflict Studies: Designing Introductory Courses in Peace and Conflict Studies to Fit Liberal Arts Education Requirement by Kent State University

Conflict Resolution in Education in Teacher Education (CRETE): The Next Generation using “an innovative consortium model to build infrastructures between teacher education programs, CRE organizations (Educators for Social Responsibility and Creative Response to Conflict) and large, urban school districts”

Peace Education for Sustainable Development: UNESCO Associate Schools Curriculum Design and Evaluation

Mental Health Disorders (MHTC-JJ) Module #4

Empowering Youth to Make Positive Change: Project Citizen & Youth for Justice Programs by Ohio Center for Law-Related Education

Innovative Approaches for Undergraduate Coursework in Peace Studies and Violence Prevention by Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention at Virginia Tech

Conflict Resolution Education in Teacher Education

Creative Response to Conflict-A Model for Teaching Conflict Resolution in the Elementary Classroom

International Humanitarian Law: Why is Justice Needed and Who Should Judge the Accused

Conflict Behavior in the Diverse Classroom

Panel: Use of Circle Processes in Multiple Settings

Global Peace Education: Challenges and Successes from the Field

Panel: Examples of Peaceful School Initiatives

Plenary: University Responses to Violence: Case Western Reserve University, Kent State University, and Virginia Tech

Juvenile Screening & Assessment (MHTC-JJ Module #5)

Family Engagement: Professionals and Families as Partners

A Study of Approaches and Outcomes focusing (sic) on Restorative Justice

Conflict Resolution Education Resources on the Web

Cultural Traditions and Perceptions That May Lead to Conflict

The United States Institute of Peace: America's Commitment to Building Global Peace and Security "A Presentation on the Institute's efforts in secondary and higher education, as well as plans for its Public Education Center slated to open in 2012."

Trinidad and Tobago: Innovative Partnerships between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Local Government to Promote Conflict Resolution Education

School-based Peer Mediation Programs, K-12, Present and Future

Policy to Programs: Initiatives by the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management

Panel: Preventing and Addressing Conflict with Youth in Africa

Treatment of Youth with Mental Health Disorders (MHTC-JJ #6)

Twelve Years of Restorative Practices in Baltimore's Inner City Schools and Juvenile Diversion Work

Horizon Community: Character Reformation and CRE in an Adult Prison

Teaching Conflict Resolution within the Context of Arab and Arab American Cultural, Social, and Political Perspectives in Michigan by Henry Ford Community College

The Role of Students and Student Organizations in Campus Violence Prevention

Citizen Diplomacy as CRE: Building Mutual Understanding, and Peaceful Relations through the Franco-American Teachers in Training

Man Up Campaign – Stopping Violence Against Women and Girls!

Systemic Approach to Peace Education in the Crimean Community by Tavrida National University

Conflict Resolution Education (CRE): Research and Evaluation Update by Marsha S. Blakeway, George Mason University, who uses Paulo Freire on her syllabus

Teaching Conflict Resolution to Students through Literature

Gangs: Assisting High-Risk Youth

Strategies for Evaluating a Community-Based Divorce Education Program

Creativity and Conflict, Activism and Art: Using Creativity and Art to Teach about Conflict

Philippines: The Use of the Valuing Process in Challenging Prejudice

Panel: The U.S. National Peace Academy and a Local Example of Community Involvement on designing the National Peace Academy and “Alternatives to Military Recruitment at High Schools” by Tony Jenkins of the National Peace Academy and Chantal Dothey of the Cleveland Peace Action Network

Engaging in Book-Based Social Justice-related Discussions with Young Children

Conflict Dialogue for Diverse Students and Teachers: Alternative Approaches to Restorative Problem-Solving and Proactive Conflict Education

Values-Based Approaches, Quality Teaching and Positive School Cultures

Changing Consciousness: Conflict Resolution, Emotional Intelligence, and Peace Studies for a One-World Government

*Report on the Third International Conference on Conflict Resolution Education,
Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland, Ohio, March 24-27, 2010*

By Mary Grabar

A conference with the name Third International Conference on Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) Building Infrastructure for Change: Innovations in Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) and Justice Initiatives, which was held at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio, in late March 2010, may sound like a grandiose project for a community college. But educators' aims are ambitious these days. Community colleges are expanding into service and peace initiatives across the globe. Likewise, elementary school teachers and "emotional and social intelligence" consultants attempt to cure elementary school children of what they see as behavior problems and prejudices through "truth sessions" and "trust exercises." Parole officers too attempt to end the "school-to-prison pipeline" with such sessions, non-governmental and governmental agencies attempt to fashion empathetic global citizens through their curricula, and bureaucrats attempt to cure all conflicts in schools and workplaces through laws and workshops against various forms of "hate."

Cuyahoga Community College is one of many venues, public and private, where a network of educators, activists, and education entrepreneurs gather to discuss strategies for molding the minds of students from kindergarten through college to make them peace-building global citizens. The scope of the project that falls under the umbrella of "conflict resolution" ranges from having schoolchildren publicly reveal innermost feelings, to advocating for the UN Rights of the Child. It involves high school and college students employing their "emotional intelligence" in international diplomacy, both in online discussions and in trips abroad. It requires them to rethink gender roles as they collectively contemplate dating violence.

This isn't your daddy's community college, once a place for those, who might not otherwise have the opportunity, to take the core classes for transfer to a four-year school or earn an associates degree for a profession, like dental hygiene or drafting. Cuyahoga Community College, like many community colleges, serves as a center for "emotional learning" and global peace initiatives.

Cuyahoga Community College's focus also reflects the trend in education overall, where academic achievement counts for less and less, and displays of emotional intelligence and community service work count for increasingly more. As I noted [in my report](#) on social studies teaching,² children are asked to rely on their emotions even when discussing such traditional subjects as history. Even the Honor Society now assigns only

² http://www.usasurvival.org/docs/Grabar_report.pdf

25% to grade point averages,³ with the rest of the ranking based on “character, leadership, and service.”

In contrast, students are being *graded* on such topics as social and emotional intelligence. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), some high schools now have classes in this topic. One proponent in a promotional film on CASEL’s website happily noted that a student may go to English for first period and then to a social and emotional intelligence (SEL) class for second period. CASEL, a center for the movement, even promotes incorporating SEL into regular classes, like math, as it does in this [video](#).⁴ In Louisville, Kentucky, public school students have twenty-minute community meetings at the beginning of each day to devote to these activities.

More schools will likely have such classes with the passage of [HR 4233](#), the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2009, which would allocate federal funds to such efforts. Education Secretary Arne Duncan expressed his enthusiasm for SEL, or Social and Emotional Learning as he spoke before one of the bill’s sponsors Congressman Tim Ryan on March 18, 2010.⁵ Duncan [repeated](#) the mantra of SEL proponents that these are “absolutely teachable, learnable skills.” Accordingly, Duncan pledged to increase spending on such efforts by 60 percent. The bill was referred to the [House Subcommittee](#) on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education in April.

Meanwhile, classes in foreign language and philosophy are being cut, and class sizes for basics like math and freshman composition grow. Nevertheless, we can expect more of the efforts that have been underway since the 1990s, when the notion of teaching “emotional intelligence” captured the attention of educators who saw an opportunity to institute a “consciousness change” like the one advocated in the 1960s.

The publication of the book of the same name *Emotional Intelligence*, by Daniel Goleman,⁶ in 1995, propelled the movement into high gear, rallying peace-loving idealists. Educators saw a way to put a legitimate term onto their efforts to mold young people into peace-loving world citizens.

Daniel Goleman was ready. He had co-founded CASEL in 1994, the year before his book came out and became a bestseller. The center of the activity, where much of the oft-cited “research” is conducted is the University of Illinois at Chicago, the same university where Bill Ayers, co-founder of the terroristic Weatherman [is employed](#) as “Distinguished Professor of Education.”⁷ Chicago, of course, is where Ayers associate Barack Obama launched his political career and where Education Secretary Arne Duncan is from. Linda Darling-Hammond, who was education advisor to Obama during his

³ <http://www.nationalreview.com/phi-beta-cons/39535/national-honor-society-has-quaffed-kool-aid>

⁴ <http://www.edutopia.org/math-social-activity-sel-video>

⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/user/SELonTV#p/a/f/0/PTZcty1G5A>

⁶ Goleman, Daniel. *Emotional Intelligence*. 1995. New York: Bantam, 2005.

⁷ http://www.usasurvival.org/docs/Mary_Grabar_rprtl_Ayers_Updated.pdf

campaign and reportedly on his list of candidates for Education Secretary, is also listed as a member and one of the “collaborators” on CASEL’s website.

Duncan’s Assistant Deputy Secretary, Office of Safe & Drug Free Schools, Kevin Jennings, kicked off the Ohio conference with a keynote speech. He was introduced by college president, Jerry Sue Thornton, who bragged that her college was the first in Ohio to offer certificates in conflict management and peace studies. Creating “global leaders” with training in conflict resolution, global leadership, and cultural competence is the goal of the college, she asserted, and proudly noted that a new “Peace Pole” had been erected in the courtyard.

Thornton praised Jennings’ work in launching GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network) and running it for fourteen years after spending ten years as a high school history teacher. She did not mention that GLSEN works to advance the acceptance of homosexuality in the schools or that Jennings, a homosexual activist, has cited the late [Harry Hay](#), a member of the Communist Party USA who promoted NAMBLA (North American Man-Boy Love Association), as an “inspiration.”⁸ Hay actively campaigned for the “rights” of pedophiles, a fact that Jennings had to have been aware of. Instead, Thornton noted that the National Education Association (NEA), the teachers union, had awarded Jennings its Human Rights Award.

At the conference, Jennings said that he was inspired to move to Washington for the position of Assistant Deputy Director by the death of Carl Joseph Walker Hoover, an eleven-year-old who committed suicide, reportedly after being bullied. The suicide of Carl Hoover has been used by GLSEN in their anti-gay bullying campaign promotions. Jennings’ education work experience, according to the biography on the Department of Education website, involves ten years as a history teacher and as an advisor to the school’s Gay-Straight Alliance group. The rest involves launching GLSEN and working on behalf of gay rights issues. His background involves gay activism and not administration in school safety issues.

Nevertheless, after repeating the administration’s emphasis on the purported need for more access to higher education, Jennings launched into his argument for making schools “safe” as a necessary foundation for improving achievement and college preparedness. Jennings, however, greatly expanded the notion of “safe” from what he characterized as the simplistic “Just Say No” anti-drug campaign of Nancy Reagan and the security measures instituted in response to school shootings. He noted drops in rates of violence since the 1990s, but then linked increasingly poor academic performance in schools to unsafe school environments. “Unsafe” under Jennings’ definition, however, encompasses “social rejection,” and “uncivil behavior, verbal threats, and hate language.” For him, such behaviors and attitudes comprise the largest part of the iceberg that forms unsafe schools (the visible parts are the more obvious overt violence and drug peddling); they make it difficult for students to succeed academically.

⁸ http://usasurvival.org/docs/ASI_Rprt_Hay_n_Jennings.pdf

Inviting the assembled educators to call him at the phone number he gave out, he also expressed his gratitude for their work in training students to intervene in instances of bullying. Jennings cited statistics that purportedly show bullying is 50 percent more likely to occur in schools with more than 1,000 students than those with less than 300.

What Jennings did not mention, though, was that with the economic crisis that continues apace, public schools are consolidating. He did not mention the Obama administration's hostility to school vouchers, which would provide parents an opportunity to place their children in small and safe private schools. Nor would any such practical solutions be mentioned in the workshops that followed in the two days of the conference. Instead, Jennings claimed that emotional and social education was as important, if not more so, than such subjects as math and reading.

SEL has also inspired government officials working in child welfare and juvenile delinquency, and has spawned a huge interconnected industry of consultants and specially created bureaucratic positions. Jennings sat on the first panel moderated by Molly McCloskey, Managing Director, Whole Child Programs, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), whose summer conference offers similar workshops, many by “educational consultants.”

Panelist Dr. Mary Lou Rush, Executive Director for a new Center for Reform and Strategic Initiatives at the Ohio Department of Education, noted Ohio's leadership in expanding the assessment of safe schools to include “school connectedness,” psychological safety, and nutrition standards in 2004. “School climate” and “twenty-first century skills” were some of the themes that she noted and that would be repeated at the conference.

Mark Barth, billed as the “architect of the New York State Guidelines for Social and Emotional Development and Learning,” outlined his long career in education and government by going back to his days as an eleventh-grader in 1965 volunteering in a Head Start program. He referred to New York's Children's Mental Health Act of 2006 and touted the state funded teacher center, which provides “professional development.” As I discuss later, he acts as a CASEL proselytizer as he works in Albany to implement SEL through law.

Another panelist whose career trajectory matured from 1960s-inspired idealism to secure government work was Rachel Wohl. She described her evolution from “flower child” to “social change filmmaker,” and then “social justice lawyer.” Now, as she described it, she works for “visionary justice.” She is the founding Executive Director of the Maryland judiciary's Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO) which distributes grants and collaborates with the Maryland Department of Education and the University of Maryland Center for Dispute Resolution in such programs as a cooperative discipline program in schools and training for police.

My first workshop after this keynote panel was “Preventing and Addressing Harassment in Colleges and Universities.” Representatives from the Department of

Education's Office of Civil Rights informed a roomful of people keenly attuned to harassment about protocols for dealing with harassment cases. Participants were encouraged to be proactive, to have a knowledgeable staff, and an action plan ready for when complaints occur. Department attorneys distinguished the finer points of harassment, e.g., advances had to be "unwelcome," and reminded the participants of their legal limitations.

The afternoon keynote presentation focused on the Sesame Workshop, of PBS's *Sesame Street* fame. In addition to being a path breaker in presenting minorities in a positive light for the first time on television, *Sesame Street* was touted for promoting social and emotional learning.

Now an initiative described as "Muppet Diplomacy" aims to promote peaceful social relations and is being spread through over 140 countries. Even in places like Bangladesh, where televisions are scarce, community viewings are offered. In India, the show is viewed on a bioscope that is wound up by hand. Films shown in various parts of the world were played for us. In South Africa, "Kami" dealt with children shunning the title character because of her HIV-positive status. After information was given about HIV transmission, the segment ended happily with the other child-puppets playing with Kami. The one for Ireland dealt with the Protestant "Orange March" that had traditionally excluded Catholics.

One might have thought that we were just watching cute puppets mouthing lessons about getting along, but we were told that Muppet Diplomacy rests on "ecological systems theory" that entails three areas: 1.) The "self," which involves emotions, labeling, self-esteem, and pride in one's culture; 2.) The "other"; and 3.) community interdependence. In an effort to end labeling that children pick up from others at an early age, the program aims to show children models of diversity through puppets. All the buzz words of the conference were included in this description: empathy, perspective-taking, active listening, and conflict resolution. The ending message was that we "have to start as early as possible" if we want to promote a "peaceful culture."

The organization that has been collaborating with Sesame Workshop for the last dozen years, Search for Common Ground, has as its mission, according to their website, "to transform the way the world deals with conflict—away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative problem solving." To this end, they work with local partners. According to the organization's founder (in 1982) and president, John Marks, who spoke on the panel, half of their work is through media and half through training.

One segment that he showed involved young Macedonian and Albanian adolescents, with the Albanian boy going to a party of Macedonians against his parents' wishes. The segment ended with his parents at the party too, having a good time, with the father saying, "Even parents can make mistakes sometimes." The takeaway message is that parents are benighted and that children can be reprogrammed to teach them.

The radio program “Golden Kids News” in West Africa was pointed to as successful in transforming the perception of children to little teachers. Marks claimed that a survey indicated that 98% changed their ideas of the roles of children after the show went on the air. He also claimed that after eight episodes had aired 60% of children would invite children of other ethnic origins to play, contrasted to 30% before. The organization’s biggest show, though, is a “soap opera for social change,” which Marks saw optimistically, noting that “Archie Bunker made it uncool to be a bigot.”

The last film shown was a music video, “Ring the Bells of Change,” performed by Melissa Etheridge when Al Gore won the Nobel Prize in 2007. The footage lingered on glowing, peaceful scenes of various religious faiths: Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism. The only reference to Christianity was a momentary shot of a black Catholic priest.

The workshop I attended afterwards, “Preventing and Addressing Bullying-United States Department of Education,” attracted a fairly large group of about forty and was conducted by Department attorneys located in the Cleveland office, one of twelve across the country. The presenter pointed out that the department addresses only bullying based on race, color, or national origin. When one participant asked about the case in Philadelphia where black students reportedly bullied Asians, the Department attorney ignored the question and instead brought up cases involving African-American and Hispanic victims.

“How to Develop Programs in Peace and Conflict Studies in Community Colleges,” the next workshop I attended, was a how-to session. Jessica Szabla of the sponsoring community college’s Global Issues Resource Center, bragged about the rapid growth of peace programs over the last few years. She directed participants to the Conflict Resolution Education [website](#),⁹ as well as to the United States Institute of Peace.

Barbara Thorngren of Nashua Community College in New Hampshire, who brought eleven students to the conference, gave tips on overcoming bureaucratic hurdles. She said a certificate should be the goal because it would “empower students to become change agents.” Certificates are tacked onto degrees, but can be viewed as the first step in awarding degrees or minors. (Some universities, like Kent State, offer degrees and minors, in Applied Conflict Management.) She described them as typically including three electives and core courses in conflict management and peace studies with an optional study abroad, particularly in Costa Rica’s program at the UN’s [University for Peace](#).¹⁰ The capstone would be service learning. The organization, Community Colleges for International Development, also provides resources, and, indeed, their website shows that their conferences provide tips on developing courses and getting programs into place.

⁹ <http://www.crededucation.org/>

¹⁰ www.usip.org

Thorngren shared her personal experiences in getting the program underway at her 2000-student college. She described compiling an advisory committee that reflected community support; it included a judge, mediators, and counselors. She did not note the high salaries of those who administer such programs; at the community college where I teach directors earn well over \$100,000 a year in salary, more than twice what an average professor makes. Instead, Thorngren stressed cost effectiveness when making the pitch. Students, she said, raise their own travel funds.

Kathleen Catanese, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Cuyahoga Community College, buttressed Thorngren's encouragement with the fact that the administration cares about the bottom line: will students enroll? Will courses make students more marketable?

And quite distinctly she emphasized that the administration does not care about *content*.

Indeed, it seems that the faculty proposing such programs are given carte blanche as to what they will teach. By all indications from the speeches and workshops at this conference the content goes far beyond the practical skills of defusing emotionally volatile situations (that police and teachers could learn in much less time than the proposed certificate program).

In addition to certificate programs, peace studies is seeping into general education classes. Another workshop offered at the conference was called "Teaching Conflict Resolution to Students through Literature." Another was on teaching it through art. One workshop offered by Kent State University (with "the largest undergraduate degree program in the country") was titled "Mainstreaming Peace and Conflict Studies: Designing Introductory Courses in Peace and Conflict Studies to Fit Liberal Arts Education Requirements." Catanese gave tips on conducting a needs assessment by seeking administrative support (to conduct surveys, etc.), determining the market, and creating the assessment. After cautioning that "perception" of "conflict" was important (implying the definition needs to expand), she suggested conducting surveys in introductory classes in English and History and asking professors to give participating students extra credit.

A handout, from a "How To' Manual for Creating Peace Studies Programs at Community Colleges," prepared by Thorngren and others, laid out the steps already described. Additionally, it suggested using funding for professional development to attend conferences and workshops sponsored by the United States Institute of Peace, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, and the Red Cross program Exploring Humanitarian Law. Collaborative work locally with law enforcement, area businesses, the Peace Corp., interfaith dialogue groups, environmental stability groups, and others was suggested. Additional national and international agencies included The Earth Charter (focuses on "sustainability"), Global Youth Connect, and Midwest Institute. The network of professionals in education, government agencies, criminal justice, and nonprofits is vast, and thus obscures the political agenda.

The Midwest Institute for International/Intercultural Education, based in Michigan, extends its membership roster of about 100 colleges to colleges in such states as Georgia and Florida. Director Theo Sypris bragged in the 2010 spring newsletter that “despite fiscal austerities and tight budgets, our consortium will have another successful year.” In 2010, projects will continue, including “three week-long curriculum workshops” on Languages and Global Communication, Environment and Sustainability, and Europe. But a column in the newsletter by College of Menominee Nation professor William Van Lopik reveals the ideological bent of the workshop. Van Lopik teaches “Introduction to Sustainable Development” and found the Midwest Institute’s workshop on “Global Poverty and Inequality” particularly helpful to his pedagogical goal of getting students to understand “the global inequities that exist in the world, particularly among indigenous peoples” and of getting them to assume “their roles as global citizens, living lives of social responsibility.” Recognizing “the historical parallels between their cultural history in the United States and the cultural history of other indigenous peoples in other parts of the world” was another important objective. Another editorial in the newsletter, by Laura Lacasa Yost, a professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Kirkwood Community College, started off with the assumption, “A key component of any institution of higher learning is community service. . . . As the world becomes dramatically smaller, that sense of helping others can now extend beyond the local or regional service area to the international stage.”

The “How To” handout from the workshop also listed that among the values of a peace program to be demonstrated to administrators is the fact that the program “fulfills various General Education requirements.” None of the General Education requirements, in the traditional sense, of math, business, writing, or even rigorous environmental science, however, seems to be met in a “sustainable development” or “conflict resolution” course. Rather, as the Kent State-sponsored workshop implied, traditional courses will be transformed as peace courses will be “mainstreamed.” In the newsletter Van Lopik promotes the Center’s Global Perspectives Inventory, which tests for “the degree of understanding and awareness among college students of various cultures and their impact on our global society” and “degree of engagement with others who are different from themselves.” These criteria do not suggest a measurement of *knowledge*, such as one would get in a world history course, but of vague, feelings-based understanding, awareness, and sensitivity. The handout listed the benefits of a Peace Studies degree for those working in social work, international business, politics, education, economics, the Peace Corps, Americorps, Vista, the United Nations, USAID, the World Bank, and the U.S. government. Promotional materials for the Cuyahoga college center tout the certificate for police officers, teachers, and other professionals, but they may be getting more than they bargain for.

In the last presentation of the workshop, Gregory P. Rabb of Jamestown Community College in New York State, said he aims to make his students, whom he described as “white” and “patriotic” (with the highest graduation rate of all community colleges in New York State), more internationally aware through an online simulation program that covers four topics: the environment, health and reproductive rights,

economics, and human rights. His semester begins with lectures, but eventually students spend more time online playing roles as world leaders and negotiating differences, for example, between North and South Korea.

While most of the conference focused on emotionally reprogramming *all* students, Saturday morning's panel on "Rerouting the Education-to-Prison Pipeline: Innovative Court/School Collaboration," focused on those one would think would require such special services: juvenile delinquents (although the term would never have been used). It featured members of the judicial and social services in Ohio. Juvenile Court Judge Linda Tucci Teodisio claimed that a MacArthur Foundation study showed that over 70 percent of youth involved in the juvenile justice system were experiencing mental health disorders. "Juvenile correctional facilities have become a warehouse for mentally ill youth," announced a Power Point slide. Teodisio promoted the idea of training for teachers and staff in identifying problems in middle school that are manifested in such ways as truancy. She touted a responder program where mental health professionals provide an alternative to police or work in conjunction with police. In her area, a Family Resource Center for teen parents offers tutoring that is used as credit against ordered community service. The Department of Youth Services offers a re-entry program that provides follow-up after release from prison. Other programs include New Paths for developmentally delayed youth with such handicaps as Aspergers Syndrome and autism, and [Crossroads](#)¹¹ for those with mental health and substance abuse problems. She claimed that studies show that community involvement programs reduce commitments to jail by 74%. The website also reveals a teen board that runs a [teen court](#).¹² (One conference workshop focused on creating a teen court program.) But as the title of the panel implied (the "pipeline" from education to prison), the assumption seems to be that the system is the problem, and therefore needs to be changed. There was a call for the schools to offer more services like diagnosis of problems. SEL then becomes the cure for the systemic problem.

Panelist David James, Superintendent of Akron City Schools, noted that zero tolerance policies put students further behind because students think of suspensions as vacations. James recommended programs like STRIVE, in which suspended kids' parents are offered counseling, and the YMCA's Phoenix program that works with the police department, which conducts sweeps for daytime truancy.

Steve Hanson, Manager, Children, Families, and the Courts, Supreme Court of Ohio, who had worked previously in a residential treatment center, emphasized child and family engagement; prison and zero tolerance breaks up the bond, he claimed. Kevin Shepherd, a parole officer for eleven years and now Parole Bureau Chief, Ohio Department of Youth Services, claimed that youth commitment is down 70 percent. Shepherd implied that a lag in education seems to be the source of criminality, and opportunities for education can be the cure. He offered that youth involved in the juvenile justice system typically lag academically behind their peers: the average white

¹¹ <http://www.co.summit.oh.us/prosecutor/Juvenile%20Crossroads.htm>

¹² <http://www.co.summit.oh.us/prosecutor/Teen%20Board.htm>

offender is 16.5 years old and at the eighth-grade level; the average nonwhite offender is the same age, but is at the sixth-grade level. He suggested ensuring that such juveniles be able to graduate from high school, instead of being directed towards obtaining GED's that don't bode as well for future success as do traditional degrees.

But Shepherd then cited more important risk factors like criminal history, antisocial personality, peer association, attitudes, values and beliefs.

Nevertheless, parole officers now go beyond simply monitoring for parole violations, he stated. Employing emotional intelligence, they ask about why the perpetrator is still using drugs, for example. As a result, claimed Shepherd, from the 2500 enrolled in institutions and 2500 on parole in 1990, today 1000 are enrolled in institutions and 1200 are on parole. Neither he, nor anyone else, however, cited a *drop in crime*, so it appears that offenders are being placed in alternative programs.

My first workshop that morning was "Teaching Emotional Intelligence: Strategies and Activities for Helping Students Make Effective Choices," led by consultant and licensed social worker Adina Bloom Lewkowicz. Referring to Goleman's book, Lewkowicz touted Emotional Intelligence as a means to prevent behavior problems in the classrooms, a way to "rebuild the dyke" that would stop the flow of negative emotional reactions. Although she presented her workshop with much flair and energy, beginning by belting out a song, the strategies she presented were simple, indeed simple-minded.

Assuming the roles of students, in our first demonstration, we sat in a circle for the "choice walk," wherein a volunteer walked in the middle of the circle and then was asked about the choice she made regarding her posture, speed, etc. This activity supposedly points out to students that choices affect impressions and outcomes. Next, we worked on assumptions, such as those that come up about performance on tests. Other activities included reading scripts on controlling anger (a girl playing with her best friend and being pestered by her younger sister and the assumptions that might lead to angry explosions). Slow breathing was demonstrated and recommended. Lewkowicz also promoted her book from which she copied a section on negotiation (stating desires directly, giving feedback, brainstorming possible solutions, and agreeing on a solution and following it through).

These are probably not bad skills to learn—in a voluntary private counseling session. But when students can't opt out and are *graded* on such exercises we should be concerned. Even the *refusal* by a student to participate will draw attention from peers and the "facilitator." Even as an adult among people I knew I would probably not see again, I felt uncomfortable, such as when I had stand in a line on a continuum of how we react to anger-inducing situations. The unwilling child's discomfort must be magnified.

With a "safe schools czar" now aiming to eliminate even "social rejection" in schools, one can see a growing market for services like hers. Lewkowicz's workshop, like the others, counted as a continuing education credit for participants.

She also distributed promotional material for workshops, in-services, and conferences for teachers.

The title of the final keynote address, “Preventing and Addressing Sexual Violence Against (sic) Children: Global Challenges – Local Struggles,” sounds like it would address problems in American schools. But it featured Jimmie Briggs who is known for his reporting on child soldiers in Africa. He is a former staff writer for *Life* magazine and author of *Innocents Lost: When Child Soldiers Go to War*. The program also noted that he is the “first African American to be appointed as a Goodwill Ambassador and Special Envoy for Children and Armed Conflict at the UN.”

But are African child soldiers a fair model? Briggs, who revealed that he is a single father of an eight-year-old girl, said that he remains “traumatized” by what he witnessed in Africa: rape and military inscription of children. He criticized the U.S. for its “dubious distinction” of not signing the Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child—the far-reaching document which makes it illegal for a parent to even spank his child. It would make over 90 percent of American parents criminals, because, according to Jo Bronson and Ashley Merryman,¹³ at least 90% of Americans have reported spanking their child at least once, with the percentage slightly higher in the black community. However, in the black community where corporal punishment is more accepted, “the more a child was spanked, the less aggressive the child [was] over time.” A University of Texas study found that even spanking three or more times a week in conservative white Protestant households had no negative effect.¹⁴ Seemingly reluctant to keep the focus on Africa, Briggs also cited CDC (Centers for Disease Control) statistics that purportedly reveal that one of three women will be assaulted and that one in six females in the military are sexually assaulted. Such equivalences have the effect of trivializing the real problems—like rape, forced inscription, and dysfunctional and violent families.

The discussion then turned to domestic problems in this arena, with panelists from two Ohio domestic violence programs and a professor of psychology who trains school psychologists. Rebecca Cline, “Prevention Program Director for the Ohio Domestic Violence Network,” said we should “look at conditions that create violence, oppression.” She promoted the group [Men Can Stop Rape](http://www.mencanstoprape.org/).¹⁵ The agenda of this group, however, goes beyond the ending of rape to redefining masculinity and ending a laundry list of oppressions. For example, the mission statement on the website describes such core values: “View men positively”: “we must embrace and be comfortable with the full range of emotion in men that is authentically human”; “Uphold gender equity”; “Practice non-violence”: “We build on shared strength, not on strength over others. We help men learn healthy ways to express anger and the full range of emotions men are taught to suppress. . . .”; “Challenge assumptions”: by bringing “edginess to the conversation about men’s violence against women in order to challenge long held beliefs about appropriate

¹³ Bronson, Po, and Ashley Merryman. *NurtureShock*. (New York: Hachette, 2009), pg. 185.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 187.

¹⁵ <http://www.mencanstoprape.org/>

behavior”; and “Connect oppressions” (“deeply connected to racism, sexism, homophobia, classicism, religious intolerance, and other oppressions that make everyone vulnerable to victimization”).

What is *not* part of the mission statement is advocacy of harsh punishment for the rare man who *is* an actual rapist.

The organization receives support from the Ford Foundation and George Soros’ Open Society Institute.

The program also listed Cline as “directly accountable for the DELTA Project, a local, statewide and national primary prevention initiative funded by the Centers for Disease Control.” Most of the states’ programs seem to focus on teen dating and are often administered through the schools. The programs focus on prevention, so all boys are subjected to such lectures on gender roles.

The Ohio Domestic Violence Network’s 2009 report to the CDC “Pathways in Prevention” also goes far beyond the problem as it speculates on root causes. In the “Summary of Conditions in Ohio that Merit Addressing,” some of these conditions concern high numbers of housing foreclosures and inadequate school funding. Curiously, the organization also links domestic violence to the fact that “Ohio is a concealed carry state.” The authors state, “This alone may have an impact on incidents of SV/IPV [spousal violence, intimate partner violence] as carrying weapons becomes a social norm.” However, there is no evidence cited that carrying a gun (or low education or foreclosure) correlates to spousal abuse. (The authors, though, in their larger objective of a culture that rewrites male and female roles, indeed, may want to disarm men who might carry weapons to *protect* their wives and girlfriends.)

Next, Psychology Professor Bill Pfohl (Western Kentucky University) repeated the major talking points about preventing teen dating violence and bullying. He is also president of the UNESCO-affiliated International School Psychology Association (ISPA), whose mission is to promote the spread of school psychology throughout the world. The organization sees the role of the school psychologist as far beyond that of a professional who is knowledgeable about child development and can assist children with special problems. Rather, the website states:

“There is a growing demand for School Psychologists to broaden their spheres of influence. The valuable knowledge and experience we have accumulated in confronting the realities of modern life enables us to take a more active role in the community. We can now place these at the service of the national and local leadership of different countries, both political and educational, helping them to develop and implement programs designed to improve the quality of schools and the lives of children.”

Among the organization’s goals is advancing “the psychological rights of all children throughout the world by participating in and contributing to the work of the

NGO Group for the Convention of the Rights of Children, providing information and resource support on children's rights to ISPA National Affiliates, cooperating in research projects that further children's rights, participating in the planning of international children's rights conferences and in the coordination of the distance learning project," and "taking part in cooperative projects with UNESCO and Education International."

These projects include teaching peer mediation and conflict resolution to children. On the resources link are many sites associated with "emotional intelligence."

The final workshop I attended was "Be the Change: Engaging Middle and High School Students in Human Rights and Transitional Justice" led by Facing History and Ourselves' Susan Oehler, who described her job as helping "teachers teach" on how to connect the past to moral choices today. Facing History is an international nonprofit organization, with locations in eight cities, including Cleveland. The organization's "Choosing to Participate" display on the Civil Rights movement that was in Cleveland for five months focused on the white on black racism of that era; students in a news clip aired for us testified to the fact that such racism still exists, albeit in more subtle forms. The aim of the program, not surprisingly, is the "awareness" of increasingly "subtle" forms of racism.

Such programs mimic college level oppression studies classes. Now they are being woven into the curriculum of primary and secondary schools, where children are forced to emotionally recreate lessons through role-playing rather than learn history.

Indeed, the stories in Oehler's presentation and in the group exercises she had us do come from a "history" that addresses only certain kinds of prejudice: anti-black, anti-Semitic, and anti-Islamic. Students are to engage emotionally with the online lessons about such injustices and then reflect ethically. "I want students to dig into things deeply," said Oehler. Students are asked what could happen if people don't stop genocide and segregation. In the "pedagogical triangle," the site presumably provides the "intellectual rigor." But the focus is on role-playing and not on historical facts like the Allies liberating the concentration camps and Civil Rights laws ending segregation.

Again mimicking student activities, we were asked to respond to the Van Morrison song "Days Like This." The song, as the hand-out explained, was played after the visit of President Clinton, "the first U.S. President to visit Northern Ireland" for a "peaceful crowd of 80,000 people . . . from many groups within the country." It was described as an event that allowed participants to "imagine peace." We were asked, "What does it say about resolving a conflict?" An appropriate response about "being the change" was sounded by a participant. Again, the question remains: Do students learn about actual history? Do they learn what was behind the conflict? (And dare I mention how the U.S. provides a contrast in terms of religious tolerance and pluralism?)

Oehler then gave a Power Point presentation based on the program's online material that features "upstanders" (those who stand up to injustice). These young role

models “take the hero off the pedestal” and thereby supposedly “empower” teenagers. These “upstanders” included Martin O’Brien who, as a twelve-year-old, began as a peace activist in Northern Ireland; Ernest Guevarra, a doctor in the Philippines; and Arn Chorn Pond, a child survivor of the Cambodian genocide who was adopted into the United States and went back to the camp in the Khmer Rouge where his father, among other artists, was killed. We were divided into small groups and ours focused on an African “upstander,” Yinka Jegede-Epke, an AIDS activist, a young woman who contracted AIDS from her dentist. When I mentioned, though, that nationalized health care would preclude the competition and fear of lawsuits that a privatized system does the others in my group only acknowledged the fact that I had spoken. The alternative was not even *considered*. One woman mentioned that it was nice that an activist focused on *women* with AIDS. In spite of all the talk about critical thinking, it is clear that any perspective that goes beyond the idolization of hand-picked “heroes” is ignored.

The student interviewers’ questions transcribed in a hand-out, as expected, echoed program objectives. For example, questions concerned convincing “people to see AIDS and HIV as a human rights issue,” and asking about feeling danger, “models for courage and activism,” what effect the disease had on her choice for work, and the role of religion in the “choices” Jegede-Epke made. All such concerns come from the assumption that human rights activism is the goal. Real solutions, like disease prevention through upgrading health care, were not addressed. And one would not expect middle school and high school students to be able to articulate such questions, especially when a lesson plan is titled, “Be the Change: Upstanders for Human Rights,” and the website uses information from far-left ideological groups. For example, “Facing Today”’s April 15 article “The Year in Hate and Extremism” begins, “The radical right is raging,” and quotes the [Southern Poverty Law Center](#)¹⁶ that attributes this alleged rage to the election of an African American president.

As I milled among the educators and peace activists who wore perpetually friendly smiles, often above buttons that stated, “When I listen, people talk,” I became increasingly uncomfortable. I thought about how uncomfortable I would have been as a child to have had one of these true believers as a teacher. I think I would rather have been rapped with a ruler than be subject to one of their emotional inquisitions in front of my peers. But they truly believe that through their actions and attitudes they can transform children and by extension future world leaders and citizens.

Conflict resolution education, based on notions of social and emotional intelligence, was presented as the cure for everything from poor academic performance to criminality. Much of it is based on Daniel Goleman’s bestseller, *Emotional Intelligence*, which in a practical way highlights the connections between emotions and success. For example, he notes that high anxiety can lead to freezing during tests and depression can lead to failure. There is really not much new there, though. What Goleman did was

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http://townhall.com/columnists/TomTancredo/2010/04/23/the_hidden_agenda_of_the_southern_poverty_law_center?page=1

repackage what most people already knew and suggested that such intelligence could be taught en masse.

Despite the vagueness and lack of rigor, Goleman’s book spawned an industry. This industry not only brings in fees for social workers and psychologists, but carries the promise of achieving grand social goals. Indeed, Goleman, in the tenth anniversary edition of his book, describes being “gratified” by “how ardently the concept [of social and emotional learning, or SEL], has been embraced.” The number of such programs in the decade since the publication of his book had risen from a “handful” to “tens of thousands of schools worldwide.” Goleman proudly claims that “In the United States many districts and even entire states currently make SEL a curriculum requirement, mandating that just as students must attain a certain level of competence in math and language, so too should they master these essential skills for living.”¹⁷

Goleman links SEL to academic achievement. As evidence, he cites two unpublished presentations at the American Psychological Association meetings, one by Roger Weissberg, “who directs the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning [CASEL] at the University of Illinois at Chicago—the organization that has led the way in bringing SEL into the schools worldwide.”¹⁸

Goleman, *himself*, though, co-founded CASEL. And Weissberg, the “researcher” cited by Goleman, is listed as a founding member, and a member of all three working groups (Preschool to Elementary School SEL Workgroup, Illinois Assessment Workgroup, and Research Advisory Group). The study cited by Goleman was conducted by his associates at his own program! Not surprisingly, a study conducted by emotional intelligence advocates and entrepreneurs showed that emotional intelligence is extremely beneficial. Governmental agencies now uncritically cite such “research” as justification for implementing expensive programs.

Despite the obvious bias of the cited research, Goleman, in the introduction to the 2005 edition of his book, expresses his hopes for a day when “SEL would have become standard practice in schools everywhere and its qualities of “self-awareness, managing destructive emotions, and empathy would be givens in the workplace, ‘must-haves’ for being hired and promoted. . . .”

Mark Barth, one of the panelists described earlier, is one of those who wants to make SEL standard practice—by law. In his online draft for the Guidelines and Resources for Social and Emotional Development and Learning (SEDL) in New York, he refers to CASEL’s “consumer’s guide” to classroom-based SEL programs. He references CASEL’s 2008 “three-part meta-analysis of SEL on K-8 students,” Weissberg’s articles, and CASEL founder Daniel Goleman’s book as a bible on the subject. Several of the authors cited in his Guidelines are *members* of CASEL.

¹⁷ x. Introduction.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

In fact, in his acknowledgements, Barth begins, “The New York State Education Department is indebted to the leadership of [CASEL] and to CASEL’s Vice President for Strategic Initiatives Mary Utne O’Brien for monthly, sometimes daily advice” and “to Roger P. Weissberg President and member of CASEL Board of Directors who made the assisting the development of New York States’ (sic) SEDL guidelines a CASEL priority.” He calls the CASEL website “an elegantly crafted encyclopedia and a priceless resource for anyone wishing to put NYSED’s SEDL Guidelines to use.” A “special thanks” is also given to the George Lucas Education Foundation for making and producing SEDL videos online.” Even the New York State Department of Mental Health cites the CASEL “meta-analysis” to claim that SEL improves academic achievement. The New York Children’s Mental Health Act of 2006 requires the development of guidelines for incorporating SEL into schools on a voluntary basis by districts.

Bronson and Merryman, however, claim that they got Goleman to admit that there was no real research supporting his claims about the value of learning “emotional intelligence.”¹⁹ In their 2009 book *Nurture Shock*, they cite studies that confirm what common sense would tell us: children learn valuable skills from conflict. It has been a rite of passage into adulthood. The imposition of adult-dictated “conflict resolution” sessions is another part of the nurture overload that children confront today, which includes excessive praise by parents and teachers, hyper-sensitivity to self-esteem, unwillingness to allow competition, etc. Such sessions freeze children’s emotional growth, Bronson and Merryman demonstrate.

In fact, applying this kind of therapy on a mass scale can have a harmful effect. Psychologists have pointed out that excessive attention to feelings and self-esteem has the effect of producing narcissists, which as studies have shown are increasing in number. One would think that the blanket, generic approach to violence that comes from group exercises can have the effect of normalizing such behavior. To make students “peer counselors” and “mediators” puts an onerous burden on them and absolves the adults of responsibility. Mediation that focuses on resolution through compromise can shift blame onto the victim and undermine our notions of justice. When punishments are not dealt with justly, the victim can experience a build-up of grievance, until he explodes. In her analysis of violent kids, psychologist Helen Smith²⁰ notes that students are no longer allowed less violent outlets like physical fights, which have been seen as a part of growing up.

Indeed, the focus on emotion can make a problem worse. Smith claims that therapy and focus on feelings and self-esteem can exacerbate a narcissist’s problems. Anxiety about punishment, in contrast, can inspire him to change. She concludes a chapter: “Paradoxically, school curricula . . . aimed at helping teens get in touch with

¹⁹ <http://blog.newsweek.com/blogs/nurture shock/archive/2009/10/21/a-conversation-on-teaching-emotional-intelligence-in-the-classroom.aspx>

²⁰ Smith, Helen. (*The Scarred Heart: Understanding and Identifying Kids Who Kill*. Callisto Publishing, 2000).

their emotions may actually make things worse—given the emotional makeup of many troubled teens—while programs that substitute rational thought for emotion may help them deal with their problems constructively.”

But last December, CASEL sent out a press release bragging about the bipartisan legislation by Democratic Congressmen Dale E. Kildee (MI) and Tim Ryan (OH), and Republican Congresswoman Judy Biggert (IL) called the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act (HR 4223). In addition to providing grants, the Act would authorize the Secretary of Education “to provide technical assistance to states, school districts, and community-based organizations” for social and emotional learning and would allow him to “conduct an independent evaluation of grantees to determine the program’s impact on student achievement, attainment and behavioral outcomes.” The last task suggests that the data supporting the effectiveness of these programs are inconclusive. (As Bronson and Merryman point out, it is to a program’s advantage to require more study—to keep the funds coming in.) Arne Duncan speaking with Congressman Ryan on March 18, 2010, as mentioned earlier, repeated the mantra of SEL proponents that these are “absolutely teachable, learnable skills.” He cited—once again—the “meta-analysis” that purportedly showed an 11 to 17 percent improvement in academic achievement. But the oft-cited “meta-analysis” was done by CASEL’s own Weissberg and Loyola University professor Joseph Durlak—who is part of CASEL’s “Research Advisory Group” (as is Weissberg). The education department’s budget calls for \$410 million to be spent on school safety issues under Jennings’ expanded definition. But it is difficult to pin point exactly *how much* is going to be spent on SEL efforts, in other words how much of tax dollars are going to go toward paying consultants and trainers.

Despite being touted as a political moderate who is focused on raising academic standards, Duncan seems to have had a friendly attitude toward such efforts. As superintendent of Chicago public schools, Duncan directed the similarly touchy-feely High School Transformation Project that included a 2006 “Student Connection Survey,” which asked students to measure their schools on such qualities as “safe and respectful climate” (including “emotional safety”), “expectations” (teacher encouragement, “connect to what I am learning to my life outside of the classroom,” “expects everyone to work hard,” and “believes I can do well in school”), “student support” (how much students feel listened to, cared about, and helped by teachers and other adults in the school). Kevin Jennings is now the point man on this initiative, speaking to various groups like the Summer Institute at Fordham University’s Center for Social and Emotional Education, July 6-8.

This new approach fits with the goals of educators who see their roles as agents of social change and their students as subjects to carry it out. While it makes sense that individuals who are stymied by emotionally upsetting home lives or poor coping skills would be helped by learning new strategies aimed at addressing these problems, the way such therapy is used—on an indiscriminate group scale—and the ideological goals it is mixed up with—reveal that it is not the individual student and her academic success that is the prime concern of such educators.

And the claim that SEL improves academic achievement is put into doubt by the school created by CASEL member Linda Darling-Hammond and run by Stanford Education College faculty. Stanford New Schools employed conflict resolution along with other efforts aimed at emotionally aiding students, but it has failed miserably, reported Joanne Jacobs. Stanford New Schools targeted low-income Hispanic and black students and featured a web of programs and private services to meet their emotional needs. Jacobs reports, “In March, Stanford New Schools (aka East Palo Alto Academy)—a charter high school started in 2001 and elementary grades added in 2006—made California’s list of schools in the lowest-achieving five percent in the state.”²¹ Students were graded on a “five-dimensional rubric based on (1) Personal Responsibility; (2) Social Responsibility; (3) Communication Skills; (4) Application of Knowledge; and (5) Critical and Creative Thinking”; only 20 percent of the grade was based on knowledge. (The guinea pigs in such social experiments are usually the children from minority groups who are the most vulnerable.)

But such evidence that flies in the face of claims of success is ignored by proponents of SEL. Conflict resolution is part and parcel of the new pedagogical approach of constructivism that shuns knowledge and reason in favor of creativity and emotion. Teachers now “facilitate” while students supposedly work out their lessons and problems creatively and emotionally. Ironically, the “facilitator” stepping out of a role of enforcer of clear-cut, established rules and guidelines can easily become a manipulator, preying on students’ emotions. Through suggestion and appeal to the students’ peers, she can exercise immense emotional power.

It’s not surprising that CASEL’s agenda—like virtually all such groups’ agendas—goes beyond “conflict resolution” or resolving disputes. CASEL promotes community activism and changing academic assessments from traditional knowledge based ones to “comprehensive assessments” that “provide a picture of the whole student,” according to their website. Teachers are to evaluate students on their “performances,” “leadership skills,” “creativity,” and, of course, social and emotional intelligence, the same standards of the failed Stanford New Schools. The larger agenda aims to end objective academic measurement. Likewise, *behaving* by the rules is not enough. Little Johnny’s report card now includes not only marks for citizenship, but for his feelings and expressions. It used to be that Johnny did not have to *like* little Susie, but now he does. He will also have to confess before an assembly of his peers and an emotional intelligence educator like Michael Pritchard what some slight was “doing to your heart.” For conducting this [this kind of assembly](#),²² (video produced by CASEL’s partner George Lucas’s Edutopia) Pritchard charges between \$750 and \$1650, plus that same amount for presentations to teachers and parents. Even the terms used for activities in such sessions—like “truth-telling” and “trust exercises”—indicate a violation of psychological boundaries of children that should have all parents and citizens concerned.

²¹ Pajamas Media April 24, 2010.

²² <http://www.michaelpritchard.com/videos>

These programs parallel the pedagogical approaches of those like tenured “Distinguished Professor” Bill Ayers, who pretend to allow school children to discover and construct knowledge, while guiding them in an ideological direction through emotional coercion. As my earlier report stated, Ayers claims that the teacher’s most important trait is “love.”

Illinois, and more specifically the University of Illinois at Chicago, seems to be the epicenter of such efforts that align quite well with the pedagogical philosophy of Ayers. According to the New York State Department of Mental Health, Illinois is a leader (and a model), having created in 2004 “SEL learning standards.” Illinois “requires school districts to adopt a policy on meeting the social and emotional needs of every child.” Not surprisingly, among the writers of the state standards is CASEL president Roger Weissberg, and members Mehyun Song and Mary Utne O’Brien.

Another writer of the standards was Larry Nucci, professor emeritus from the Department of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Coincidence that this is the place where Bill Ayers teaches?

Bill Ayers’ name does not appear—at least prominently—among the names on CASEL and similar organizations.

But it seems that Nucci and Ayers have a professional relationship based on similar pedagogical beliefs. Nucci published Ayers’ essay, “Who in the World Am I? Reflecting on the Heart of Teaching” in his 2005 book *Conflict, Contradiction and Contrarian Elements in Moral Development and Education*. Arne Duncan was involved with the same Chicago Annenberg Challenge that Obama was involved with, along with Ayers; and Duncan supported separate schools for gay students. As Chicago school superintendant, he advocated a concept of “community schools” that would be open 12 to 14 hours a day, offering homework help, health clinics, and potluck dinners. So while Duncan seems to be getting kudos for his reform movement “Race to the Top,” his background, along with his pick of Kevin Jennings, indicates an agenda that goes beyond traditional academics. By his own statements, he presents a new role for schools—as providing those things parents once did: homework help, doctor visits, meals, and emotional guidance and support.

Social and emotional learning—and all its political goals—jibe well with the agenda of Bill Ayers, “communist with a small ‘c,’” as he calls himself. Just about every statement about “helping” children at the Cleveland conference overstepped the role of teacher or counselor and was followed up by the desired objective of worldwide “peace.” Conflict resolution, the way it is touted by its proponents, involves the overthrow of our notions of justice for those of an international order based on compromise. Each individual child in the classroom is seen as a tool for bringing in this new world order. It is a new world order where masculinity is eschewed and replaced by endless talk and exploration of feelings, where right and wrong are overruled by concern for hurt feelings, where children are required to parade their feelings before peers and adult facilitators,

where personal feelings and disputes are projected onto the world stage, where ignorant students are led to believe that they know how to bring about world peace (and have that onerous and ridiculous task imposed on them), where teachers, counselors, and parole officers take the place of family in round-the-clock “community schools.”

Former “flower children” have found their opportunities to implement ideas of the 1960s. Consultants see new money-making opportunities in districts desperate to control students, who, as a result of post-Sixties permissiveness, know no discipline. It’s all part of the larger plan of the SDS at Port Huron in 1962: to change consciousness by working in the schools. The indoctrination goes far beyond the political correctness in curricula and lectures we’ve been used to.

In this shocking report, “*Changing Consciousness: Conflict Resolution, Emotional Intelligence, and Peace Studies for a One-World Government*,” Mary Grabar reveals the real agenda behind “Conflict Resolution Education” and warns that parents, citizens, and political leaders should not be fooled by the innocuous-sounding names such as “emotional intelligence” under which such radical efforts masquerade. She discloses that:

- Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Conflict Resolution Education, Peace Studies, and other variants are names for a pedagogy that aims to reprogram students through emotional manipulation.
- Government officials have taken up the cause and are dedicating millions in federal dollars to such efforts. Among the true believers are Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Assistant Deputy Secretary, Office of Safe & Drug Free Schools, Kevin Jennings.
- Kevin Jennings uses SEL to promote indoctrination of school children towards the acceptance of the gay lifestyle, a cause that he has spent the bulk of his professional career on.
- SEL advocates use a wide array of left-wing non-profits and international organizations to assist them in their efforts, including the UN’s University for Peace in Costa Rica and the federally-funded U.S. Institute for Peace in Washington, D.C.
- Sesame Workshop produces films that propagandize SEL throughout the world.
- Anti-Americanism is reflected in efforts to compare childhood inscription and massive rape by soldiers in Africa and the U.S. refusal to sign and ratify the UN Rights of the Child treaty that would outlaw spanking by parents.
- Efforts are underway on a state-by-state level to mandate SEL into curriculums.
- A federal effort to expand this kind of “learning” has taken the form of the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2009 (HR 4233), introduced by Democratic Congressmen Dale E. Kildee (MI), Tim Ryan (OH), and Republican Congresswoman Judy Biggert (IL).
- The University of Illinois at Chicago, where former Weather Underground terrorist and communist Bill Ayers teaches in the College of Education, is the incubator for these efforts. Ayers wrote a back cover endorsement for *Queering Elementary Education*, the same book that carries Kevin Jennings’ foreword.