



# NCPIE Update

*A Publication of the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education*

*January 2006*

## **Innovative Film Series Explores Family and Community in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

January's NCPIE meeting featured a presentation by Michael Courville, Program Director for The Respect for All Project (RFAP). Michael shared with those in attendance an overview of RFAP's highly acclaimed series of documentary films and diversity training programs. Before closing his presentation, he issued a special request for national collaborations with NCPIE members.



For the past ten years RFAP has produced documentary style films and associated anti-bias training programs designed to help teachers, parents and guardians, youth service providers and students themselves make learning environments more welcoming and safe places. As a program of Women's Educational Media, the RFAP encompasses a series of documentary films, printed curriculum guides and professional diversity training. The goal of their efforts is to create safe schools and communities by giving youth, parents, their educators and service providers the tools they need to address and understand diversity of all kinds. With a focus on anti-bias education and training, the RFAP is a program that promotes cultural diversity and is looking to connect more fully with parent involvement organizations interested in anti-violence and anti-bullying education.

### **An Overview of Women's Educational Media**

Since 1978, Women's Educational Media (WEM) has produced and distributed films and educational resources on issues ranging from environmental concerns to affordable housing to preventing prejudice. Working closely with educators, activists, national and local organizations, the films presented by this organization are used to inspire meaningful social change.

In 1991 WEM won an Academy Award® for the film *Deadly Deception*, which fueled a boycott against energy giant General Electric and led that company to give up its nuclear-weapons production. But for nearly a decade, most of WEM's work has focused on the need to create schools and communities that are safe for all children in the United States and abroad. Bolstered by the buzz from the Academy, WEM created The Respect for All Project to help educators understand the importance of addressing diverse issues with young children in an age-appropriate way, and of helping kids address sensitive issues such as race, ethnicity and gender.

### **The Rationale Behind This Project:**

Waiting to teach children to accept differences of all kinds until middle school or high school is too late; statistics show that by sixth, seventh and eighth grades, harmful stereotypes have already begun to take hold, and teaching about respect—when it is done at all—becomes a difficult process of "unlearning" negative attitudes and opinions. The films that encompass the project are:

- *That's A Family!* (2000)--Grades K-6
- *Let's Get Real* (2003)--Grades 6-9

- *Straightlaced* (2007)--Grades 9-12

Each film is told entirely from the perspective of school-age children. Children who come from families that are often ignored or disparaged by popular culture and the media tell us what they wish people understood about them in the film, *That's a Family!*

*Let's Get Real* is a powerful documentary, designed for middle school students, where youth speak up about name-calling and bullying. It exposes tough social issues behind bullying and violence, including racial and ethnic tensions, anti-gay prejudice, religious discrimination, sexual harassment and gender bias.

And, finally, *Straightlaced* (a working title for this film targeted to high school youth), currently in production, will encourage high schools students to reflect on the pressures they face to conform to strict gender roles and how that influences to their own anti-gay behavior.

### **Resources for Educators**

All of the films in The Respect for All Project come with extensive discussion and teaching guides designed to be used in conjunction with the films. They feature:

- sample lesson plans
- frequently asked questions
- discussion starters, and
- further resources

RFAP also provides professional training for educators and youth-service providers about how to use these films to engage young people in meaningful discussions about all kinds of diversity, including differences in race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation and ability. RFAP is available to present at conferences and on college campuses.

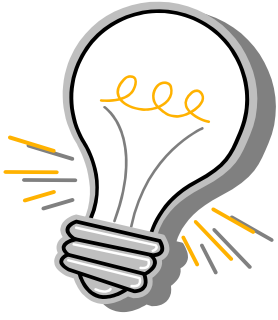
### **National Partnerships and NCPIE**

The Respect for All Project has joined with the National Education Association, the Child Welfare League of America, the US Conference of Mayors, the Association of Children's Museums and the Afterschool Alliance to launch an innovative campaign that fosters diversity awareness and respect in communities around the nation. This National Outreach Coalition provides training to educators and youth-service providers at daylong events held at children's museums in cities nationwide. Members of NCPIE are invited to become a part of this national partnership to help bring these resources to their state and local affiliates. Partnerships can be developed in a variety of ways. From hosting a film screening at a national conference to developing a tool-kit for parents and guardians working to bring the films to their school, NCPIE members can choose a strategy that compliments their unique programs and organizational missions. The impact of partnership includes the ability by those involved to:

- Reach more parents and guardians in rural communities and smaller urban areas
- Expand access to an effective tool for schools, communities and families
- Support existing efforts to make students safe, welcome and successful
- Promote family involvement in building a positive school climate for all students
- Foster a more inclusive community and more democratic society across our nation

For more information on WEM or the RFAP, please contact Michael Courville directly at

mcourville@respectforall.org, or 1-800-405-3322 x389. Their web-site is: [www.respectforall.org](http://www.respectforall.org).



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## **Spotlight on *The Evidence***

*A continuing column highlighting the research from “A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement” by Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp.*

This portion of The Update will soon be moved to the NCPIE web-site: [www.ncpie.org](http://www.ncpie.org). Please visit the site often for the latest information on research associated with parent involvement.