



ReVision

re (ri) *n.* I. anew, again **vision** (vizh'ən) *n.* I. the manner in which one sees or conceives of something

YES Workshop Communicates to Deaf Students

Even in a world with no spoken words, name-calling and hurtful remarks still torment.

YES bridged uncharted waters to reach deaf and hard of hearing high school students from Miami Southwest High School with a breakthrough presentation of the ESSENTIALS OF ORIENTATION™ course. For many students, this was their first educational experience related to name-calling and bullying.



Interpreter signing for Joseph Zolobczuk, YES Education Coordinator during the ESSENTIALS OF ORIENTATION™ course.

Deaf and hard of hearing students are among the most communication challenged and isolated youth. Many parents of deaf students in the Miami-Dade County Public School System (MDCPS) do not know sign language and have limited ability to communicate with their own children. Deaf and hard of hearing students rely on sign language for their primary mode of communication. School is where most of their social interactions take place. A "psychology of deafness" exists that serves to isolate deaf, not only from other people, but also from

knowledge, thereby contributing to their self perception and their place in the hearing world.

Deaf students sign slurs

American Sign Language (ASL) is concept based. The sign for "gay" and the sign for "faggot" are the same sign, but to hearing people, one word is acceptable and one word is not. However, after attending the course at YES, the nuances of signing the word "gay" took on a whole other meaning for the deaf students.

“ It isn't just information that gives them power; it's understanding the information that gives them power. The course empowers deaf students because YES takes them beyond labels into higher cognitive processing and the ability to make decisions to ensure their safety both in and out of school. ”

- Barbara Chotiner, MDCPS Teacher

Georgia Leaders Break New Ground

The COMMUNICATION FOR SAFER LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (CSLE) is a course co-sponsored by the Dahlenega Ministerial Association of Lumpkin County and the North Georgia College & State University (NGCSU) School of Education led by YES Institute that addresses emerging cultural divides and resolutions that have impact on the learning experience of students.

“ I feel this was a transformational process. I'm now making a difference in a significant way and am more effective in my work addressing gender. ”

- Susan Ferrell, M. Ed, NGCSU School of Education

Educators face unprecedented demands in classroom environments where the only constant is a rapidly changing culture. Not only must they be masterful in the field they are teaching, they are also called on to handle, respond, influence, mitigate, reconcile, or simply ignore many of the most difficult issues of our time. Many members of the Faculty of the School of Education (teachers of new teachers) have not received training on some of the topics that forge the day-to-day interactions of students and teachers. They are asked to teach and proceed as if the demanding, often contentious

issues of immigration, ethnicity, sexual orientation, varying religious beliefs, and new frontiers of gender are not impacting students and learning environments. Six sessions were led by YES via videoconferencing spanning several months. Each participant completed a project in their local community as part of the course curriculum.



Distance learning class with NGCSU faculty.



Amy Ryals, teacher of deaf students.

Barbara Chotiner, a MDCPS teacher and Wendy Hameroff-Cohen, a MDCPS counselor for deaf and hard of hearing students, were the driving force behind bringing the educational opportunities of YES to the deaf and hard of hearing students. As Chotiner told the staff at YES at the first planning meeting, "I feel that bullying takes on many forms and whether the deaf students were the ones doing the bullying or the ones receiving the bullying, they needed a deeper understanding from the experts at YES to fill in the gaps of their many misunderstandings."

The learning curve

An obstacle arose when an administrator in the school system became wary of the field trip and went to the YES website. The school then required the YES mission statement to be put on the field trip permission form. Many parents refused to sign the forms as they became apprehensive after reading the words "gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth" in the YES mission statement. Hameroff-Cohen called all the parents to explain the course content and the purpose of the trip, resulting in most, but not all, giving their permission.

These programs are made possible by your generosity. To participate in keeping all youth safe, visit www.yesinstitute.org to learn more.

Stepping Forward To Learn and Lead



Howard Taule, Marc Mencher, Sophie Orta, Dr. Lorie Mitchell, Richard Torres, Martha Perez-Tamayo, Bosco Lorio, Marilyn Cepeda, Julie Sherman, and Amy Ryals, all participants in the January COMMUNICATION SOLUTIONS™ course, the first workshop of Education Week.

Each January, we offer the entire YES education curriculum packed into a 5-day format. The condensed timeframe attracts many out of town guests, who welcome the convenience of learning our methods and seeing our research in one visit to the YES Education Center in Miami.

South Florida YES Education Week participants included James Gross, Meteorologist; Janice Hynes, Psy. D., Clinical Psychology;

Bosco Lorio, RT, Veterans Hospital; Dr. Lorie Mitchell, LCSW, Board Certified Sexologist; Amy Ryals, MDCPS Teacher for Deaf/HOH; and Virgin Vandervlugt, RN, Nursing Educator. National attendees included Rev. Frank Colladay, Presbyterian Minister from Dahlonga, Georgia; Rev. Steve Colladay, Unity Minister from Dallas, Texas; and Lee Klinger Lesser, Early Childhood Project Manager with the Parent Service Project in San Francisco, California.

Redefining Diversity at FIU Campus

The entire Resident Assistant (RA) body at Florida International University (FIU) South Campus attended a YES presentation as part of their diversity training in January.

"We want FIU to be a welcoming and affirming place for all our residential students," said Gisela Vega, Assistant Director of Student Life. "Part of the process in creating this atmosphere includes challenging our staff in their own diversity awareness and comfort levels through formal training sessions." FIU's student body has a relatively high percentage of minority and international students – the large public research university recently ranked third in the



FIU Resident Assistants.

nation in granting undergraduate degrees to minorities, underscoring the importance of diversity training in all areas. Along with the ethnic and cultural diversity, many of these students come from a background where sexual orientation and gender are taboo topics. "For many of these RAs, the YES presentation was the first time they have heard the words 'gay' or 'lesbian' spoken aloud in a serious public forum or met and talked to a person they are aware is gay," noted YES Education Coordinator Joseph Zolobczuk. "So our transgender speaker, who is a current student at FIU, was quite an experience." "It's a major learning experience and undertaking," agreed Vega. "But our RAs really shined. They found the training amazingly impactful. Many have already called YES for follow-up engagements for their floor projects, and we hope to continue partnering with YES throughout the year."

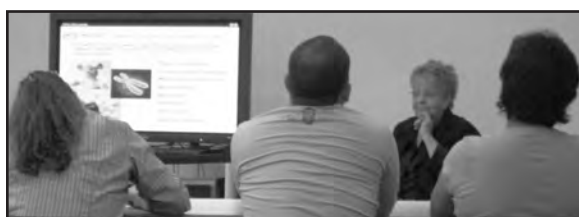


YES Speakers Sophie Orta, Gloria Bauta, Nicole Soltau, and Joseph Zolobczuk, all students and/or alumni of FIU.

Principios: A Gift for Hispanic Parents

PRINCIPIOS ESCENCIALES DE ORIENTACION is a course in Spanish designed for parents struggling with these topics where many myths, stereotypes, and fears abound. Hispanic parents in the December course arrived with many questions and much confusion. They were accompanied by some very committed school counselors that came to learn and attend the course along with the families. "Giving these parents the opportunity, not only to ask questions, but to talk freely about their children is one of the most inspiring parts of my work at YES," said Eva Leivas-Andino, Hispanic Outreach coordinator with YES. PRINCIPIOS is conducted upon request

PRINCIPIOS ESCENCIALES DE ORIENTACION
Saturday, April 14, 2007 | 9AM to 1PM



Eva Leivas-Andino in the PRINCIPIOS course.

on Saturday mornings at YES Institute. If you and friends or family are interested in attending, please call Eva to reserve your space at 305-663-7195 ext.1114.

Deaf Students (Continued)

ASL has signs for words like male or female, but has no individual signs to portray abstract concepts like masculinity, femininity and orientation. Addressing this challenge, Chotiner developed a vocabulary list so our course words could be discussed in ASL beforehand.

“ The need and right to communicate is the most fundamental of human rights. To deny it is to harm the human spirit, to foster communication is to reveal all the possibilities of life. ”

- Lawrence M. Siegel, Esq., Director
National Deaf Education Project

Customary theater-style seating provided yet another obstacle. If a student sitting in the front row is communicating, students sitting in rows behind cannot read their sign. IT Manager Tim Wagoner implemented a triple camera setup that projected live video from different room angles on the center screen. Every student and interpreter who signed could be viewed regardless of their location.



Signing the ESSENTIALS OF ORIENTATION™ course.

Results immediately apparent

Back at school, the teachers noticed immediate positive results, reporting a dramatic decrease in name calling among the workshop participants. "Our goal was to reduce name-calling," Chotiner said. But, as the day of the course went on, it went far beyond that. A counselor for deaf and hard of hearing students noted, "The participation by the students was fantastic. They felt comfortable at YES and safe enough to express their opinions." Hameroff-Cohen said that in the days following the course at YES, "...they seemed to 'listen' better to each other. They seemed to be more patient with each other, particularly when someone had something personal to share. Instead of dismissing or interrupting each other as they did before. They listened to one another with respect." One of the students wrote in his evaluation, "YES taught me how to do the right thing and to not insult people. Insults are not respectful and can hurt people."

Future efforts planned

Chotiner would like to offer the SAFE-T COURSE, a one-day student version of our COMMUNICATION SOLUTIONS™, to these students in the future. She would also like all deaf and hard of hearing students in the district to have the opportunity to attend YES courses.

Job Opportunity: Digital Specialist

Are you creative, computer-savvy and energetic? An ideal opportunity for students looking for hands-on experience.

<http://www.yesinstitute.org/careers>

Kiaora Society Membership

YES Institute welcomes new Kiaora members Douglas Kinsley, Lane W. Park, Gary B. Stross, Russell Wagner, and Dale A. Young, all joining the Kiaora Society as Mentors.

We are very grateful to Jon & Tina Kislak for renewing their ongoing Visionary commitment to YES and for exceptional support in many areas. Long time friends and Kiaora members Greg Baldwin & Jose Castro, Peter Pilotti & Joseph Rodano and Carol & Ed Williamson renewed their contributions as Kiaora Champions. We thank Kiaora members Larry Luing & Dario Espinosa, Kevin J. Miller & Allan Hunter, and Jorge Vazquez & Robert Armada, all renewing Kiaora Leaders.

We also thank Jose Alonso, Jorge Centurion, James C. Hanrahan, Barbara T. Gray, William Vaughan, Scott Dansky & John Dawson, Virginia Dunn & Jackie Cartier, Walter F. Goodman & Robert A. Flanders, Howard Perry Rothberg II &

Paul A. Scolieri-Rothberg, and Janice & Howard Scholl for renewing their contributions as Kiaora Society Mentors.

YES welcomes new corporate partner HSBC-South Miami and we thank Leticia Carrazana, South Miami Branch manager for her friendship and commitment to our work. Citigroup Foundation and the Women's Fund of Miami Dade County continue their support of the education work of YES Institute. Special thanks to the Kiwanis Club of Key Biscayne Inc., and our very own Bob Oldakowski, for their continued support.

We would like to recognize the extraordinary commitment of the YES Institute Board of Directors. In addition to being an active and effective volunteer working board, all contribute at varying levels as Kiaora Members, and renew their commitment annually. We give enormous thanks to all of our exemplary board members.



Kiaora Society

Kiaora Society members donate \$1,000 or more to the YES Institute annually.

Philanthropist \$100,000 or more

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Eddie McIntyre.

Losing a Dear Friend

We are deeply saddened by the loss of longtime friend and YES supporter Eddie McIntyre. Eddie was a man who seemed to have everything, including incredible success as a local attorney. He shared his wealth, talents, and love in many areas, always reaching to make the world a better place. His support for YES and his commitment to a safer world for youth was consistent and ongoing. His tragic and unexpected death leaves a void in our hearts and in our entire community. Eddie is missed and he will never be forgotten.

Rx for Future Physicians

Our culture has historically been silent about orientation and gender, leaving even the most educated professional with little experience of gay or transgender youth beyond basic stereotypes. Physicians, it seems, are no exception and YES spoke recently to two separate groups of medical students who underscored this omission in their preparation as doctors. "I'm glad we heard information that is not included in the medical literature," said Christine Gilmore, a second-year student attending the American Medical Student Association (AMSA) Southern Regional

Conference. Students at Nova Southeastern University found the YES dialogue helpful in future dealings with colleagues as well as patients. "The conversation about engaging appropriately with medical colleagues who make anti-gay jokes was helpful," said Laura Martin, a DO student.



Nova Southeastern medical students.

Changing Horizons of Gender

A Hispanic father recently called YES at the suggestion of his son's Hialeah middle school counselor. The father was irate and confused about his 9-year-old son's belief that he is really a girl. This call was a desperate cry for help. He had already done everything he could think of to control his son. Everything he tried had failed miserably. How could this be, and more importantly, how could he change it? The son does not "act the way a boy is supposed to." None of his other kids are like this, why this one? Fortunately this family came to YES and

attended the ESSENTIALS OF ORIENTATION™ course with the counselor who referred them. It was amazing the difference that education made in just four short hours. When it was over, the father asked, "Why isn't this information available to my son's school?" When told it was available to anyone who asked, the father resolved to call the principal of his son's school and tell them about the education resources at YES. Sharing about the availability of our work can mean the difference between crisis and resolution, for this student and many others.

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5275 Sunset Drive
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www.yesinstitute.org

First Course for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students



305-663-7195 www.yesinstitute.org

Vision

A community in which ALL youth develop as healthy individuals free of suicide, violence and discrimination.

Mission

To prevent suicide and ensure the healthy development of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and ALL youth by initiating dialogue, providing education and creating support systems.

Education Accreditations

Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Professional Development, #2-403-003, #2-406-302 (MPP)

Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy, and Mental Health, #50-1652 (CEU)

Florida Board of Nursing, #50-1652 (CEU)

North Georgia College & State University, Professional Learning Units (PLU)

Communication Consultants for the Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida

Upcoming Courses



Component Numbers
#2-403-003 #2-406-302



MDCPS educators must first register on the Professional Development portal. Search under instructor "Valido."

Use your login information above the mailing address to enroll in a course at: education.yesinstitute.org

COMMUNICATION SOLUTIONS™ Course - 12 CEU & MPP
Friday & Saturday, July 20 & 21
Noon to 6PM each day

TRANSGENDER 101 - 4 CEU New course!
Friday, April 13, 1PM to 5PM

GENDER/ORIENTATION SERIES™ - 16 CEU / 12 MPP
Part 1 GENDER CONTINUUM - Monday, June 15
Part 2 DECIPHERING MATRIX - Tuesday, June 22
Part 3 BEING & BELONGING - Tuesday, June 22

<http://education.yesinstitute.org>

Sharing from the Heart



Virgin Vandervlugt, RN, speaking to high school students at MAST Academy.

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Maybe Anything Is Possible

Debblesu Lee, Ph.D.,
Assistant Professor,
University of Miami



A week before the YES COMMUNICATION SOLUTIONS™ course, I was busy writing an entry for the newest edition of the

Encyclopedia of Positive

Psychology. The focus of the entry was "Cultural Pluralism," how all people in a society can live harmoniously together and have their differences appreciated and supported without compromise. I had come to the conclusion that this type of pluralism would not happen in my lifetime. I could not see how this could happen.

When I entered YES, I was embraced by the friendly, wide smiles of the crew and volunteers. Participants were from all walks of life and experiences. Over the next two days, various discussions and activities allowed us to explore how we define ourselves, our connections with one another, and our mutual purpose. Through sharing and listening, I began to appreciate how similar we all are, despite our apparent differences. The COMMUNICATION SOLUTIONS™ course transformed an "us versus them" context to "we," and I finally had an experience of cultural pluralism being a tangible possibility. Thank you YES, for a very inspiring experience!

Did You Know?

Anti-gay epithets are a catalyst for violence that affects all youth. 97% of all students hear anti-gay comments in school.

Gay Youth:

- 33% of all teen suicides
- 50% rejected by their parents

Heterosexual Youth:

- 80% of youth harassed "as gay" actually identify as heterosexual