

Twenty-five years ago Eden Steele was a 6th grade teacher at Parkview School in Chula Vista. She was looking for a meaningful way to empower youth with the understanding, skills, and strategies to resolve conflicts in a non-violent way. The result was Peace Patrol©™. In 1990 Eden transferred schools when she was asked to help open Clearview School in Chula Vista. During her years as a teacher and administrator, Peace Patrol grew into an international program. In 2001, the non-profit Interactions for Peace was formed.

Interactions for Peace is a grassroots organization based on performance based principles that create the foundation for peaceful interactions. Currently, Eden is the Executive Director of Interactions for Peace. She is the author of all of the pre-school through adult curriculum, programs, activities, and experiences under the “umbrella” of Interactions for Peace. She participates in and oversees all the outreach and training conducted throughout the world.

The very active Board of Directors is led by President Dale Webster, Ph.D., Chief Academic Officer Consortium on Reaching Excellence in Education (CORE). There are 25 community members on the Advisory Council.

There are many anti-bullying programs out there. Some are very specialized such as anti-cyber bullying programs and efforts. What makes Interactions for Peace and in particular it's Beyond Bullying©™-Awareness, Education, Action Experience so unique?

Beyond Bullying is not to be confused with anti-bullying or stop bullying programs. Beyond Bullying operates from a more positive perspective. It takes an organic look at the nature of individuals, families, and the community and society at large. The program teaches about covert and overt aggressive behaviors, what people do, and how to confront those actions. They teach specific lessons that build a strong foundation of understanding and skills for an individual to be more self-aware, to peacefully cooperate and communicate, and to transform conflict into open conversations. The program teaches skills and strategies that empower self-confidence. These skills include standing up to bullying behaviors wherever and whenever they occur.

Interactions for Peace hosts Beyond Bullying Experiences at elementary, middle and high schools, Boys and Girls Clubs and other community organizations in our area. The writer recently attended one Beyond Bullying Experience at Harriet Tubman Village Charter School in East San Diego on the border with La Mesa. *The Beyond Bullying – Tunnel of Bullying Experience* brings Awareness to all participants. Youth actors, ages 13 -22, from the Spotlight Ovations Theater of Peace perform bullying behavior scenario skits. Nation-wide facts on bullying behaviors are posted on the backdrops, and the actors share the consequences of these behaviors along with strategies for countering bullying.

Part One took place in the auditorium. One grade level class (approximately 25 students) attended and watched the unfolding of the presentation. Part Two was conducted in the school library with the class of, in this case, 8th graders split into two groups each at a long table. This segment had adults conducting a post-presentation discussion of what the 8th grade students witnessed. Paramount in the discussion were questions on how the students

felt and reacted to bullying behaviors that they had just seen. Also, in what ways would the presentation affect their responses to themselves being bullied or what they would do if they encountered someone else being bullied in the future?

The beyond Bullying Experience is a daylong affair with seven classes of students, grades 6,7, and 8 at Harriet Tubman participating in this experience. The day is not a “one and done” experience. Follow-up work is done on an ongoing basis with each school involved in this project.

What were my overall impressions of the Beyond Bullying Experience? I found it to be enlightening, emotive, and energizing.

Bullying is a complex problem which has, unfortunately, become even more insidious and complex with the advent of cyber-bullying. Bullying behaviors are no longer simply of the schoolyard variety. They now have tentacles that reach beyond the playground or classroom to reach into our homes, computers or smart phones. Interactions for Peace’s Beyond Bullying Experience gives students the awareness, encouragement, and skills to stand up and to confront this multi-headed monster of bullying behaviors and to assist others who are put upon by this malicious behavior.