



The mission of the Civil Rights Team Project is to increase the safety of elementary, middle level, and high school students by reducing bias-motivated behaviors and harassment in our schools.



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Here's what you can read about in the June edition of *The Torch*:

From the Teams:

Student civil rights team members at all age levels continue to do great work right through to the end of the 2017-2018 school year. See a sampling of their successes here!

From the Students:

Check out the winning submissions to this year's Civil Rights Team Project Visual Arts and Writing Contests!

From the Advisors:

This month we're featuring two of our long-time advisors, Kristine Wing at Tripp Middle School in Turner, and Lucille Rioux at Oak Hill Middle School in Sabattus. Both Kris and Lucy will be retiring at the end of this school year, and we can't thank them enough for their combined 42 years of commitment to the CRTP!

From the Office:

From the 2018 CRTP Statewide Conference to Civil Rights Night with the Portland Sea Dogs, there's so much to share from the office!

From the Director:

Enjoy the next "Let's think and talk about..." feature, where Brandon and Stacie reflect on their recently celebrated anniversaries within the Civil Rights Team Project.

We help schools think and talk about issues related to race and skin color, national origin and ancestry, religion, disabilities, gender (including gender identity and expression), and sexual orientation.

From the Teams:

At **Biddeford High School**, the civil rights team wrote a letter to the editor that was included in the *Journal Tribune*. The letter was in response to the report of a racially motivated attack on an African American man in their community. The letter condemned the attack, clearly stating “This is our community, and it is unacceptable that anyone should feel unsafe here.” It then went further, showing a sophisticated understanding of how hate works, and why it’s important to speak out against it. You can read their letter [here](#).

Hey Biddeford High School civil rights team... earlier this year we spent an afternoon together for the CRTTP traveling workshop “The Silence of Our Friends.” We looked at how a school community, and especially students, can respond to public incidents of hate. The letter you just wrote shows that you’ve really taken the lessons of that workshop to heart. You will not be silent, and your voice is strong. (And thanks to their advisors, Shari Brinkman-Young and Veronica Foster, for supporting and working with the team.)

At **Bonny Eagle Middle School in Buxton**, the civil rights team collaborated with administration and the Buxton Police Department to create a video that addresses hateful behaviors and outlines their vision for a school community that respects students of all identities. The video was edited by Saco River Community TV and has a professional look to it. It was shared with the school and is now on the school website. Watch the video [here!](#)

Hey, BEMS civil rights team... this is an impressive collaborative effort. By working with your school administration and the police department, you have created a unified message of valuing diversity in the BEMS community. Your message gets added weight with the adult voices of authority, but your voices are powerful, too! (And thanks to their advisor, Amanda Jones, for sharing.)



At **Gardiner Regional Middle School**, the civil rights team worked with [Titi de Baccarat](#), a Portland-based artist originally from Gabon, to create a large-scale art project. The final piece, titled “Children Are the Heirs to the World Adults Give Them,” consisted of forty-six button down shirts sewn together and painted to resemble the American flag. The number forty-six represented the opportunity and the idea that any of the students could become the forty-sixth president of the United States. At an assembly, students wore the “flag” together to represent the idea that we are one, whatever our race and skin color, national origin and ancestry, religion, disabilities, gender, and/or sexual orientation. The assembly also included performances by Myles Bullen, a poet and traveling artist, and African Dundada, a local rap artist. It concluded with Titi sharing his own story about how he made it to Maine a few short years ago.



Hey, GRMS civil rights team... what an incredible collaboration! You helped organize and create an experience that you and your classmates will never forget. By bringing Titi de Baccarat to your school, you helped blast through the walls that too often separate us, and provided real life evidence that immigrants enrich our communities. Keep enriching your school community with your great ideas. (And thanks to their advisor, Kaitlin Toto Mullen, for sharing.)

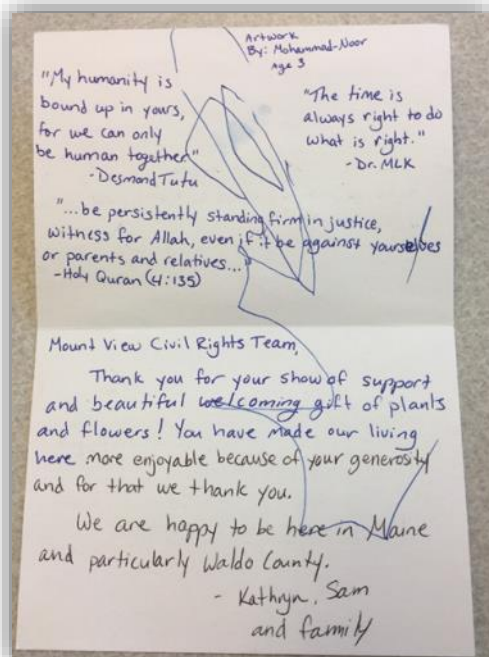
From the Teams:

At **King Middle School in Portland**, the civil rights team wrote, choreographed, performed, and recorded a rap video offering their vision for an inclusive school. The lyrics prominently featured the six civil rights categories, with multi-syllabic rhymes like *protected* and *respected*, and *nation* and *discrimination*. The video showed students performing their best dance moves on and around their civil rights team bench, a project they completed earlier this year. Watch the video [here!](#)



Hey, KMS civil rights team... this video put an enormous smile on our faces here in the CRTP office. Stacie and I loved it! It's obviously fun, but your lyrics are serious. You've found an engaging way to take a stand for inclusion, respect, and valuing diversity, but more importantly, framing those values as defining your school community. We will gladly hop on the KMS bus. (And thanks to their advisors, Jeff Gahn and Maureen Salisbury, for sharing.)

At **Mt. View High School in Thorndike**, the civil rights team reached out to a local Muslim family after someone shot at the sign for their halal butcher shop. Upon hearing that the family felt fear in their new community, the team organized a meeting and determined a course of action. They signed and then circulated a card around the school welcoming the family to the community. They enlisted the Alternative Education program to contribute marigolds and perennials they had grown and had a civil rights team member deliver the card and flowers. That team member reports "The family expressed their thanks and I got to learn a little bit about the business... They were very appreciative and were very excited to start gardening with these new materials." The team later received a thank you card from the family, and were a part of a community effort to make the family feel welcome. (And you can read more about this [here](#).)



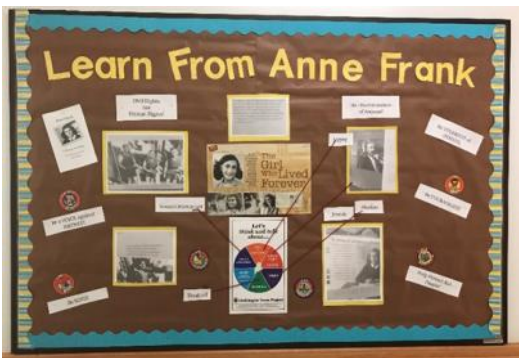
Hey, Mt. View High School civil rights team... your response helped make a family feel more welcome in your community. Creating a welcoming community is a lot like gardening, too. It takes a lot of work, and constant work, but it all results in something beautiful. Your response, and your community's response, offer us hope that there are good people out there willing to do that work. (And thanks to their advisor, Donna Driscoll, for sharing.)

From the Teams:

At **Ocean Avenue Elementary School in Portland**, the civil rights team hosted their inaugural Rainbow Walk to showcase their newly painted rainbow crosswalks that are located at *both* entrances to the school. The team painted the crosswalks after getting permission from their principal and superintendent, and then reaching out to the mayor and working with the Department of Transportation. They issued a statement through the Portland Public Schools website inviting the community to participate in the walk, also explaining that the crosswalks “honor our diversity and represent our belief that everyone is equal and should be treated with dignity and respect no matter their race, religion, ability, gender, and sexual orientation.” On June 2nd, students were released early to participate in the walk (pictured below).



Hey, OCES civil rights team... this is such a colorful and bright way to communicate that all are welcome in your school. It took a lot of work to complete your rainbow crosswalks, but you stuck with it, and then created an opportunity to celebrate its completion with your Rainbow Walk. Now everyone who walks or rolls into your school knows that they are welcome there, and that they can be proud of who they are. (And thanks to their advisors, Chris Salamone and Theresa Moran, for sharing.)



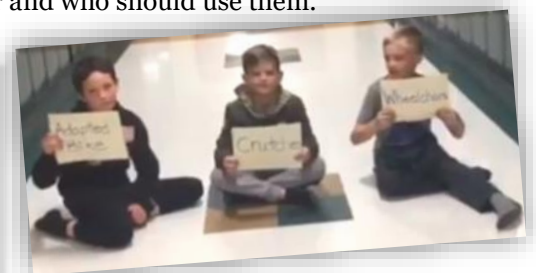
At **SeDoMoCha Middle School in Dover-Foxcroft**, the civil rights team helped students better understand the connections between Anne Frank, the Holocaust, and the team’s focus on civil rights issues today. The impetus was *Anne Frank: A History for Today*, a traveling exhibit from the [Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect](#). It was brought to Dover-Foxcroft through a partnership between their district’s parent-teacher organization and several other community organizations. All students, grades 5-8, visited the exhibit, set up at a local non-profit. A civil rights team representative was on the planning committee, team members served as docents, and the team created a bulletin board connecting persecuted identities from the Holocaust with civil rights categories from the CRTTP focus sign.

Hey, SeDoMoCha civil rights team... connecting with local resources is a great way to expand our scope and capabilities. The connections you made with the Anne Frank exhibit helped students see the work you do is important, and that we can learn from the past to create a better future. Anne Frank famously wrote in her diary that in spite of everything she still believed that people were good at heart. You are proving her right. (And thanks to their advisor, Anna Peterson, for sharing.)

At the **Wentworth School in Scarborough**, the civil rights team created a video on appropriate use of accessible door buttons. The project was in direct response to administration informing the team that the buttons were being overused by students without disabilities. The video clearly explains what the buttons are for and who should use them.

Watch the video [here](#)!

Hey, Wentworth civil rights team... you’ve really addressed the issue of over-use of the accessible door buttons in a clear and concise way. You’ve also shown that it’s important to respect accommodations for disabilities, and therefore people with disabilities, too. I predict that inappropriate use of the buttons will drop after students see your video. Nice job! (And thanks to their advisor, Sarah Athearn, for sharing.)



From the Advisors:

This month we're featuring two of our long-time advisors, Kristine Wing at Tripp Middle School in Turner, and Lucille Rioux at Oak Hill Middle School in Sabattus. Kristine is a School Counselor, and Lucy is a Teacher/Consultant for the Gifted and Talented Program, K-12. Both Kris and Lucy will be retiring at the end of this school year. Kris has been an advisor for 20 years, and Lucy has been an advisor for all 22 years of the Civil Rights Team Project. We'll miss them both *very* much!

1. What do you like about being a civil rights team advisor?

LR: Working with students that I may not usually work with in a classroom situation and seeing how these students further develop their already strong and obvious need to make sure everyone feels safe and accepted in our school. It has been very satisfying, indeed!

KW: The interactions that I have had with my 20 different Civil Rights Teams from all of the trainings, our school projects and the statewide conferences.

2. What is your favorite moment or memory associated with the CRTP?

LR: Several years ago when Litchfield had its own middle school, there was an incident involving a student with Down's Syndrome that was quite cruel...several other students said some very hurtful things to him and this was overheard by some CRT members. They spoke with me about it and then spoke to the Special Education teacher about what they could do. Together, a special meeting was held with the offending students, the specialist, members of the CRT, and the administrator on how to better communicate with the special needs students. It was extremely successful and no further incidents were reported. Members of the CRT took turns inviting the student to have lunch with them. It was truly heartwarming and sincere!

KW: I have the same memory and I have had it many times. The memories of when a Tripp CRT member or team becomes impassioned and excited about the mission of the Civil Rights Team Project. When they feel that they have made a difference at Tripp their pride in the work that they do is so memorable and contagious.

3. What do you see as the biggest civil rights issue in your school?

LR: Definitely, it would be the use of hurtful, bias-based language... we have made it our "focus" for several years... some years with more success than others... this year has been particularly challenging!

KW: Words that student's use and the intended or unintended consequences that have a ripple effect and shatter the "I'm safe at this school" feeling. This year I would say that the issue of racism has been our biggest issue. Students and staff do not know how to respond. They feel that if they respond it is going to make the issue worse, bigger and/or spotlighted. If it is ignored maybe it will go away and everyone will forget and move on.

4. What makes you optimistic about our work in the future?

LR: The more students get involved with CRTs all over the state, hopefully, the positive effects will be felt short-term and last in the long-term. We have some challenges ahead, for sure, but without the CRTP, I truly believe the problems would be more wide-spread and deep-seeded. It is these students who will make things better... the kids have the power!

KW: The fact that every year there are more students willing to join our Civil Rights Team. Educating and empowering our school youth is so important. 1) Creating and having a part in creating safe schools. 2) These CRT members are the voice of the future and their passion and strong support will always live with them.

From the Advisors:

5. What advice or wisdom could you offer to other civil rights team advisors?

LR: Provide guidance BUT allow the students to help with the agenda and with the year's planning. The more involved they are, the more vested they are to be successful and effective. Once they are comfortable with the meeting "norms" (that they should brainstorm and create during the first few meetings), let them add to the agenda and run the meetings... it is a wonderful thing to see when it works!

KW: Stay with it. Let your team develop and find their path to fit the mission of your school's CRT. Middle school teams can be frustrating just because of where the students are at developmentally but their passion is so genuine. Hold on to that and let your team move on.



Kristine Wing, and the 2017-2018 Tripp Middle School Civil Rights Team



Lucille Rioux, and the 2017-2018 Oak Hill Middle School Civil Rights Team

From the Students:

Civil Rights Team Project Contest Winners

In April we announced the winners of our five Civil Rights Team Project Visual Arts and Writing Contests. The contests were open to all civil rights team members. We received a record number of submissions this year, and some wonderful artwork and writing. Ultimately, we felt that five students did especially good work. Our five contest winners for 2018 are:

- Visual Arts, Elementary School: Clementine Benham, Mabel I. Wilson School
- Visual Arts, Middle Level: Connor Pelletier, Valley Rivers Middle School
- Visual Arts, High School: Clementine Blaschke, Yarmouth High School
- Writing, Middle Level: Laura Howe, Greely Middle School
- Writing, High School: Heaven Martin, Oak Hill High School

We recognized our contest winners at the statewide conference on May 18. The visual arts contest winners' artwork was framed and on display in the main auditorium. The writing contest winners read their work as part of the welcome to the day's program.

We are pleased to share the contest winners' work here in *The Torch*. Congratulations to Clementine, Connor, Clementine, Laura and Heaven, and everyone who submitted artwork and writing for the 2018 CRTP Visual Arts and Writing Contests.

**“We All Belong”
Clementine Benham
Mabel I. Wilson School, Gr. 3**

**“Untitled”
Connor Pelletier
Valley Rivers Middle School, Gr. 7**



From the Students:

**“One World”
Clementine Blaschke
Yarmouth High School, Gr. 11**



**“Diversity”
Laura Howe
Greely Middle School, Gr. 8**



We all walk the same halls
We learn in the same classes
We play on the same fields
But we are not the same.

All of us- every single one - is different
Black and white, tan or copper- we are not the same
We all have diversities
We all accept our own
So let's accept the diversities of others
Let's come together and realize
*We are not that different
Nor are we that similar
We all contain both -diversities and similarities-, yet no two people are completely the same
Different opinions, races, religions, ethnicities, sexualities--
This is not an evil
Not something to stand against, or to eliminate*

*Something new, it may strike fear
But this is diversity, and this is what makes us unique*

Look in the mirror and ask yourself:
*What do I stand for?
Is it -equality and inclusion? Acceptance? Love?
Do I stand for peace, and against discrimination?*

The most important question to ask yourself
The one that will determine who *you* are
Is *-Is this the kind of world I want to live in?*
And *-What am I going to do about it?*

From the Students:

**“Just Like Everyone Else”
Heaven Martin
Oak Hill High School, Gr. 10**



I was born into this world in a flurry of movement and sound, like everyone else. I grew my teeth in and munched on Gerber’s, like everyone else. I wore my hair in pigtails and got into fights with my little brother, like everyone else. It didn’t take me until my first day at school to realize I *wasn’t like everyone else*.

I hid behind my mom. I could feel everyone’s stares on me and, even as young as I was, I felt self-conscious. I knew every move I made, people were watching me, waiting for me to speak so they could judge who I was.

It wasn’t until I got older that I realized why the kids had gawked at me that day. I never understood I was different until my brother started teasing me, until the people at school told me I couldn’t sit with them at lunch. I learned to sit on the bus and be absolutely silent. I learned to sit by myself at a table and allow people to whisper things about me. I got used to running to the playground and hiding underneath the stairs to cry. I got used to wondering if I should never speak again *just* to go unnoticed.

I was like everyone else, wasn’t I? No. I wasn’t (I’m still not), because I was born with a cleft lip and palate. I was born into a world where I was automatically hindered because I didn’t *look* or *sound* like everyone else.

I was born into a world where I picked up on other defects in society people seemed to notice.

I was born into a world where kids at my school think it’s okay to mimic a disabled kid who attends.

I was born into a world where I had one of my best friends be told he could go kill himself just because he loved differently than everyone else.

I was born into a world where riding into school with obscenities at the tip of one’s tongue about someone’s skin color is an acceptable thing to have.

I was born into a world where my ancestors, the Native Americans, had barely received the commendation they deserved and *still* their rights aren’t respected.

I was born into a world where I can’t walk innocently down the hallway with one of my male friends without someone shouting, “Oooh, insert random name here is trying to *get* some!”

I was born into a world where people go so far as to attempt shoving religions down others throats.

I was born into a world with comments like, “They want to use the private bathrooms? What are they, transgender?”

I was born into a world where hate suffocates me. Hate fills my lungs and makes it hard to breathe. Hate makes my eyes water, as if my enragement is tied to the faucet behind my eyes. Hate is all around me, piercing through me with every eye I catch, every comment that’s made, every heart that beats. I can’t walk down the hallway because the only thing people seem to notice about me is how well my jeans fit that day.

I was born into a world where I struggle with the idea that, around the universe, there are people *just like me*-different-, *just like everyone else*, being pushed around and suffocated by the intense heat of hate.

I was born into a world where I grapple with choosing love instead. *Just like everyone else*.

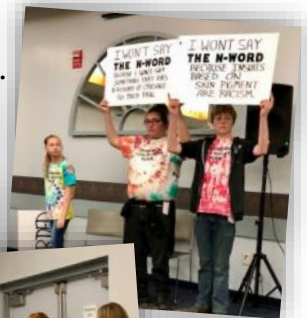
2018 Statewide Conference

On May 18, more than 550 middle level and high school students (and another 100+ adults) from 64 schools gathered at the Augusta Civic Center for the CRTP Statewide Conference. At this annual event we seek to create a safe, welcoming, and respectful environment where we highlight student voices, celebrate our work, and inspire teams with ideas for the future. It's especially important that we come together to do this, too, as it offers the unique opportunity for student civil rights teams to see that they are part of a true statewide network. When students first walk into the Main Auditorium at this event, they often pause and gasp, wowed by the overwhelming visual of so many students from so many schools gathered together in one space.



Of course we like to think that this was just the first of many “wow” moments from the day. Here are some of the highlights from the 2018 Civil Rights Team Project Statewide Conference:

- The winners of the 2018 CRTP Visual Arts and Writing Contests sharing their work. Our contest winners received a standing ovation during the introduction/welcome to the conference. (To learn more about them and see their work, check out pages 7-10 of this newsletter!)
- The Holbrook Middle School civil rights team’s facilitated workshop for middle level students, “STOP. THINK. YOUR WORDS MATTER.” The workshop focused on bias-based language and the Holbrook civil rights team’s approach in addressing it in their school community. The team shared pictures from their Duke University-inspired “We don’t say” campaigns and specifics on the process of creating these campaigns. Students left with stickers offering explanations for why they don’t say specific bias-based insults.
- The Narraguagus Jr./Sr. High School civil rights team’s facilitated workshop for high school students, “Positively Responding to Pushback on Projects.” It’s a topic that everyone in the room could relate to, but rather than focus on the negative, the Narraguagus civil rights team shared examples of how they’ve responded to resistance and remained an active presence in their school community. Their workshop immediately engaged participants with a version of *Family Feud* and featured visuals from their diverse portfolio of past project initiatives.
- Civil rights team mini-presentations in our [CRT Spotlight workshops](#). Teams from twelve schools presented: Bangor High School, Bath Middle School, Cony High School, Falmouth Middle School, Greely Middle School, Leonard Middle School, Lewiston Middle School, Madison Area Memorial High School, Maranacook Community Middle School, Messalonskee High School, Mt. Ararat Middle School, and Windham Middle School, each highlighting something they



From the Office:

did this year to engage their school communities in thinking and talking about civil rights issues.

- Shay Stewart-Bouley’s powerhouse workshop, *Authentic Dialogues: Talking about Racism and How to Take a Stand Against Hate*. Through a mix of lecture and small-group work, participants deepened their knowledge of racism in 2018, examined their own biases, and learned techniques for starting conversations on racism and how to be an effective ally. Students appreciated Shay’s candor and the opportunity to talk about racism in such a supportive, non-judgmental space. Feedback from our evaluations was overwhelmingly positive:

- ◆ “Shay’s event... made me feel stronger about my race than ever.”
- ◆ “Shay opened my eyes to how racism can be more than just hate crimes.”
- ◆ “She was phenomenal.”
- ◆ “SHAY FOR PRESIDENT!!!”

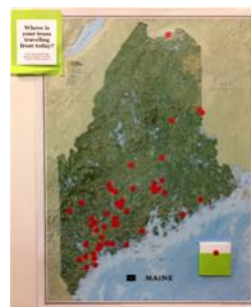


- Attorney General Janet T. Mills joining us for the welcome and introduction to the day’s program. She said that the sheer number of people there made her hopeful, and spoke eloquently on the value of diversity *and* togetherness, where “We are all stronger together, when we are welcoming to one another, when we stand together—shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand—with compassion and understanding.” The continued support from the Attorney General and our office is always appreciated in the Civil Rights Team Project!

• A celebratory conclusion with the Maine Gay Men’s Chorus. They performed a four song set of civil rights-themed songs, interspersed with testimonials from individual members on what the Chorus means to them. They ended with what might be 2017’s civil rights anthem, “This Is Me,” from *The Greatest Showman*. It was the perfect way to end their set and the day’s program.



- Students interacting with each other and engaging in a series of planned activities, including The Race Card Project, CRTP Bingo, and a Maine Humanities Council-sponsored voting activity on civil rights-themed books.



Many thanks to all the students and advisors from our presenting teams, all our outside presenters, and our friends from the Maine Humanities Council and the Maine Youth Action Network for making this event such a success. We’d also like to thank everyone who attended, as getting teams together from all around

From the Office:

the state is an important part of our vision.

And just how did we do with our vision of creating a safe, welcoming, and respectful environment where we highlight student voices, celebrate our work, and inspire teams with ideas for the future? The evaluations say *great*:

- ◆ 100% agreed that they felt safe, welcome, and respected at the event.
- ◆ 100% agreed that student voices were highlighted.
- ◆ 94% agreed that the event felt like a celebration.
- ◆ 99% agreed that they were leaving with ideas for how their civil rights team can engage their school community in thinking and talking about civil rights issues.

We are already looking forward to getting together next year!



A Night with the Sea Dogs

On May 11, 426 CRTP participants from 25 schools attended the seventh annual Civil Rights Night with the Portland Sea Dogs at Hadlock Field. In a pre-game ceremony the Sea Dogs recognized all the attending students and schools by scrolling their names on the scoreboard and reading the following statement over the public address system:

“The Portland Sea Dogs would like to recognize the students here tonight from the Civil Rights Team Project. The Civil Rights Team Project supports student civil rights teams in 184 elementary, middle level, and high schools all across Maine. Civil rights teams think that it’s important for us to talk about race, ancestry, religion, disabilities, gender, and sexual orientation, so that students of all identities feel safe, welcome, and respected for who they are. Thank you, civil rights teams, for making our schools and our state better places to live, learn, and play.”



Unfortunately, Brandon was unable to attend this year’s event, and the Sea Dogs lost to the Binghamton Rumble Ponies 5-1. But Stacie was there to celebrate our teams, the weather was wonderful, and we received the following message from one of our advisors post-game:

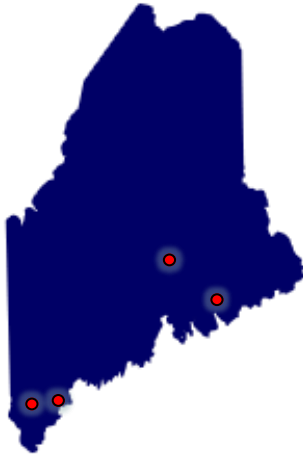
“It was truly a special night. For me, the highlight was seeing the LONG line of students circling the field (knowing that there were many who couldn’t even make it to the game) ALL working to make our world a safer place for all.”

That’s a highlight we *never* get tired of seeing, and it’s why it’s so important to get together and celebrate our work every year.

From the Office:

New Teams!

As we wind down the 2017-2018 school year, we continue to sign up new schools to participate in the CRTP. We've recently added:



- Brewer High School
- Old Orchard Beach High School
- Sanford Junior High School
- Sanford High School
- Sumner Memorial High School in Sullivan

Welcome!

From the Director:

In this edition of “From the Director,” Brandon and Stacie are celebrating anniversaries with the CRTP. April marked ten years for Brandon, and May one year for Stacie! The math will never work out like this moving forward, so in this version of “From the Director,” Brandon and Stacie contemplate their time with the CRTP.

BB: Happy anniversary, Stacie!

SB: And to you! 10 years is quite an achievement!!

BB: Well, thank you. One year is nothing to sneeze at. Anniversaries are always good times to look back and reflect. So, then... thinking of your time with the CRTP, how has the work changed?

SB: In a year’s time, I’ve definitely had the opportunity to witness change... specifically in how people are responding to incidents of hate and bias. In general, people seem to be using the tools available to them—our youth especially, to organize and be heard in a way that feels like a bit of a tide of change.

BB: And it feels like people’s voices are being heard and taken seriously. They aren’t dismissed as fringe voices. And so, when a celebrity with an enormous platform and popular television show makes a racist tweet, she loses her show. I’m not sure that would have happened even one year ago.

SB: I totally agree. If I had to pick two words to summarize the last year, they would be “increased accountability.” Being so close to the work has allowed me to reflect a lot on this point. It’s caused me to feel more optimistic about the potential of our collective efforts to create truly safe, welcoming, and respectful communities for everyone. Knowing that you’ve been doing this work for more than a decade, how would you say the work has changed *you*?

BB: Nice twist on the original question! Working with the CRTP has made me more aware of my own

