Deliberating on Bullying:
Engaging Students on an Issue of Public Concern

Chris McCauley, Executive Director, David Mathews Center for Civic Life
Cristin Foster, Assistant Program Director, David Mathews Center
MEGA Conference
July 16, 2013
Mobile Convention Center – Mobile, AL
**Mission:**
The Mathews Center is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit, non-partisan, tax-exempt corporation that works with citizens who want to make positive, innovative decisions that lead to action in their communities on issues that concern them. The Center honors the life and work of Dr. David Mathews, a native of Grove Hill, Alabama and president and CEO of the Kettering Foundation in Dayton, Ohio.

**Signature Programs:**
- Alabama Issues Forums
- Coaching Community Innovation Workshops
- Teachers’ Institute
- Jean O’Connor-Snyder Internship
Civic Engagement

“As a democracy, the United States depends on a knowledgeable, public-spirited, and engaged population.”
~The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, *A Crucible Moment*, pg 2

“Active participation in the public life of a community in an informed, committed and constructive manner with a focus on the common good.”
~American Association of Community Colleges

“The health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens.”
~Alexis de Tocqueville
Alabama Civic Health Index

- Examines three key indicators of civic health in Alabama: political action, social connectedness, and public work.

- Provides a critical window into the strong civic foundation across the state.

- Authored by the Mathews Center, University of Alabama’s New College, the National Conference on Citizenship, and Auburn University’s College of Liberal Arts.

- All findings presented in the ACHI are based on analysis of the U.S. Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data provided by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University.
## ACHI: Key Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLITICAL ACTION</th>
<th>SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS</th>
<th>PUBLIC WORK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Action means conventional political involvement: mainly efforts to influence the government and other large institutions, including voting, discussing politics with family and friends a few times a week or more, contacting public officials, and buying or boycotting products.</td>
<td>Social connectedness is composed of eating dinner with other members of your household a few times a week or more, communicating with friends or family online a few times a week or more, talking with neighbors a few times a week or more, and doing favors for neighbors a few times a week or more.</td>
<td>Public Work is working with others to solve a problem or improve something through the process of deliberation and action. The measurements for public work are attendance at meetings and working with neighbors to solve problems and improve something in the community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alabama’s Civic Health

• 9.8% of Alabamians attend community meetings (on par with national average)

• 26.6% of Alabamians volunteer (30th)

• 21.1% of Alabamians exchange favors with their neighbors frequently (4th)

• 30% of Alabamians discuss politics frequently (10th)

• 10.1% of Alabamians work with their neighbors to solve community problems (18th)
Public Deliberation

“Deliberation helps us locate the areas between agreement and disagreement, which might be called ‘common ground for public acting.’ We discover…this common ground when we learn, through forums, what people are and aren’t willing to do to solve problems, what costs and consequences they will and won’t accept, and whether they share a sense of direction.”


“Deliberation, after all, enables participants not merely to exchange information, but to transform their existing beliefs and values - to arrive at a more reflective set of beliefs through discussion with others.”

Basic Principles of Convening a Public Forum

An Effective Convener:

• Is a concerned citizen willing to engage their fellow citizens on issues of public concern.
• Locates and utilizes public space effectively.
• Engages diverse citizens to participate.
• Publicizes the forum.
• Provides ways for folks to stay connected.
• Is ideally situated to serve as a catalyst for post-forum, follow-up communication and action.
Basic Principles of Moderating a Public Forum

An effective moderator:

- Remains neutral about the subject of the forum.
- Does not take on an “expert” role with the subject matter.
- Keeps the deliberation focused on the approaches.
- Listens for values that motivate a participant’s comments.
- Intervenes as necessary.
- Asks clarifying questions, if necessary.
- Encourages everyone to join in the conversation.
- Asks thoughtful and probing questions to surface costs and consequences.
- Helps participants find common ground.
- Encourages deeper reflection.

Key Moderating Skills:

- Reflecting & Clarifying
- Summarizing
- Shifting Focus
- Asking Probing or Follow-Up Questions
- Managing Conflict
- Using Silence
- Using Non-Verbal Signals (Body Language)
Alabama Issues Forums

- AIF is a signature program with one primary goal – to bring Alabama citizens together to deliberate and take community-based action on an issue of public concern.

- In a community forum, citizens are encouraged to think through multiple approaches to an issue of public concern, while also considering the trade-offs and potential consequences associated with the actions discussed.

- Using the information gathered through recorded notes and post-forum questionnaires, the Mathews Centers provides annual reports to the public on how citizens are thinking on issues in the following areas:

  Citizen Responsibilities
  Education
  Economic Development
  Public Health
BULLYING
What is it? How do we prevent it?

AN ISSUE GUIDE PREPARED FOR ALABAMA ISSUES FORUMS
DAVID MATTHEWS CENTER FOR CIVIC LIFE
Methodology: Alabama Issues Forums


Naming the Issue: Truman Pierce Institute – Dr. Cindy Reed

Framing: Anti-Bullying Summit Citizens’ Congress and follow-up workshops.

Issue Book: Three-approach framework, “Bullying: What is it? How do we prevent it”

Deliberative Forums: DMC provides neutral moderators and recorders. Our goal for AIF 2012-2103 is to convene forums in 50 counties.

Post-Forum Questionnaires: Likert-scale questions, open-ended questions, and demographic questions

Comprehensive Report: A comprehensive report will be authored at the end of AIF 2012 – 2013 by Mathews Center staff. The report will identify emerging themes, detail community-based actions, and summarize questionnaire results.
AIF 2012 – 2013
Participating Counties

- Montgomery
- Coffee
- Shelby
- Baldwin
- Jefferson
- Calhoun
- Hale
- Lowndes
- Dallas
- Franklin
- Washington
- Marengo
- Lee
- Pike
- Greene
- Perry
- Autauga
- Choctaw
- Sumter
- Pike
- Wilcox
- Autauga
- Tallapoosa
- Lawrence
- Sumter
- Macon
- Wilcox
- Tallapoosa
- Macon
- Russell
- Lauderdale
- Houston
- DeKalb
The Framework: “Bullying: What is it? How do we prevent it?”

- Letter to Citizens
- Strategic Facts Related to Bullying
- Three Approaches
“Get Tough On Bullying”

- Stresses setting high standards for student conduct.
- Places responsibility on schools, principals, and school districts to do more to prevent and provide tougher consequences for bullying.
- Encourages schools to adopt zero-tolerance policies related to bullying.
- Suggests distributing anonymous surveys to gauge the widespread nature of bullying in schools.
- Focuses energy on punishing bullying to communicate that the behavior is unacceptable.
“Equip Students to Address Bullying”

- Concentrates efforts on educating students about bullying and how to respond to it.
- Acknowledges that lines between victims and bullies often become blurred when circumstances change and/or victims retaliate.
- Advocates creating enriching, supportive school cultures that equip young people to address the root causes of bullying.
- Encourages schools to implement peer mediation and other programs that champion peaceful solutions to bullying.
- Places greater responsibility on young people to report bullying and respond appropriately when they experience or witness bullying.
Approach Three

“Engage the Community and Parents in Bullying Solutions”

• Assumes that bullying has long-term effects on the community.

• Asks parents and the community to accept more responsibility for talking about and preventing bullying.

• Advocates that civic groups and businesses address bullying in meetings and service projects.

• Encourages community-based mentoring, character education, and other programs to reinforce positive behavior and combat bullying.
AIF 2012 – 2013 Emerging Themes

• Involve PARENTS in bullying awareness and prevention.
• Focus on addressing ROOT CAUSES of bullying.
• Work together to DEFINE bullying.
• Raise AWARENESS in schools, communities, and workplaces.
• Provide safe, anonymous avenues for REPORTING bullying behavior.
• Engage the COMMUNITY in bullying solutions.
Upcoming Events and Signature Programs

- Bullying Forum at Military Kids Camp – Shelby County (7/22/13)
- Lauderdale County Bullying Forum (8/1/13)
- Tallapoosa and Chambers County Bullying Forums (8/8/13)
- “Injustice Remembered” Panel – Dothan (8/27/13)
- Marengo County Bullying Forum (9/10/12)
For further information, contact

Chris McCauley, DMC Executive Director
cmccauley@mathewscenter.org
www.mathewscenter.org

David Mathews Center for Civic Life
P.O. Box 6
Montevallo, AL 35115
Phone: 205-665-9005
Fax: 205-665-7577