



**Morningside Center** for Teaching Social Responsibility

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## Middle School Offerings

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility (formerly Educators for Social Responsibility Metropolitan Area or ESR Metro) has a 22-year track record of successful work in the New York City public schools. Through our research-based programs for grades PreK through 12, we help all members of the school community (students, school staff, and parents) deal better with conflict, create positive learning environments, and take leadership in shaping a more peaceful world. Our approach is engaging and interactive, employing small-group sharing, brainstorming, skills practice, role-playing, and discussion. We tailor our work to address the needs of each school or group, so costs vary.

**Resolving Conflict Creatively.** Morningside Center offers a comprehensive conflict resolution program for middle schools aimed at helping young people develop skills in dealing well with conflict, handling strong emotions, and making good decisions—skills they will use the rest of their lives. The core component of Resolving Conflict Creatively is professional development to support teachers in providing regular instruction to students. The curriculum consists of engaging lessons on listening, dealing with feelings, assertiveness, mediation, collaborative problem-solving, intercultural understanding, countering bias, and making a difference. The curriculum can be seamlessly infused into other curriculum areas, integrated into health courses or advisories and/or taught as an elective.

**Peer Mediation and Peer Leadership.** We support development of a positive peer culture by engaging students in such activities as mediating disputes, conducting anti-harassment workshops, and organizing community service projects. The participating students may be members of student government or part of a leadership class; or they may be selected as peer leaders or mediators through a special process in which the student body and the faculty participate. Morningside Center provides consultation, training, and ongoing support for student leaders and faculty advisors.

**The 4Rs (Reading, Writing, Respect & Resolution).** The 4Rs is a literature-based conflict resolution and character education program. Originally developed for grades K-5, The 4Rs now extends to middle school. The 4Rs is designed to fit into the NYC public schools' balanced literacy framework. It uses high-quality children's literature to build students' literacy skills while developing their social and emotional competencies. Each unit includes a read-aloud, book talk, and applied learning (conflict resolution skills lessons). With its emphasis on creating a caring classroom community, The 4Rs also helps teachers establish a good climate for learning. Teachers receive a 4Rs Learning Kit containing everything they need to implement the program, including teaching guide and children's books, 4Rs Family Connections (the parent component), supplementary activity sheets, and puppets or other age-appropriate tools. We provide introductory training for teachers, then coach them as they implement the curriculum.

**Advisories.** Advisories can strengthen the bonds among students and between students and adults. They can help young people feel more connected to school and develop students' social and emotional competencies. But effective advisories require careful planning and implementation. Morningside Center's services include: facilitating a collaborative planning process aimed at creating a viable program that is tailored to the school's needs and that enjoys broad support from the school community; providing professional development for advisory teachers; and working with the school to create a customized curriculum for advisories.

**Planning for Social & Emotional Learning (SEL).** SEL is the process by which students develop their social and emotional competencies. It is also a powerful lever for school improvement. A growing body of scientific evidence suggests that as students develop life skills in handling feelings, dealing with conflict, and making good decisions, they do better academically. Programs like the RCCP and The 4Rs foster SEL. Students also learn what they live: everything that goes on in the school affects SEL, including recess, discipline policies, the curriculum, and the way teachers talk to students. Our SEL coaches, mostly retired principals with extensive SEL training and experience, support principals and their leadership teams in creating a vision of a school infused with SEL, assessing SEL needs and resources, and creating and implementing an action plan for sustained school-wide high-quality social and emotional learning.

**Eliminating Bullying & Building Community.** Our research-based Pathways to Safety Program takes a whole-school approach to countering bullying and building community. On the school level, we work with a planning team to survey the problem and develop school-wide initiatives to eliminate bullying. On the classroom level, we provide a ten-lesson curriculum and professional development to support teachers in implementing it. And on the individual level, we provide professional development for guidance counselors to support them in providing effective counseling for students who are targeted by bullies and their parents as well as for bullies and their parents.

**Classroom Management.** We provide training and coaching to help teachers create a positive classroom environment. Our approach is based on four principles: Know yourself and your students; be proactive; deal well with conflict; and always treat students with respect. Teachers learn to create effective classroom procedures, set enforceable limits, and establish positive connections with students. They practice skills in deescalating conflict, and they brainstorm and discuss creative approaches to challenging situations they encounter with their students. We observe teachers in the classroom and meet with them afterwards to debrief and discuss effective approaches for handling student behavior.

**Peace in the Family.** Our Peace in the Family workshops help parents strengthen their relationships with their young adolescents. They bring parents together to discuss the common issues they face and develop skills in communication and problem-solving. A typical workshop series includes four 3-hour workshops on such topics as: active listening, dealing with feelings, assertiveness, building self-esteem, collaborative problem-solving, child development, punishment versus discipline, and advocating effectively for your child. We also implement intensive leadership development programs for parents, providing training to prepare parents to facilitate Peace in the Family workshops for other parents.

**Teachable Moments.** Morningside Center has pioneered inquiry-oriented approaches for exploring controversial issues and current events. Hundreds of thousands of teachers turn to our website [www.TeachableMoment.Org](http://www.TeachableMoment.Org) for materials to help their students learn about important issues, consider opposing points of view, and develop critical thinking skills. To introduce social studies teachers to Morningside Center's approach to promoting inquiry and critical thinking, Morningside Center also offers training and classroom coaching.