

Welcome to *Owning Up!*

Owning Up helps you work with the most interesting, funny, and challenging people in the world. It teaches young people to build the social and emotional skills necessary for treating themselves and others with dignity and positively engaging in their education and communities. It will teach young people to understand their individual development in relation to group behavior, the social dynamics that lead to discrimination and bigotry, and the skills to be socially competent in the difficult yet common conflicts they experience.

Owning Up examines the cultural constructs that influence young people's socialization. It incorporates cultural definitions of gender, sexism, racism, classism, homophobia, and other forms of "isms" that affect young people's beliefs and decision making around self-esteem, friendships, group dynamics, and social and physical aggression.

Whether you're teaching *Owning Up* in a school, to a team, or with a youth-serving organization, this curriculum respects your understanding of young people and the communities you serve. *Owning Up* was created with core principles to guide behavior:

- All people have the ability to contribute to their own education and have valuable opinions and experiences to share.
- Adults are in partnership with young people who are often insightful teachers.
- A young person's academic success and engagement are interconnected with their social competency.
- "Soft skills"—the ability to work with others, negotiate conflict, and understand and respect the needs of others in balance with your own needs—is a difficult skill set to master and requires constant and graduated practice.
- To be credible and effective educators, adults must self-reflect on how they interact with young people. They must develop their own social and emotional skills and the ability to manage themselves. A culture of dignity is impossible if the adults don't hold themselves to the same standards they demand of their students.

- ❑ No community is immune from abuses of power and, with dignity, can effectively address injustices that can occur within it.

Upper Elementary School is not too early to be talking to students about these issues. Young people are aware of the many forces that impact social dynamics. Helping them understand the forces that shape identity, behavior, and power allow them to name and therefore tame some underlying influencers that may be shaping their behavior or the behavior of others. The sooner students begin to understand these forces, in age appropriate lessons, the healthier the young people in your community will be.

As the educator, *Owning Up* asks you to guide young people through challenging, awkward, and personal conversations with their peers. Take the young peoples' concerns and their experiences seriously. That is what *Owning Up* is about: collaboration between educators and students to find courage, purpose, and ability to create the world in which they want to live.

About the Sessions

Owning Up covers:

- ❑ Defining dignity, how it is different than respect, and why it should be the basis of our interactions
- ❑ Identifying and discussing behaviors and attitudes associated with groups, popularity, trust, exclusion, and aggression.
- ❑ Understanding expressions of anger and strategies to effectively communicate when anxious or in conflict.
- ❑ Developing a plan of action when a friend or group demeans someone or themselves.
- ❑ Recognizing the influence of culture on individual behavior and decision making, from friendships to academic engagement.
- ❑ Identifying and strengthening support networks and personal standards in relationships.
- ❑ Clarifying and promoting the definition of consent— across the spectrum of young people's interactions and relationships.
- ❑ Identifying and developing positive relationships with adults.