

## STUDENT-LED CPR: ONE OF THE MAIN PAYOFFS

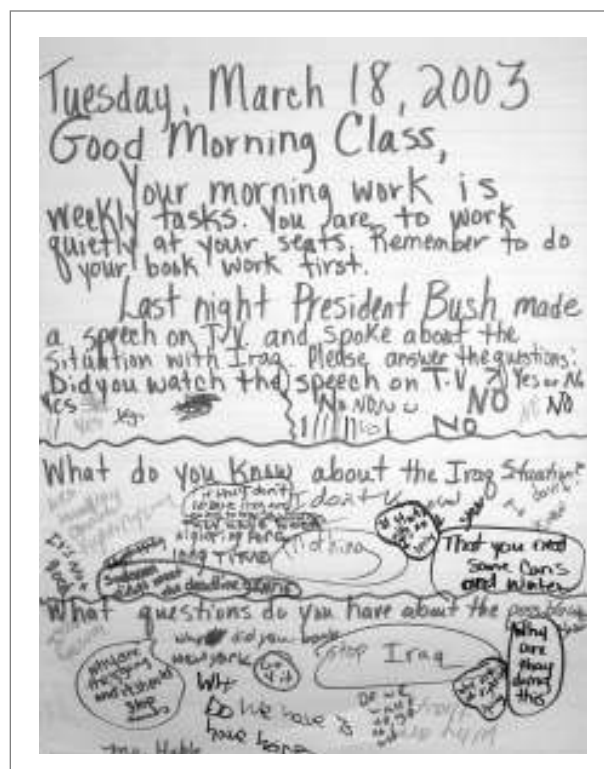
I know many kids who do not like grown-ups telling them what to do, let alone one of their classmates, but they do like kids running the meeting, because we are friends and we respect each other.

—middle school advisory student, Minneapolis MN

A major benefit of CPR advisory meetings is that, when the time is right, they can be led by students. Meeting leadership provides student with the chance to exercise the responsible independence that is essential for their success in school. Adolescents' craving for autonomy, their desire to demonstrate their competence in the world, their desire for good relationships with peers, and their constant search for ways to have fun—all these fundamental needs are satisfied in their leadership of CPR, a structure designed to boost them toward school and life success.

### Sample Student-led CPR

Dejon raises his hand as a signal and the circle of eighth graders falls silent. “Our greeting today is Slapjack. I’ll demonstrate with Alex.” The two do a hand jive and greet each other: “S’up, Alex.” “S’up, Dejon.” The greeting moves around the circle. The students have done Slapjack many times before, so they are comfortable with it. Some smile, others look a little sleepy. Everyone looks at his or her partner, at least briefly.



*The topic for individual shares today is the same as yesterday—tell about a place in the world you'd like to visit. Tell just a couple of things about the place, and then open it up to questions and comments. Sylvia, you're up.*

Dejon leads the group through the sharing and then calls for a round of Frogger, a game that requires careful observation and focused attention, and ends with most of the group pretending to be asleep. It is both silly and challenging. It takes focus and self-control.

Finally, Dejon asks for someone to read the news message aloud, and facilitates a discussion of the famous people identification challenge in the news: “Nobody got Golda Meir or George Washington Carver. Anybody have an idea about either one of these?” After a couple of guesses, Dejon calls on Catherine to look up the names in the Famous People Biographies book.

*Let's rate this meeting. Give a thumb up if you think it went well, thumb sideways for so-so, and thumb down if you think it wasn't a good CPR at all (then you've got to tell us why). OK, on the count of three—one, two, three, thumbs! (Looking around) Everybody seems to think it went pretty well. Thanks. Anybody got an idea for a cheer to end with today? OK, let's try the Gorilla. Ready? Uhn. Uhn. Uhn. Meeting's over—have a good day.*

Everything that Dejon did in leading the meeting was planned ahead, had teacher approval, and was patterned after the CPR meeting routine that, as a member of this advisory, he had practiced since the first day of school that year. Now it was April, and the group no longer needed an adult to lead their meetings. Much to their satisfaction, they were able to do the leading independently and responsibly. The students gradually took over single components of the meeting. They began by choosing and leading an activity. By the second semester, groups of four led meetings, each person taking one part. By the end of March, one student could lead the entire meeting. CPR meetings were now giving these young people daily opportunities to satisfy their needs for feeling competent and autonomous, and for having fun with their peers as well as with their teacher.

### **Plan for Success**

Timing is everything in the process of turning control over to students. If you give them independence and power before they are ready to use it responsibly, they fail, and you have to pull the power away from them. If you wait too long to give over some of the control, students grow restless and resentful and eventually may balk at participation.

#### **Look for these signs of self-control**

- When students can greet each other cordially each day, without discrimination or a subtle sliding scale of friendliness, they are ready to lead greetings.
- When students listen carefully and without interruption to peer sharing, and when they ask interesting questions and make friendly comments in response to everyone's sharing, without slighting some with their silence, they are ready to lead sharing.
- When students participate enthusiastically in games and other activities without losing their self-control, and they can get rowdy and then calm and silent in response to the silence signal, they are ready to lead activities.

- When they participate in reading and discussing the daily news message and are willing to do a careful job planning and executing the chart or overhead, they are ready to start creating and leading the review of the news.

Careful planning is required for all the components of CPR, so student leaders must create a plan, present it to the teacher for review and revision if necessary, and follow the approved version. A CPR Plan Sheet will guide them through the steps they must take to create a good meeting. The plan will be reviewed by the teacher for an OK before the meeting takes place. See page 276 for a Student CPR Plan Sheet.

### Challenge Them

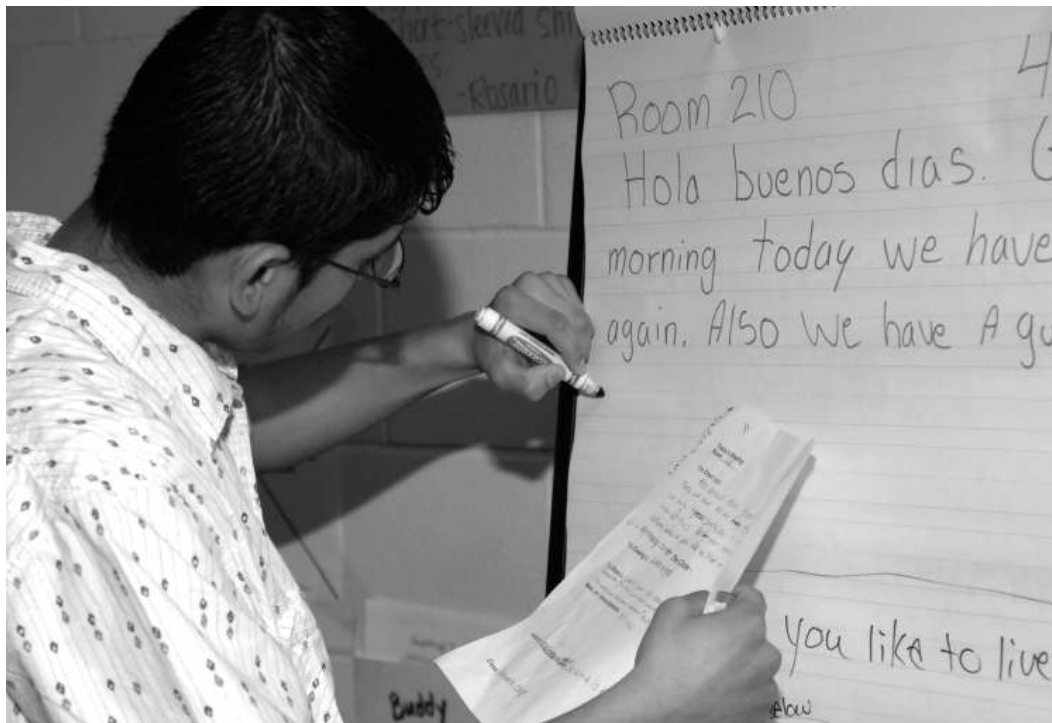
Let students know early on that you are hoping they become skilled enough in CPR to lead it themselves. Tell them that what it takes is learning the routine and some greetings and games, and most important, learning self-control.

*As time goes by I will introduce you to more challenging greetings, shares, and activities. As you learn to handle them, your skills will grow, and then we'll start talking about student leadership of the meeting. I know you can do it, and I'll show you how.*

### Steady Progress

Students generate ideas

Capacity-building for leadership of the meeting happens incrementally. It begins with



An eighth grader prepares the daily news message before CPR begins

students making suggestions: ideas for greetings, sharing, and activities, and interesting questions or tasks for the daily news. Greetings are easy to invent; students dream up creative handshakes and body movements and language all the time. The best sharing topics reflect the things students want to know about each other, and as long as the topics remain appropriate, a broad range of them will bring variety and energy to the sharing component. The activity component is usually easy for students to handle—they know lots of games already, and may ask to play them and/or teach them. Watch out for games that are too competitive that can damage the cooperative spirit of the advisory.

### Setting the criteria

Student suggestions for CPR will steadily improve if you establish guidelines for what will and won't work in meetings. The guidelines can be brainstormed with the students, but the teacher has the final say. It is your job to keep the community close, safe, and caring, so you lead the guidelines process. Use the charts already generated for participating in the meeting components, adding content relevant to planning.

### Suggested guidelines for student plannings

#### Preparing the daily news

- News is legible, accurate, and well written
- News contains useful information about the day
- News contains an interactive question or exercise

#### Greeting

- Everyone is included
- The greetings are respectful and friendly
- Time frame is two to five minutes

#### Sharing

- Everyone gets a chance to share, but not necessarily every day
- The format for the shares can vary: individual, whip, partner, etc.
- Students get a chance to ask questions and make comments with some of the shares
- The sharer's job is to start the story with the basic facts, to call on a variety of people, and to answer questions
- The group's job is to listen attentively, ask interesting questions, and make friendly comments
- Time frame is about five minutes

#### Activity

- Most of the games are cooperative, not competitive
- Everyone gets a chance to play
- Games are played with courtesy and self-control
- Time frame is about five minutes

## Daily News

- Everyone responds to the interactive part
- Everyone gets a chance to read the news aloud, but not every day
- The interactive part, which includes some form of learning, social or academic, is processed by the whole group
- Time frame is three to five minutes

Once the guidelines have been decided on, they can be posted so everyone who makes a suggestion about a greeting, share, or activity can use the guidelines to shape the suggestion. At this point, suggestions are welcome. Later, when student partners are planning entire meetings, they can use planning sheets that include the guidelines. You may decide to add your criteria to a Student CPR Plan Sheet based on the sample on page 276.

## Challenge students to use cooperation, not competition

Students need to understand that, in order to build community, the games, need to be mostly cooperative, not competitive, especially early in the year. That may take an explanation from you:

*I have lots of activities for us to try, and I'm sure you have good ideas, too. Most of our games will not be about winning and losing. In other words, they will be non-competitive games that will help us get to know each other and are enjoyable for all, including people who are just learning the game. Competitive games can be stressful and can pull groups apart, rather than build them up. Later in the year, when we're used to playing together, we might look at some of the competitive activities and add them to our repertoire. For now, let me know if you have an idea for a cooperative game we can play.*



Leading CPR helps prepare students for future leadership roles

If students suggest a competitive game, you might be able to lessen the competitive aspect by using revolving outs: as soon as the next player or team is out, the previous 'out' player or team returns, so there is never more than one player or team out at a time, and no one is out permanently.

To completely avoid the winner/loser aspect of a competitive game, you can often drop the elimination element altogether and use a timing goal for the whole group, or an everybody-makes-it goal instead. Here's an example of such a conversion.



A student leader asks for silence

## Sample Competitive to Cooperative Conversion: Key Punch Game

- **Key Punch** (page 248)

**Original version of the game:** Teams race against each other in an effort to touch all the numbers (1-10) in order, scattered on the floor. Each team member has a turn stepping or jumping from number to number, until the entire team has had a turn. Whichever team finishes first wins.

**Revised version to build community:** Teams race against the clock, and their times are recorded. Then the two teams combine and time how long it takes for everyone to make a run. The challenge is to see if the two teams combined can beat the times of the two individual teams added together. The combined teams are given time to strategize, and they have three tries.

**Extra challenge:** If they come up with good strategies in their combined brainstorming, make use of everyone's previous experience, provide coaches all around the circle and guide and cheer each other on ("Six, over here!" "Seven, in the back!"), they might beat the time of *either* of the individual teams alone.

### Student leads one component

A student might lead one part of CPR. The student will have prepared a plan and run it by the teacher for revisions, if necessary, and approval.

After a student or partners have led a component, they ask the group to reflect on the component. This process gives the leader feedback that will help him or her plan for next time.

*What worked about our greeting today?*

*What could we improve next time?*

*Using fingers to indicate five (really liked it) to one (didn't like it), show with your hand how much you enjoyed today's greeting (or sharing or activity).*

### Students take turns leading the meeting

Generally, half or more of the year is over before an advisory gets to this point. It usually takes that much steady work on social skills, inclusion, building a repertoire of greetings and games, and becoming clear about the criteria for students to be ready to steer the ship. At this point, students (usually partners or a small group) take on the responsibility of planning and leading a whole CPR meeting. It takes a series of steps to do this each time they lead.

1. The group is formed, and they come up with ideas for the meeting. These ideas are described on a Student CPR Plan Sheet (page 276).
2. Group submits their plan to the teacher.
3. Group conferences with the teacher, revisions are made as necessary, and a date is set.
4. Group leads the CPR meeting, followed by a brief class reflection (oral or written) on the meeting. The group is acknowledged by the class for their accomplishment.

5. Group members write their own reflection on the meeting process and hand it in to teacher.

The whole process is set up for success. By the time students step into the leadership role, they have experienced months of CPR meetings, know the criteria for each of the components, and have been guided in their planning by the teacher. The scaffolding is in place, and a good result is predictable. Successful leadership builds confidence, competence, and the satisfaction of autonomy: we did it ourselves! Student leadership of CPR prepares students for leadership in other arenas, and gives thrust forward to students' sense of connection to school—a feeling that their school really does belong to them and they to it. School attachment is a hallmark of student attitudes in healthy middle school climates.

Like more advisory ideas? There are 200+ activities, greetings, sharing ideas, and daily messages in *The Advisory Book*.