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## Letter from the Chair



The spring/summer 2017 CAYA issue is not about Donald Trump. If you're disappointed, I'm so sorry. If you're relieved, read on. The past several issues of the CAYA *SectionConnection* have had articles related to a common theme. For example, both issues last year were about mindfulness; this year, we have no theme. In January, when the committee was brainstorming topics, we came up with several fantastic articles, but none of them coalesced around a single subject. So, we decided to go with the articles rather than force a theme. Again, if you're disappointed, I'm so sorry.

In this issue, you'll read CAYA committee member Mary Elizabeth Alviar's article about an innovative approach to working with children, Dr. Ross Greene's Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS). The article summarizes Dr. Greene's innovative approach to working with youth with disruptive behavior problems. Alviar interviewed Dr. Greene for the article and shares some of his thoughts about the issue. She also provides a case comparison about how CPS addresses a behavioral issue differently from traditional approaches.

The second article, by Dr. Jeffrey Kranzler, is about school-based mentoring. Most of us are familiar with the community-based mentoring efforts by faith organizations and nonprofits like Big Brother/Big Sister. Dr. Kranzler talks about the benefits of bringing mentoring into the schools and what you can do to start a school-based mentoring program. Even if you are not a school-based social worker, this article will provide you with some things to think about as you talk with your school about the resources they provide and the types of services that might be available in your community.

Jonathan B. Singer, PhD, LCSW  
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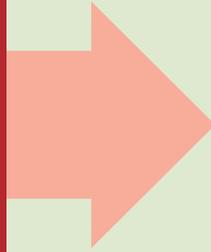
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## COLLABORATIVE & PROACTIVE SOLUTIONS: An Innovative Approach to Addressing Behavioral Problems



MARY ELIZABETH ALVIOR, LCSW, ACSW, DCSW

(Editor's note: The author, Mary Elizabeth Alviar, interviewed Dr. Ross Greene during her research for this article. All quotations come from that interview.)

### SCENARIO: SOCIAL WORKER USING TRADITIONAL PARENTING

**Mom:** I just don't know what to do. I have tried timeouts, took away privileges, and used a reward chart for positive behavior just like you suggested. But Junior isn't making any progress. He still refuses to cooperate with simple requests. It's like he doesn't care that he loses TV or gaming time and I know he wants those rewards, but he doesn't ever get close to

earning them. Now what?  
**Social Worker:** Hmm...we've tried increasing the consequences for negative behavior and increasing the rewards for positive behavior. Maybe we haven't found the right motivator yet?

### THE PROBLEM

Often, social workers who work with children and their families find themselves confronted with behaviorally challenging children whose behavior doesn't seem

to respond to traditional parenting interventions. It seems the more the parent increases the consequences, the more frustrated both the parent and the child become.

Most social workers who work with the child, adolescent, and young adult population are familiar with Barkley's Parent Management Training (PMT), which incorporates traditional parenting practices—clear expectations with consistently

applied rewards and consequences—as a valuable evidence-based approach (Kazdin 2009). If a child is misbehaving, the assumption is that he or she can be helped to behave through the application of rewards and consequences. A great deal of effort is spent on guiding parents and teachers to implement clear rules, reward charts, and consequences. Behaviorally challenged children are often labeled as oppositional, unmotivated, and limit-testing,

# programs require professionals with specialized training

while their parents are often assumed to be passive, permissive, and inconsistent in their parenting.

However, many children and adolescents do not respond to the traditional approach. Dr. Ross Greene's Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS; Greene, 2014a, 2014b, 2017) offers a fresh alternative that has a strong evidence base of its own. In a head-to-head comparison of PMT and CPS, CPS was found to be equivalent in effectiveness both at the time of treatment and at six months posttreatment (Ollendick et al., 2015). CPS has been implemented in outpatient settings, schools, residential and inpatient facilities, and juvenile detention facilities. It is the subject of active research in the United States, Sweden, Australia, and Denmark.

## A COLLABORATIVE AND PROACTIVE SOLUTION

CPS is a model that is grounded on the belief that children will do well when they are able and that their behavioral challenges arise from lagging skills and unsolved problems. The focus of this intervention is to determine which skills are delayed and which problems need to be solved so that the children can behave well. Dr. Greene, founder of CPS, explains that "behaviorally challenging kids have lagging skills, not lagging motivation, because kids aren't different from the rest of us: They will do well if they can."

This cognitive shift from motivation to skill deficit is an important shift of perspective from blaming a child for not wanting to behave to the recognition that a child misbehaves when the situation or expectations outstrips his or her ability to perform appropriately. In fact, this approach is one

that also removes the blame from the parents for their child's misbehavior; it is the lagging skill or unsolved problem that is the focus. CPS is non-blaming, non-judgmental, and proactive, seeing challenging behavior as a form of developmental delay.

## THREE PLANS

CPS identifies three ways to react to a child's misbehavior. Plan A is the autocratic application of his or her will through consequences. Dr. Greene believes that Plan A causes more challenging behavior in a behaviorally challenging child.

Plan B—proactively addressing lagging skills and unsolved problems—has three steps. The first is the Empathy Step, in which the parent or social worker nonjudgmentally asks the child about the behavior. This step sounds like, "I notice that you aren't doing your math homework. What's up?" The goal here is to elicit from the child information to understand his or her perspective on the unsolved problem. Sometimes this requires a series of questions to clearly identify what the child's concern or problem is in relationship to the unmet expectation.

The second step is Defining the Problem. This is when the parent can express his or her concern or perception about the problem. Defining the Problem sounds like, "The thing is, it is very important that you do your homework."

The third step is the Invitation to Brainstorming Solutions. This step sounds like, "I wonder if we can think about finding a way to help you with [child's concern] and still get your homework done [parent's concern]?" Possible solutions

are brainstormed and then evaluated on two criteria: The solution has to be doable, and it must satisfy the concerns of both the child and the parent. Plan C involves dropping the expectation for right now.

Plan C is the strategic choice of prioritizing which expectations on which to focus.

## SCENARIO REVISITED: CPS-TRAINED SOCIAL WORKER

**Mom:** I just don't know what to do. I have tried timeouts, took away privileges, and used a reward chart for positive behavior just like you suggested. But Junior isn't making any progress. He still refuses to cooperate with simple requests. It's like he doesn't care that he loses TV or gaming time, and I know he wants those rewards, but he doesn't ever get close to earning them. Now what?

**Social Worker:** Let's ask Junior what's up with this behavior so we can find out what problems and lagging skills he needs help with. If consequences and rewards aren't working, then we aren't dealing with a lack of motivation but a lack of skills in the areas of adaptability/flexibility, frustration tolerance, and problem solving. If we can figure out what the specific problem is from his perspective, then together we can make a plan with him to solve this.

## IMPACT OF CPS

When parents do Plan B, they are offering the child the opportunity to express what their challenges and needs are—instead of what more commonly happens when the parent skips past the child's concern and goes straight to identifying the solution he or she wants the child to use.

Plan B discussions engage the child in becoming a problem-solving partner. Solutions that are generated by the team have the buy-in of the child, as the solution must be acceptable to both parties. Without the child's agreement, any solution is doomed to fail.

There are many advantages to the CPS approach. It is non-blaming, non-punitive, and non-adversarial. It allows the parent and child to join a team whose goal is to help the child build skills to address his or her lags and solve the problems at the root of the challenging behavior. CPS is collaborative and not a unilateral coercive system. Solving problems through collaboration can take more time but ultimately leads to more durable solutions, and it is through the repeated process of using Plan B that a child can build his or her lagging skills while supporting his or her self-esteem and strengthening the bond with his or her parents.

The social work profession was founded on values of client self-determination, mutual respect, and collaboration. The CPS approach epitomizes these values. It demonstrates compassion and respect for both the children and their caregivers.

As a social worker who has used CPS with individual families and in a parenting group, I can attest to the relief parents feel when they realize they aren't to blame for having a behaviorally challenging child. I've seen relationships between parents and their children blossom when they realize the challenging behavior is the result of a delay in developing an emotional or cognitive skill, rather than pure defiance. CPS is an ethical, evidence-based parenting approach that is in synchrony

with the values of our profession. Dr. Greene states the impact of CPS: "It models and communicates respect and teaches life skills that can be used as an adult."

### HOW DO I LEARN MORE ABOUT CPS?

There are many ways to learn more about this model, including trainings online, in person, and by DVD. There are links to further research and information on annual summits and consultation at [www.livesinthebalance.org](http://www.livesinthebalance.org), a philanthropic foundation dedicated to promulgating CPS.

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### RESOURCES

Bill of Rights for Behaviorally Challenging Children: [www.livesinthebalance.org/sites/default/files/BillofRights216.pdf](http://www.livesinthebalance.org/sites/default/files/BillofRights216.pdf)

Greene, R.W. (2014a). *The explosive child: A new approach for understanding and parenting easily frustrated, chronically inflexible children*. New York: Harper.

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Lives in the Balance:  
[www.livesinthebalance.org](http://www.livesinthebalance.org)

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## NASW SPS On-Demand Animals in the Lives of Children Webinar

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# BUILDING RESILIENT SCHOOLS: Mentoring & Mastery



DR. JEFFREY KRANZLER, PHD, LCSW

*"It's all right to tell a man to lift himself by his own bootstraps, but it is cruel just to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself by his own bootstraps."*

—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

When Dr. King spoke these lines in the 1960s, "boots" were both metaphorical and literal: He was acknowledging that hard work was necessary to succeed but insufficient to overcome an economically unjust system that left many without the means to own a pair of shoes. His universal message is as relevant today as it was in the 1960s. In the context of schools, Dr. King's message translates as a missive to staff: It is simply unfair to demand that struggling students improve academics and behavior if they are not provided with the tools needed to do so. For children, adolescents, and even young adults, one of the "boots" we can provide is mentoring.

Mentoring connects youth with role models who demonstrate pro-social behaviors, effective social skills, high self-esteem, and strong academics. These role models become resources

that struggling students need to pull themselves out of the negative cycles created by behavioral disturbances, poor social skills, low self-esteem, and poor academic performance. Research has shown that connecting youth with a caring supportive figure is an integral factor in the development of resilience (Ungar, Ghazinour, & Richter, 2013). Through my work in implementing school-based mentoring programs, I have witnessed the impacts that mentoring can produce.

## WHY SCHOOL-BASED MENTORING?

School-based mentoring has the advantage of safety. Effective school-based mentoring programs limit interaction and activities to the school settings and ensure that all activities are supervised and that contact between mentors and mentees outside of school is prohibited. On-site mentoring programs also allow for closer communication between parents, teachers, administrators, and mentors. Not only does the readiness of communication make mentoring more effective, it provides multiple sources for evaluative

data. Compliance with attendance requirements and ongoing supervision and training are more readily implemented within a controlled environment as well. But most important, the positive emotions felt by students as a result of the school-based mentoring relationships are more likely to translate into positive feelings about school itself. When a school provides an effective mentor, a student feels that the school itself cares, and he or she will be more motivated to comply and thrive within the school setting.

The benefits of school-based mentoring have been demonstrated in several research studies that compare youth who receive school-based mentoring with youth who do not. These studies have found that, compared with youth who did not receive mentoring, mentored youth have better academic outcomes (Herrera, Baldwin Grossman, Kuah, & McMaken, 2009), fewer referrals for behavioral disturbances, and increased connectedness to school (Gordon, Downey, & Bangert, 2013). A comparison of mentored and nonmentored students in school-based settings revealed that the mentored students had gains in academic attitude and performance, class

attendance, and behavior (Herrera, Grossman, Kuah, & Feldman, 2007). But, to be fair and balanced, not all research on school-based mentoring has found differences between mentored and non-mentored youth (Dubois et al., 2011). Many programs being implemented in schools have never been evaluated in rigorous clinical trials. This dearth of evidence base reflects not only the challenges of conducting school-based research but also the lack of standardized definition of "school-based mentoring."

I have personally experienced the impacts of school-based mentoring programs done well. Students in one of my mentoring programs improved their academic performance by a full letter grade, and high school mentees reduced behavioral disturbances by 67 percent during their mentoring programs. So, how do you build school-based mentoring programs that are truly effective?

## BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-BASED MENTORING PROGRAM: A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH

Mentoring is an intervention that requires skillful implementation of empirically supported practices

that have been shown to create successful programs. Failures in mentoring programs are often because of the disregard for the evidence base. The following is an overview of the crucial steps that schools must take to create successful programs and outcomes. These steps have been developed through my own practices and are based on concepts found in Mentor: The National Mentoring Partnership's guidebook *Elements of Effective Practices for Mentoring* ([www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)).

### 1. Identify a program

**coordinator:** Mentoring programs require oversight and conscious guidance by someone who has the time, motivation, and training to direct all necessary aspects of the program.

### 2. Select and match mentees

**and mentors:** Mentors must have certain quality traits to be effective. They include being caring, authentic, personable, mature, committed, and enthusiastic, just to name a few. Mentees need to be open to having a mentoring relationship and have one or more areas in which they are struggling. Making successful matches is determined by aligning interests and personality traits, and matches are informed by parental, student, and teacher observations.

**3. Initiate training:** A mentoring program without training is like a meal without food; however, the mistake that many school-based mentoring programs make is in providing only initial training. Ongoing training is an absolute must. Mentors feel empowered when they are given the knowledge base that they need to succeed. Training elements include, but are not limited to, developing interactive listening skills,

creating boundaries, setting goals, responding to mentee concerns, and terminating relationships in healthy ways.

### 4. Create minimum expectations of contact and concrete

**programmatic requirements:** Mentoring works only when expectations for quantity of contact and rules are clearly and concretely articulated.

### 5. Provide ongoing supervision:

Mentors need to know that they have someone to turn to when they face challenges in their mentoring relationships. Just as important, supervision keeps mentors accountable for meeting program expectations.

### 6. Reach out regularly for mentee and parent feedback:

Parents are independent sources of information that help coordinators assess programs. Parents will trust programs that reach out for their feedback and involve them. Mentees also gain more from programs when their input is valued and they can alert a program coordinator to any negative elements that may be taking place.

### 7. Help mentees set goals:

Relationship development is complemented when mentors help mentees set goals. Mentors must be trained to help mentees autonomously set goals and develop the skills and self-motivation to act toward achieving them.

### 8. Work the termination process:

By necessity, all school-based mentoring programs must come to an end. As in therapy, the sessions that end the relationship can have an equal or greater impact than those that occur during the course of the relationship. Hasty, avoidance-based endings harm mentees. Endings should be a process that spans multiple meetings and includes group activities,

discussion of emotions regarding the ending of the relationship, identification of areas of needed work, and—most important—celebration of accomplishment and recognition of the impact of the relationship.

The research on the cost effectiveness of school-based mentoring is negligible and is an area that requires the attention of peer-reviewed journals. In my own work, I have found that a small initial investment in training and implementation can lead to self-sustaining programs—especially if students and staff are given leadership and high-level responsibility roles and if program guidelines are followed well. However, it is important to temper excitement about mentoring programs with the understanding that poorly implemented programs are not only ineffective, they can also have negative consequences (Miller, 2007). When done right, though, mentoring can grow thriving students into leaders and struggling students into resilient, successful, and confident young adults.

**Dr. Jeffrey Kranzler, PhD, LCSW, is the founder of Leaf Mentoring ([www.leafmentoring.com](http://www.leafmentoring.com)), which creates mentoring programs in elementary, middle, and high schools; community organizations; and colleges. His clients include several schools, Covenant House of New York, and the Johns Hopkins University A-Level Capital Firm. Dr. Kranzler welcomes any questions about mentoring and can be reached at [info@leafmentoring.com](mailto:info@leafmentoring.com).**

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## RESOURCES

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**National Mentoring Partnership:**  
[www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)

**Leaf Mentoring:**  
[www.leafmentoring.com](http://www.leafmentoring.com)

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