

# LSCI: one school district's experience

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GLENBROOK HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 225, a two-school district, is located in Chicago's northern suburbs. Residents of the upper middle class suburbs of Glenview and Northbrook are highly educated. They have high expectations for schools. The student body is approximately 4,000, with a faculty and staff of 600. These comprehensive high schools offer fine academic programs as well as a wide array of athletic and co-curricular programs which include the majority of students. While 93 percent of Glenbrook students continue on to college, Glenbrook is not just looking at academic development; meeting the needs of each individual student and the socialization of adolescents are both top priorities, also.



The memo on the bulletin board advertised a one-week, intensive training institute for educators interested in advancing their skills in the area of crisis intervention. Life Space Crisis Intervention training, a technique founded and taught by Dr. Nicholas J. Long, would be offered during the summer of 1995. A call was placed to the superintendent of special education for approval to attend the Institute, and the Glenbrook High Schools were quickly on their way to incorporating LSCI into a part of their everyday vocabulary.

I returned to Glenbrook with a set of invaluable tools. Using these skills in isolation for a year, I recognized the importance of implementing this new paradigm in my district. During the next two summers, Dr. Long and I trained over 50 Glenbrook faculty members – including both special education and regular education teachers, psychologists, social workers and administrators – in the skills of Life Space Crisis Intervention. We now share a common language.

One of the most rewarding aspects of having been actively involved in the training of the Glenbrook staff is seeing the newly acquired skills being used. Several weeks into the school year, as I walked through the halls, I encountered a colleague

who was engaged in a conversation with a student who was clearly in crisis. It became obvious to me that the teacher was using one of the interventions she had just learned. I sought her out later, and she told me that, initially, when she realized the student was having trouble, she felt a sense of panic. As she became more involved in talking with the young man, she recalled, her ability to intervene effectively felt natural. After several minutes, she forgot about her fear and simply let the process work for her and the student in crisis.

I asked her how the student felt after they were done talking. Her response indicated that she had been successful in helping him to drain off the feelings that were overwhelming him and to establish a time line of what had happened that was making him feel so angry. After telling me the process she went through, I pointed out to her that she had successfully utilized the skills she had been trained in, specifically the Conflict Cycle.

Her response: "It felt like the right way to talk with him."

Perhaps the most noticeable change amongst trained adults is a new sense of confidence. LSCI is based on the ability to form relationships with youth in crisis; Glenbrook is also a relationship-

based school. As a result, the staff already had many of the basic foundation skills of LSCI. What they gained through formal training was a process to use, a context in which to use the skills and a support system.

Throughout the year, I met with groups of staff who had been trained and were using the LSCI skills on a daily basis. At one meeting, as people were sharing their experiences, it became clear to me that not only had the LSCI training benefited the staff, but the students, as well. As people shared experiences with the group, a theme emerged: the adults discussed the process itself, but more importantly, they described how the student was impacted. Students have begun to recognize the common language, acquire the prerequisite skills and accept LSCI as a method of intervention.

The addition of Life Space Crisis Intervention to Glenbrook has been felt in many positive ways. Trained adults have new tools, a renewed sense of confidence and a common language. Students reap these benefits, as well. Although we have always taken pride in our ability to work with students and have used relationships as a basis for doing so, we can now better help adolescents in crisis.