



THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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I first experienced HIV and Pride on January 17, 2008 at Williamsburg Prep in Brooklyn. What caught my attention was the profoundly intense reaction of the students. There were over sixty freshmen in attendance and they sat on the edge of their chairs in a crowded classroom room, clearly enthralled.

The presenter, Rick Mueller, had their undivided attention. The honest account of how he was infected with HIV by making wrong choices, when he knew better, because he did not like himself, and the way he had to struggle accepting his life, touched the students. Not only that, their expressions suggested identification; they were listening. Their emotions suggested that they understood and were touched by this words. The play was not only informative but thoroughly entertained them and me; clearly they knew that the events displayed could happen in their school. When the actors were sad, so were the kids.

HIV and Pride continued presenting in High Schools in my network until June. The reactions of my principals who have experienced it is always the same. They are delighted and want HIV and Pride to return. Gary Beidleman, the principal of Foundations, had HIV and Pride back six times.

With the current increased infection rate among the 13-19 age group, it is imperative that it continues.

Sincerely,

Mychael Willon
Network Leader