



## The Reid Technique of Interviewing and Interrogation Tips for Educators

By Steve Greiner, President, ISDA

This article is intended for educators who have attended a presentation on “The Reid Technique of Interviewing and Interrogation” and are familiar with the process, terms and methods described therein. Without that prerequisite baseline of knowledge, this article will have limited value.

This is the second half of a two-part article. The first half was in the March 2011 issue.

### 5. Try not to be intimidating.

The Reid Technique is truly a “verbal finesse” type skill that can become a fear producing tactic if used improperly. Avoid yelling or pounding on the desk – frustration can become great when, as deans, we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that a student has committed a rule violation, yet refuses to admit it even in the face of irrefutable evidence. Emotions may be compounded by past history with the student who may have been dishonest, disrespectful, or insubordinate. Staying calm carries with it an aura of control, which is key in eliciting a confession. If the student realizes he has pushed your buttons, and that he is in control, it is less likely that he will give you what you really want: the truth. Further, a student is more likely to confess his violation to a sympathetic listener rather than a raving lunatic. Lastly, if you do manage to produce a confession through intimidation, it is not uncommon for the parent to contend that you yelled at the student until he confessed, and that the student really did not commit the act, but simply admitted to it so you would stop yelling at him.

### 6. Learn to move from interview to interrogation seamlessly.

I realize that the way the Reid Technique is spelled out, there are two distinct sessions. First is the interview, which is primarily information gathering, followed by the interrogation, which is primarily designed to get the confession from the guilty party. Occasionally, with

younger inexperienced people who do not have a significant amount of life experience, once they start to open up during the interview, they may continue to provide information (including a confession) if the right questions are asked and the correct environment is set. If, during the interview, the student begins to confess, don't stop the interview to make a formal transition to interrogation, but rather move directly into the theme phase of the interrogation. Come out from behind the desk, sit next to the student and begin modeling the confessional position – lean over, palms up. At this point, sitting next to the student is not intended to raise his anxiety level, but to demonstrate a personal connection and to create a comfort zone wherein he can confess. Some younger students, especially the ones who have not spent a lot of time in your office, will have heightened anxiety levels already. If a student's anxiety level continues to rise, he may shut down and it becomes advantageous to lower his level of anxiety. Success has been realized at this point by reciting a well developed theme, and by using the ‘Alternative Question’, (step 7 of the interrogation process): “Was this your idea or did your buddies talk you into it?” Remember to follow the alternative question with the supporting statement, “I'm sure you got talked into it, didn't you?” Success with this combination can be attributed to providing justification for the violation, but also for the suspect to be able to tell himself that he is still a good person

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## President's Corner

by Steve Greiner, President, ISDA

As we look toward the well deserved break of summer, I would like to share with all of you what the ISDA has been up to the last few months.

As you may remember in my last article, we have made some rather significant changes to the fall conference. Location, dates, registration and other items have changed for this year in an attempt to make the ISDA conference as valuable and accessible to its members as possible.

Hopefully, by this time you are aware, we will have created a mass e-mail list that provides us with the ability to make contact with all the deans in the state electronically. This was not an easy task to accomplish. Sure, gathering e-mail addresses of past and current conference attendees (maybe 150 people) was not difficult. The real work comes in when we try to access the other 600 deans in the state. There was really no place we could go to access the information at one time. What was required included calling all of the middle and high schools in the state, finding out who these people are, getting their addresses, and creating a spread sheet. This task, while not exceedingly difficult, was very time consuming. Further, in an effort to cover all the bases, we called and confirmed the addresses of people who have been attending the conferences as we did not want to leave them out. We would like to use this ability to stay in contact year round and stay connected by more than just the annual conference.

This list also will allow us to be a more 'green' organization and be mindful of resources. Further still is that it will save the organization money, as sending out conference flyers and other information to our members costs the organization more and more money every year. Realizing that our profession tends to have a rather high turnover rate, this list will need to be a living document and require updating every year or so. With that said, if you leave your position, please ask your replacement to contact one of the executive board members so we can make the necessary updates to the list.

Lastly, as the ISDA continues to grow and branch out, connections are made. The ISDA has joined the Reid Preferred Group of Associations (RPGA). What this does is enable ISDA members to attend any training presented by John E. Reid and Associates at a discounted rate. Reid and Associates has provided me with a code to give to you if you would like to attend training. Simply call or e-mail me and I will give you the code you need when registering to receive a discounted rate on the course.

In closing, remember, as you recharge your batteries this summer, that we as deans do make a difference in the lives of many young people. We have the unique opportunity to teach kids lessons that may last them a lifetime. I'm not saying teachers don't have great impact on students, they do. However, for the clientele we typically deal with, the regularly scheduled curriculum may not be the main focus of their school day. Do not underestimate the influence you have on the students you have contact with. Be mindful of the words you choose, be a source of hope, be a role model, be positive, be respectful and treat each student the way you would like your son or daughter to be treated, even if they did just make a huge mistake.

Have a great summer! See you in the fall.  
Steve

and that he committed the act for a good reason or understandable circumstances. Know your audience. This opportunity/necessity to move from interview to interrogation smoothly does not present itself often, but you need to be able to recognize and capitalize on it when it does. Once again, the Reid Technique is very powerful and needs to be used judiciously with younger people.

### **7. Use time as a tool.**

Time can be extremely useful if utilized with the right student in the right state of mind. There are several conditions that need to exist if this is going to be successful:

- a) The relationship with the student needs to be positive or neutral.
- b) The student must have a strong moral compass.
- c) The student requires a delicate approach due to his state of mind.

If these conditions are met and the seed is planted in the student's mind at the right time, success can be realized. Typically, this approach is reserved for very delicate individuals and is really about as watered down as the Reid Technique can be. If this situation necessitates, let time do the work. Once again, having the theme ready is a necessity. When it becomes apparent during the interview that the fragile student is guilty, seize the moment. Slip into interrogation mode, plant the seed of the theme, give them the moral "out" of the justification, then finish with the reassurance that "yeah, this sort of thing happens to good people all the time" and walk out. Leave him alone with his thoughts for fifteen or twenty minutes. Upon return, many times with very little provocation or further theme development, he will confess. This delicate approach only works if the student has a strong moral compass and is in a weakened or fragile state of mind. Having a positive relationship with his Dean who he doesn't want to let down is also a benefit to this situation, but it is not necessary. An advantage to this tactic is that time alone with one's conscience does the pushing, not you. You aren't the bad guy; you are the good guy who has just offered him the way out, thus allowing not only the positive relationship to be preserved, but also the student's state of mind. Further, if after the twenty minutes he needs some further persuading, you have not done any damage to the formal interrogation.

The concept of relationships, and the importance of utilizing them in conjunction with the Reid Technique,

especially with students who you see repeatedly, was addressed more than once in this article. This is a variance from what the law enforcement community usually encounters – most of their suspects they have never seen before, where as we, as school personnel, often times see the same students on a repeated basis. The most important guideline on relationships would be... preserve them! You will most likely need them again. Learn to repair the relationship even after a confession by utilizing the theme again. Reassure the person that he is not a bad person, that he just made a poor decision, and he absolutely did the right thing by telling the truth to make the situation right. Believe it or not, you can also get some miles out of the theme with the parents. No parent wants to hear that their kid is bad and does bad things. Parents are much more receptive to accepting a consequence for their student when you preface the consequence with statements such as: their student is a good person who made a bad decision for an understandable reason, or he was mature enough to admit he was wrong, and now he wants to make the situation right.

There are some investigations, however, when all the aforementioned guidelines go out the window. If the situation is that of an expellable offense (weapons, assaults, bomb threats, etc), the priority is to solve the case-developing positive relationships or even preserving or repairing them becomes a secondary concern. In these most serious cases, use all the behavior-provoking questions you need, put everything possible in your favor, and use the Reid technique at 100% strength. If the offense is that bad, you will most likely not need to interview this person again as he will be expelled or even possibly locked up, so go ahead and use your whole bag of tricks.

Finally, practice your craft. Interviewing is just like any other skill; if you don't use it, you will lose it. Practice the Reid Technique whenever you can. You don't need to be working an expulsion or felony case. Try it on kids who cut class. Throw in a behavior-provoking question and watch the response. Ask the punishment question and watch them shrug their shoulders. Practice developing themes on kids who steal food from the cafeteria, or who are late to class; the justifications for such behaviors can be almost irrational, but if it allows them to blame someone or something else for their behavior, they stick with it. The Reid Technique of Interview and Interrogation is truly amazing.

**TIPS** *continued on page 4*

The focus of this article was simply to point out several factors that differ between law enforcement and schools. Behavioral and physiological differences between juveniles and adults do exist. Environmental differences do exist. Further, relationships that occur in school may not exist in law enforcement and can be a great advantage to you as a school official. Finally,

the importance of an appropriate and well developed theme cannot be understated. This is by no means an all inclusive list of tips and strategies. If your school has been utilizing the Reid Technique for a period of time, you have certainly developed some strategies of your own. Hopefully, these tips can add to what you have developed and make you a more effective Dean.

## **Mark Your Calendar!**



The ISDA Fall Conference will be held  
**Thursday, November 3 and  
Friday, November 4, 2011.**

New location – Hilton Hotel, Lisle, Illinois

For more information, please contact  
Steve Greiner at [sgreiner@d155.org](mailto:sgreiner@d155.org).

## **2011 ISDA Monthly Meeting Dates**

Below is the list of ISDA meeting dates through  
October 2011. Please join us anytime!

Meetings are always at Noon at  
Mings Restaurant.

Contact Steve Greiner with any questions.

**12:00 p.m.**

**Mings Restaurant, Schaumburg Radisson**  
1725 E. Algonquin Rd. • (847) 397-1500

Tuesday, June 7, 2011

Tuesday, August 16, 2011

Tuesday, September 13, 2011

Tuesday, October 11, 2011

## **New Address? Retiring? Job Change?**

### **New Position Next Year?**

Please help us keep our membership information updated. Contact Steve Greiner at [sgreiner@d155.org](mailto:sgreiner@d155.org) with membership changes, or complete the membership application form on the last page and mail it to Dave Shuttars, Crystal Lake Central High School, 45 W. Franklin, Crystal Lake, IL 60014.

## **We Want To Hear From You!**

*Do you have exciting news to share?*

Don't forget ISDA when sending news releases about your school! We want to share success stories from the field with all ISDA members.

If you have an article or any ideas for the newsletter, please contact **Sara Rogers** at [sara.rogers@d128.org](mailto:sara.rogers@d128.org).



## Illinois State Deans' Association Membership Application

*(Please print or type)*

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I wish to become a member of ISDA. Please find my membership dues enclosed.

1 Year Membership Dues: \$45 • November 1, 2010 – October 31, 2011

Please make checks payable to: **Illinois State Deans' Association**

Mail to: **Dave Shutters, Crystal Lake Central High School, 45 W. Franklin, Crystal Lake, IL 60014**