

Sexual Violence Prevention Education Programming: Impacting Youth in Kansas

Issue

Bullying can adversely impact Kansas youth, especially in their ability to build healthy relationships and develop respectful attitudes toward youth and adults. Bullying does not discriminate; it impacts individuals of various ages, genders, race, ethnicities and socioeconomic status.

According to the Steps to Respect Program:

- Children who regularly bully others may grow up to become perpetrators of domestic violence, child abuse, hate crimes, sexual abuse, and other illegal behavior
- Bullying affects virtually all children. Although it is true that some children will never be bullied, research shows that children witness 85 percent of school bullying incidents.

Intervention

Kansas communities are making efforts to address bullying. Winfield Intermediate School (WIS), located in Winfield, Kansas, houses approximately four hundred fifth and sixth grade students who are both racially and ethnically diverse. Beginning in August 2007, WIS began implementing Steps to Respect, an eleven lesson program ranging in subject from how to build friendships to bullying prevention to sexual harassment. To further enhance this program, Winfield Public Schools have developed a Respect Initiative that is in place in every school within the district. The Respect Initiative is a district wide policy that defines bullying and the consequences of participating in bullying behavior. Additionally, all staff is trained to recognize bullying as well as to help students work through bullying situations.

Impact

Winfield Intermediate School has embraced the Respect Initiative and students have responded positive to the Steps to Respect lessons. The staff believes the impact of “everyone being on the same page” has been felt across the building. In addition to pre/post survey given to all students, anecdotal information is collected from students and staff. One sixth grade teacher reported the following:

We were doing Numbered Heads (a classroom management technique commonly found in the Success For All Reading program) in my Language Arts class last week. There were four students in the group and each member was assigned a number from one to four. Two boys in the group began to argue over their numbers. I was about to step in to help solve the program when a third boy walked over and said, “I have an idea, you can be my number, number 2 today” and looking at the other boy said “you can be my number next time. After all, it is only a number, and what does it really matter?” The other two had to stop and think. They smiled at each other and went on their assignment. The boy that “broke up” that argument looked at me and said, “It is just a number, I can’t believe they were getting all worked up over a number!”

This story demonstrates the impact of providing students with strategies that are student friendly and easy to embrace. These strategies can be used by students and staff to help create a climate in schools and the workplace that will remain a positive influence.

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