

Anti-Bullying

By Carroll DeWeese

Birmingham Public Schools recognize that bullying is a problem that can leave students afraid to go to school or result in violent acts. Some studies indicate that bullying is a problem that affects millions of students across the country. In an effort to be proactive, Birmingham Public Schools are addressing the problem of bullying and how to deal with it inside and outside of school.

At Berkshire Middle School, Principal Jason Clinkscale and teachers at the school have personally talked to students about bullying and bully prevention. To reinforce an anti-bully attitude among students, the school had a bully prevention specialist Richard Paul present his Duck Sense Eliminating the Bullying Assembly Program to students. Mr. Paul is an award winning speaker, author, and ventriloquist that has educated, motivated, and inspired over six hundred thousand students, parents, and teachers throughout the United States and Canada. His goal is to teach students and adults respect, responsibility, and kindness in order to eliminate bullying.

Bullying is not limited to schools, but Birmingham Public Schools wants to teach students and staff how to deal with it. Bullying is aggressive behavior where the use of force or coercion is used to affect others, particularly when the behavior is habitual and involves an imbalance of power. In schools, bullying is a form of peer abuse. The bullies may attack their targets physically (shoving, tripping, punching, hitting, or assault), psychologically (shunning from a group or gossiping about the person), or verbally (taunting, teasing, cruel remarks, or insulting). Students often experience cyber bullying, which is verbal bullying via email, instant messaging, and computer postings.

Bullying is not good for either the person bullied or the bully. Bullying is relentless and the person bullied can develop mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, stress, and even thoughts of suicide. Bullying is a form of violence and can lead to progressively more violence as a person grows up. Some have estimated that as many as 1 in 4 of elementary school bullies will have criminal records by the age of 30. Even if they do not develop a criminal record, they typically will be rejected by their peers, lose friendships, and have relationship problems as they age.

Bullies can be girls or boys who like to dominate others and are focused on themselves. They may lack feelings of caring for others, compassion, empathy, guilt, or remorse.

If bullied, students should tell a trusted adult or teacher. When confronted with a bully, they can practice taking the following kinds of actions: ignore the bully and walk away, control and not react with anger, and avoid being physical. In addition, they can learn how to take charge of their own life and be true to themselves. They can talk to someone that can give support, such as a guidance counselor, teacher, or friend.

For additional information of what Berkshire Middle School is doing for bully prevention, readers can contact Berkshire Principal Jason Clinkscale (248- 203-4704) (jc16bps@birmingham.k12.mi.us) or Berkshire Community School Organizer Lori Lachowicz (248-203-4706)(ll02bps@birmingham.k12.mi.us).