

Devoted To:

- Improving academics
- Deterring violence
- Fostering resiliency
- Enhancing coping skills
- Reducing risk
- Preventing suicide

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Culture shift

[Northwest District boosts bullying prevention]

School culture. It's integral to academic success. Yet when bullying behaviors are present, they undermine a culture of kindness and acceptance so vital to learning—not to mention a key safety and overall well-being of students, staff and community.

Making sure students feel safe from intimidation and harassment isn't just a priority for many Missouri education administrators. It's a mandate that's non-negotiable.

[take note]



WHAT: 30% to 70% reduction in student reports of being bullied and bullying others

HOW: Olweus Bullying Prevention, a designated Model Program by U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

MORE: See pages 3 and 4

That's why districts across the state continue to bolster bullying-prevention policies and protocols. This recent focus is due, in part, to federal law requiring all school districts nationwide to have had bullying policies in place by the start of the 2010 academic year.

Yet progressive districts recognize that **bullying breeds a climate of disrespect and fear that run counter to the core mission of schools**—that is, to help prepare youngsters to rise to their full potential as adults. Among these forward-thinking Missouri school districts? Northwest in Jefferson County.

When Northwest conducted a survey in spring 2006 to gauge bully awareness among students, school officials were concerned to learn that 11 percent of the district's students reported they feel unsafe at school. In response, Northwest Assistant Superintendent Scott Spurgeon led a cross-functional team of students, staff and administrators to proactively address survey results with targeted initiatives and action that included:

- Identifying "hot spots" where bullying occurs—and developing ways to curb it in those areas, which can include hallways, school yards, parking lots, bathrooms, lunchrooms and buses.
- Training both staff and students to identify bullying behaviors, including how to report bullying behaviors for students, and how to investigate reports of bullying for staff.
- Participating in one school-wide bully-awareness activity each month during the academic year.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT KEYS TO A CULTURE SHIFT THAT PROMOTE SAFETY AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT? SEE PAGES 2-4 OF THIS ISSUE.



Optimizing academic outcomes means fostering a climate of empathy and kindness toward others. So proactively and firmly address bullying behaviors is integral to achieving and maintaining a school setting beneficial to all.

A policy bulletin for MISSOURI EDUCATION LEADERS

- School Board Members
- Superintendents
- Principals
- Central Office Administration
- Guidance Counselors

inside

WEIGHING IN ON Well Aware



"... IMPROVING CULTURE IN OUR SCHOOLS HAS REAL ACADEMIC BENEFITS ..."

2 A message from Dr. Larry E. Ewing, MASA 2008 Superintendent of the Year.

[it doesn't add up]

11

States which have adopted bills requiring schools to develop specific sections on cyber bullying as part of their school harassment policies.

SOURCE: McClatchy-Tribune News Service, Washington, March 24, 2008

55%

Teens ages 12-17 who actively use social networking websites such as MySpace.

SOURCE: Pew Internet & American Life Project

A-

Grade given to Missouri by a watchdog group for its new comprehensive anti-bullying law at the state level. With this 2010 legislation, Missouri moved from a grade F to A-.

SOURCE: www.bullypolice.org

The link among academic outcomes and bullying, psychological distress and school violence have been further strengthened by



a study released in January 2008 (see source reference at right under “Academics and Bullying”). Researchers at the University of Washington found that the odds of being a bully victim (versus a bystander) were ten percent lower for every one point increase in grade-point average.

The significance of this is profound to Missouri students, and to us as education

administrators who craft policies that promote student achievement. If we are to help our students to reach their full potential, we must be advocates for a school culture of positive behavior and empathy for others.

Aggression and bullying run counter to this. They support a climate of fear and disrespect that can negatively impact learning.

Moreover, school-based aggression can have effects that are traumatic and long lasting for both perpetrators and victims alike.

The call to action for Missouri education leadership is clear and undeniable: improving culture in our schools has real academic benefits, both short- and long-term. It is my hope that this issue of *Well Aware* will inspire us as administrators to strengthen the foundation for a school culture where children feel a sense of belonging and connectedness. We can put practices in place that influence student behavior and boost outcomes. We can also encourage development of protective factors that indeed boost social and academic competence.

Larry E. Ewing, Ed.D.

Former Superintendent of Schools (Retired)
Fort Osage R-1 School District
Independence, Missouri

Freedom from fear and intimidation

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.”

THOMAS JEFFERSON, 1776

It is a basic democratic right for a student to feel secure and not be troubled by offensive or humiliating treatment. Schools can teach this during history and social studies classes. And staff can work to ensure that school policies honor student safety and foster a culture of kindness and acceptance, not one of aggression and intimidation. How? By enhancing bullying-prevention policies and protocols through applying evidence-based model programs.

ACADEMICS AND BULLYING



“I’m no good.”

“I don’t belong in my school.”

These disturbing emotions were more likely expressed by students involved in bullying behavior than bystanders. This, according to new research published in Jan. 2008 on bullying and school safety. Investigators studied 5391 students in grades 7, 9 and 11 in an urban public school district, 26 percent of whom were involved in bullying as victim, bully or both (bully-victim). Their findings are sobering, and **reinforce the link between academic achievement, school environment and mental health**. Findings include:



Students involved in bullying were more more likely than bystanders to feel unsafe at school and sad most days.



Victims and bully-victims were more likely to say they are “no good.”



Victims were more likely to feel that they “do not belong” in their school.



Bully-victims were more likely to say it is “not wrong” to take a gun to school.

READ THE RESEARCH! Bullying and School Safety. Glew GM, et al., University of Washington, Seattle. *Journal of Pediatrics*. 2008 Jan;152(1):123-8, 128.e1.

Feedback? Contact talkback@wellaware.org

Escaping the pain [consequences of bullying gone unchecked]

Written in fall 2002, these verbatim excerpts from a 7th grader who was bullied suggest a life of promise, happiness and potential.

WHO AM I? By Jeff Johnston, Fall 2002, 7th Grade

I'm number six in a line of seven. I'm William's big brother and my Dad's number-one son. I'm uncle to Alex, Danny and Amanda, and my mother's right-hand man.



I'm a loyal friend and a good secret-keeper.

I'm the one the Admiral teachers depend on to bring their mail every afternoon, staple papers, and alphabetize emergency cards.

I'm Mrs. Miller's moving crew, Dr. Miller's tic-tac fetcher, Mrs. Harmon's computer-booter, and Coach Henderson's improvement goal for the past semester ... Overall, I'm just a normal kid with a great life. I have a big family with caring brothers and loving sisters.



In my future, I hope that I will get a scholarship to Harvard. I want to become a lawyer like my cousin Bobby, my grandmother and my great-grandfather.



I'm important to other people, and I have big plans for my future.

Jeffrey Scott Johnston died by his own hand on June 29, 2005. He was 15 years old and had been bullied via the Internet by a classmate for three years, beginning in 7th Grade. Jeffrey's mother Linda is an elementary educator who collaborated with other parents to tell their late children's stories of being bullied and the consequences in a new book, "Bullycide in America" (2007, JBS Publishing, Inc. ISBN: 1-59029-069-0). Want to learn more about bullying-prevention programs that are proven and promising? See below or email us with your request, feedback or opinion at talkback@wellaware.org.

[training support available to schools]

Boosting bullying prevention

It's been linked to vandalism, shoplifting, skipping and dropping out of school, fighting, and use of drugs and alcohol. It can disrupt a school's ability to educate in a safe environment, and have long-lasting effects on student health. So bullying, whether verbal or physical, is about more than peer-to-peer aggression. It's about student academics and overall well-being. That's why several agencies have partnered together to launch a collaborative, evidence-based effort to reduce bullying in Missouri. In recent years organizations such as the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals, the Dept. of Mental Health, and the Dept. of Health & Senior Services have worked to grow a cadre of individuals trained in the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*. A federally designated model program, Olweus proven results include: **Noteworthy 30-70% reduction** in student reports of being bullied and bullying others; significant reductions in student reports of general **antisocial behavior** (e.g., vandalism, fighting, theft and truancy); significant improvements in **classroom order and discipline**; and **more positive attitude** toward school work and school. Schools concerned about bullying and are prepared to take action can apply for training assistance. To find a certified trainer, you can visit www.clemson.edu/olweus/trainers.html/htm#missouri. Or for more information, contact Glenn Berry Ed.D., former director of the Missouri Center for Safe Schools and the



statewide training coordinator for the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*, at gbsafe@socket.net.



BE SURE TO CHECK OUT **BULLIED: A STUDENT, A SCHOOL AND A CASE THAT MADE HISTORY**. THIS DOCUMENTARY CHRONICLES ONE STUDENT'S ORDEAL AT THE HANDS OF ANTI-GAY BULLIES, AND OFFERS AN INSPIRING MESSAGE OF HOPE TO THOSE FIGHTING HARASSMENT TODAY. TO **ORDER YOUR FREE COPY TODAY**, VISIT WWW.TOLERANCE.ORG.

CAMPUS CULTURE PROGRAMS TO CONSIDER

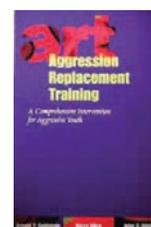
TO ADDRESS BULLYING, AGGRESSION AND MORE IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

Olweus Bullying Prevention

Multilevel, multicomponent school-based program to prevent or reduce bullying in elementary, middle and junior high schools
Target ages: 6-15
Info: clemson.edu/olweus/



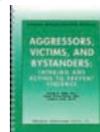
Aggression Replacement Training®



Comprehensive intervention for aggressive youth to teach adolescents to understand and replace aggression and antisocial behavior with positive alternatives
Info: researchpress.com/product/item/6500/

Aggressors, Victims and Bystanders

Part of a comprehensive health education curriculum for middle and high school students that analyzes habits of thought that promote, allow for, or prevent violence
Target grades: 6-8
Info: thtm.org/special.htm



PATHS® (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies)



Violence-prevention curriculum that promotes social/emotional learning, character development, bullying prevention, and builds the problem-solving abilities and other life skills
Target grades: K-6
Info: channing-bete.com/prevention-programs/paths/

Mark these dates on your calendar
TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT'S COMING UP!



NATIONAL BULLYING PREVENTION MONTH
 OCTOBER 2010

MASSP Assistant Principal Conference
 DECEMBER 6, 2010, COLUMBIA
<http://www.moassp.org/node/102>

NO NAME-CALLING WEEK
 JANUARY 24-28, 2011
www.nonamecallingweek.org

MISSOURI SAFE SCHOOLS & COLLEGES CONFERENCE
 JULY 7-8, 2011
www.educationsafetyconference.org

Be well aware [resources and help]

CHOOSING A PROGRAM THAT WORKS

"A Systematic Review of School-based Interventions to Prevent Bullying" was published in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine in January 2007. Researchers found school-based interventions that involve multiple disciplines showed better results. To obtain a copy of this study, email us at talkback@wellaware.org.

BOOSTING SCHOOL SAFETY

Have you checked out the interactive CD on threat assessment in schools from the U.S. Dept. of Education? Order "A Safe School and Threat Assessment Experience" by emailing edpubs@inet.ed.gov.

FREE TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE

Is funding a barrier to implementing suicide-prevention training that could protect both students and staff? The Missouri Dept. of Mental Health (DMH) has Regional Resource Centers for Suicide Prevention across the state that provide free training for school personnel including QPR, a program listed in a Best Practices Registry for Suicide Prevention (sprc.org). Centers provide presentations for your student body to encourage help-seeking behavior. Contact the Resource Center in your region by visiting <http://dmh.mo.gov> or contact Scott Perkins, DMH Youth Suicide Prevention Project Director at 573-751-8155 or Scott.Perkins@dmh.mo.gov.

[talk back]



What is your biggest barrier to enhancing culture or strengthening bullying prevention in your school? Time ... resources ... training ... comfort level ... support from school board and parents?

Let us know at talkback@wellaware.org. And tell us what you think of the **Well Aware** newsletter, a suicide prevention policy resource for Missouri school leaders and administrators.

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Well Aware

A Suicide Prevention Policy Bulletin for MISSOURI EDUCATION LEADERS

- School Board Members ■ Superintendents
- Principals ■ Central Office Administration
- Guidance Counselors

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