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South Elementary students learn ways to prevent bullying

by Denise Kinder Staff Reporter

Mike Dreiblatt of Balance Educational Services, LLC presented his workshop, Bullying, Cyber Bullying, and Social Aggression, to the staff and students of South Elementary on Sept. 15, and then spoke to a group of about ten parents about bullying later that evening.

Dreiblatt is the cofounder of Balance Educational Services, and a national speaker. He provides dynamic, practical seminars and workshops to whole school communities: students, school staff, administrators, parents and community members.

Dreiblatt engages attendees and teaches the best practices and realistic strategies that can be used immediately. In the workshop he presented to South Elementary, he showed how to replace bullying and other misconduct with pro-social actions.

He is an expert in bullying and violence prevention, creating healthy relationships, effective communication styles, and discipline of students with special needs.

Dreiblatt spoke with the younger students at South Elementary about ways to express their feelings the right way, and explained to the older students about being a bystander in a bullying situation. The four types of bullying he touched on were physical, verbal, cyber, and relational.

He informed the parents that most children are not bullies or targets, they are the bystanders.

"The average bullying situation takes place in less than 30 seconds," Dreiblatt said. "When a bystander intervenes, the time drops to seven seconds."

The bullying proofing plan of action Dreiblatt spoke of involved four actions for children to take against a bully.

The first option is to ignore and/or walk away. The second option is to assertively tell the person to stop. To be assertive, the child must keep a calm demeanor, have eye contact, lower their tone of voice, and choose their choice of words. "This is important to practice at home with your kids," Dreiblatt said.

The third option is to warn that you will talk to an adult and then walk away. Dreiblatt explained this is hardest to do for third through tenth grade students. He also explained the difference between tattling and telling on someone to the younger students. "You tattle to get someone in trouble, and tell to get someone out of trouble," said Dreiblatt.

The fourth option is to go to an adult. Dreiblatt said the options are in no particular order to follow, and he also holds a severity clause to protect your body at all times.

Dreiblatt gave the parents information they should use when working with the schools when their child is involved in an ongoing bullying situation.

First, parents should follow the chain of command. "Talk to the teacher first," Dreiblatt said. Then, if a meeting is arranged, prepare for the meeting by making arrangements for other people and paperwork to be at the meeting in plenty of time before it begins. Next, the parents should work with the school to develop a safety plan and make sure the student is involved with the plan. In about three to six weeks, evaluate the safety plan based on whether the student is safe. The parents should also be aware of limitations regarding information they can receive about other students.

Some things not to do are assume you are the only one who is watching out for the best interest of your child. Parents should also not minimize the problem or assume your child is giving you all the information. Also, don't assume just because your child quits talking about the situation that the bullying has stopped.

Dreiblatt also has a book available titled How to Stop Bullying and Social Aggression. The book helps educators engage bullies, victims, and bystanders at their own level and teach healthy behaviors to create safe, healthy schools. The book can be purchased on Dreiblatt's website, www.BalanceEducation.net.

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P.O.Box 369

210 W. Main

Jackson, MO 63755

Phone: 573-243-3515

Fax: 573-243-3517