

October 7-12, 2013 Anti-Bullying Awareness Week

The first full week of October is designated as “Anti-Bullying Awareness Week,” an initiative aimed at ensuring safe and bully-free environments throughout Kansas.

The message is loud and clear, bullying in any form is not okay. The teachers and staff in USD 435 know the facts and are aware of the strategies for prevention. Whether it’s verbal, physical, cyber or relational, bullying will not be tolerated.

If you haven’t read it, I recommend Barbara Coloroso's book, “The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander.” The author repeatedly cites examples of violence that have erupted because of bullying.

In her estimation, bullying creates a myriad of social problems ranging from diminished feelings of self-esteem to violence toward others or even oneself.

She identifies three characters in this tragedy: the *bully*, the *bullied* and the *bystander*.

Bullying is based on antisocial behavior. Coloroso states, “Many children who *bully* continue these learned behaviors into adulthood and are at risk of then bullying their own children, failing in interpersonal relationships, losing jobs, and ending up in jail.”

Those that are *bullied* tend to lose self-confidence and suffer from feelings of guilt and shame. As they become more isolated, they develop survival strategies instead of social skills. If pushed too far, they may eventually strike out in violent ways.

Bystanders, who observe bullying, may walk away, jump in as accomplices, or actively intervene and help the bullied child. Coloroso believes that the role of the bystander must be transformed into that of an actively intervening witness: someone willing to stand up, speak out, and act against violence.

Bullying will not go away without intervention. It is a learned behavior that can be examined and changed. Families, schools and communities need to develop programs to assure that all children grow up in a safe, kind, and caring environment. Daniel Goleman, author of Emotional Intelligence, states these programs should focus on teaching the seven key abilities needed to effectively manage life: 1) To motivate ourselves; 2) To persist against frustration; 3) To delay gratification; 4) To regulate moods; 5) To hope; 6) To control impulses; and 7) To empathize.

Barbara Coloroso maintains that bullying is everyone's problem and that we must all be agents of change.

I have several of the Coloroso books on hand at the district office for the community – if interested, please stop by to pick one up. Additional information can also be found on the following website, “The end of bullying begins with me” at <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4980>.