

Building Bridges to Reduce Bullying

*Highland Goffes Falls School
Manchester, New Hampshire*

The Building Bridges committee organized a monthly double header event—a night with two concurrent workshops, one for students and one for parents. Four teachers, six parents, and the principal comprised the Building Bridges Committee, whose goal was to bridge the gap between school and home. One of the most well-received double header nights this year focused on reducing bullying.

The parents' workshop featured guest speaker, Christine Mattise, a guidance counselor and author from New Hampshire. Mattise has lectured extensively on bullying in the U.S. and abroad. Her presentation to parents focused on bullying and harassment in an elementary school setting. Approximately 50 parents and teachers learned strategies to teach children life-long skills to balance their personal rights and responsibilities as young citizens. During the interactive workshop, parents tried out the practices Mattise described.

The children's workshop was a musical program presented by Judy Pancoast, a professional singer who performs nationally. Pancoast sang and talked about who a bully is, how bullies hurt children, what to do if someone is bullying you, and how to be the best person you can be. Students learned positive behavior and relationship building skills through music, dance, and interactive song and storytelling. Approximately 40 children from ages three to twelve role played the parts of the victim and the bully using conflict resolution strategies.

Building Bridges committee members worked with various stakeholders to organize the workshops. Through the school's partner-

ship with St. Anselm's College, students provided free babysitting for siblings too young to participate in the workshop. Teachers and parents created fliers for students to take home, and the local paper advertised the school's double header night. The PTA and the Parent Information Center in Concord helped fund the parent and student workshops.

Parents have commented, "We need more programs like this." Others have said, "I love having a program for kids at the same time. Thanks." The Building Bridges Committee will continue to seek parent and student input to the workshop topics—a great way to increase ownership, partnership, and satisfaction. By offering workshop topics based on parents' requests, the Building Bridges Committee has increased participation rates steadily.

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