

Sherman School's Anti-Bullying Program

*Sherman Elementary School
Eau Claire, Wisconsin*

All 427 students at Sherman Elementary joined a campaign to rid their playground of its worst behavior problems. Sherman School's Anti-Bullying Program brought important lessons into all classrooms and had children in grades K to 5 creating posters that urged their classmates to think twice before they picked on their peers.

Administrators at Sherman developed the program in response to student opinions. The school's book club members read *Loser* by Jerry Spinelli, which focuses on the experience of an outcast adolescent. In discussing the book's major themes, the boys in the book club agreed that there was some bullying going on at Sherman.

The school counselor and partnership coordinator decided it would be a good idea to address bullying and to prevent it. The school bought an anti-bullying curriculum, *Know What? Bullying Hurts*, for all grades. Students learned skills to help them identify and confront bullies. The lessons taught students to empathize with their peers and understand the reasons why bullying happens in the first place.

But the education did not stop with the students. The district's parent facilitator presented a parent workshop on the same topic. The school served dinner and provided child care. About 45 parents attended, and agreed that the workshop was helpful. "We think this information will be beneficial," a parent said.

When the classroom lessons were complete, the school sponsored a poster contest so students could illustrate and share what they had learned.

At the end of the year, administrators celebrated the school's progress by hosting an Anti-Bullying Graduation Celebration. A good crowd of students and parents turned out for the event to play a game of bingo and watch jugglers who had incorporated an anti-bullying theme into their performance. All students received a bracelet with the STAR logo, which

encouraged them to stop, think, act, and review their behaviors.

Both students and teachers agreed that the program had positive results. Student discipline referrals decreased; students have been "caught" doing kind, rather than unkind, acts. "We see changes on the playground and in the school building," said the partnership coordinator. "Students know the appropriate language to use when dealing with bullying."

Perhaps the most significant impact, however, was making children more aware of their own behavior. "Wow, I've been a bully and I didn't know it!" one student said.

The school used grant money to pay for most of the program's \$1,340 cost. A small fundraiser helped cover the rest.

School officials plan to continue the anti-bullying program. They would like to raise money for the *Peaceful Playground* program, which would expand on this year's program.

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