

65 percent of students have an increased understanding of how to handle bullying situations

## Peer mentoring reduces bullying in Campbell County schools

### Situation:

Nearly one in five students experience bullying in some way, according to nationwide Olweus surveys. The remaining students, called bystanders, also are affected by bullying. Campbell County school district data shows that local averages are similar to or slightly higher than national data.

In cooperation with the Campbell County School District, a peer mentoring program was implemented in nine elementary schools in 2010. The program, *Bullying Hurts*, pairs eighth through twelfth grade teens with fourth grade students in their classrooms. Teens attended training that taught what bullying is, how to identify bullying, and target strategies for handling bullying. Teens were also taught mentoring teaching and relationship skills. The program included a leadership self-assessment and teamwork strategies.

Fifty teen mentors worked with more than 500 fourth grade students. Teen mentors were assigned to fourth grade classrooms. Mentors worked consistently with the same group of students allowing for building mentor relationships. Teen mentors visited three fourth grade classrooms in nine schools reaching 27 classrooms three times each. The Safe Schools/Healthy Students office was instrumental in arranging visitor scheduling with fourth grade teachers, bus transportation, and excused absences for mentors. A representative of that office, along with the 4-H educator, accompanied teen mentors on every classroom visit.

### Impact:

Results in the fourth grade classrooms were evaluated through surveys of teachers. Teachers evaluated the program using comments and a ranking of questions about youth behavior.

As a result of this program:

- 78 percent reported an increase in student awareness of what bullying is
- 65 percent of students have an increased understanding of how to handle bullying situations
- 100 percent of teachers indicated the mentor relationship was beneficial to students
- 27 percent indicated they would make changes in the classroom as a result of the program

Those responding yes were asked to elaborate what changes they planned to implement.

Changes involved adult staffing where the greatest percentage of bullying occurred. Trouble areas included bus stops, cafeteria lunch lines, coat rooms, cafeteria tables, and specific locations on playgrounds during recess.

Impact and growth of teenage mentors was measured with pre-training, pre-mentoring, and post-mentoring school visits surveys:

- 100 percent recognize bullying occurs in school (pre-training, pre-mentoring, post-mentoring)
- Teen mentors learned what bullying is. 82 percent pre-training; 68 percent pre-mentoring; 33 percent post-mentoring – I have not been bullied
- Confidence in mentoring younger students increased from 63 to 94 percent from pre- to post-mentoring after training.
- Teen mentors' understanding and ability to identify bullying in their own relationships increased 65 percent.
- After mentoring, 100 percent of teen mentors had a better understanding how bullying affects their own relationships.

Analysis of teen mentor data indicates youth completing the training and who become mentors are more likely to be honest with themselves and others about their peer relationships.



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