



Bullying Prevention/Unity Day at Jenkins Elementary—students and staff “make it orange.”

“Make it Orange & Make it End!”

The students and staff of Jenkins Elementary recently joined in the national movement to end bullying. The school family, with approximately 450 students and 40 staff members, wore orange on October 9th—reminding one another that bullying is unacceptable at Jenkins or anywhere else.

Originally known as Unity Day, scores of educators and students across the country endorsed the theme “Make it Orange and Make it End!” -- reminding school communities of the need for bullying prevention.

Hickory Public Schools uses the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, a research-based bullying prevention training program. The HPS faculty is currently involved with on-going training and implementation strategies to reduce bullying problems in the schools—for the long term.

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is designed to improve peer relations and make schools safer, more positive places for students to learn and develop. Goals of the program include: reducing existing bullying problems among students, preventing the development of new bullying problems, and achieving better peer relations at school.

Bullying is a serious issue. According to the Olweus Program, bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power. Most often, it is repeated over time. School bullying takes on many

forms, and it is done by both girls and boys. A recent U.S. study shows that 17 percent of all students reported having been bullied "sometimes" or more often. This amounts to almost one in five students—according to statistics issued by Olweus.

“October is anti-bullying month and we decided to participate in the orange ‘Unity Day’ to address the serious issue of bullying,” said Cynthia Parrish, Jenkins Elementary guidance counselor. “The focus of bullying prevention is not about the victim and the aggressor—but the bystanders. We are trying to empower the bystander(s) to take a stand—and support the victim. When the victim is supported by the bystander—it’s a signal for the bullying to stop,” said Parrish. “Somehow the one who bullies often believes they are above the other students—perhaps in academics, athletics, height, financial, social; but when a crowd supports the victim, the bullying typically dissolves.”

The Olweus Program offers multiple methods that we will use in the classroom, in the halls, on the playground—wherever bullying may occur, said Parrish. “The training provides role-playing scenarios to help the students comprehend the process and resolve.”

Several staff members at Jenkins serve on a committee that helps to train colleagues while organizing the school-wide program. Members include: Principal John Black, Assistant Principal Terry Ashley, Cynthia Parrish, Betsy Swann, Pam Kidwell, Paula Gambill, and Denise Prince. All nine schools within the district have organized Olweus school committees with members initially receiving training from Angela K. Simmons, HPS director of student services. Simmons attended national Olweus training in preparation for the start of the program with Hickory Public Schools.

The official kick-off of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program at Jenkins Elementary is set for Monday, October 28th. Local performer and educator, Rick Cline, who is well-known for leading several percussion and jazz groups in the area, will entertain the Jenkins school family while providing an enthusiastic launch to bullying prevention at Jenkins Elementary—as they join schools across the nation determined to “make it end!”

#####