

## Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

The Reading City Community School District embarked on a journey last school year to research and select a bullying prevention program that could be implemented district-wide during the 2013-2014 school year. After much work, an anti-bullying program was selected, which met the criteria and standards developed by a team of teacher, counselors, administrators, and parents. This team then chose to implement the Olweus Anti-Bullying program, a bullying prevention program that has been implemented throughout the world and has over thirty-five years of research supporting it.

Olweus is a multi-tiered program that addresses bullying at all levels of a student's experience: school-wide, classroom, individual, and community. The overall goal of Olweus is to shift behavioral norms regarding bullying and redesign the architecture of the school climate to be a more positive environment in which bullying is less likely to occur or be rewarded. The program is designed for all students, not only those who are bullied and those who bully others. The Olweus program is a comprehensive, long-term approach to the prevention of bullying, not simply a shot-in-the-arm effort to put out fires when bullying occurs.

The school district has adopted Olweus's definition of bullying with the implementation of the program: *A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself.* Imbedded in this definition are three major components: 1) Bullying is aggressive behavior that involves unwanted, negative actions; 2) Bullying generally involves a pattern of behavior repeated over time; 3) Bullying involves an imbalance of power. Also, bullying can take place in many different forms: physical hitting, verbal taunts, spreading of false rumors, intentional social exclusion, and sending nasty messages on a cell phone or over the internet.

**School-Wide Level:** At the school level, the staff at each building has been trained in the Olweus method for preventing bullying. Also, each building has been provided with the necessary resources to implement the Olweus program. As a necessary part of the program, staff discussions are encouraged throughout the year as teachers delve into the depths of teaching students important social-emotional skills that are the foundation of the program.

Another piece of the Olweus program is the administration of the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire. This is an anonymous questionnaire given to all of our students in grades 3 to 12. The questionnaire results help reveal the nature and extent of bullying in our schools, in addition to monitoring the effectiveness and impact of the program.

4 anti-bullying rules: Our school has adopted the 4 rules against bullying: 1) We will not bully others; 2) We will try to help students who are bullied; 3) We will try to include students who are left out; 4) If we know someone is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

Olweus kick-off: Each building held a kick-off of the bullying prevention program by leading various activities that promote the ideas of the Olweus program.

School-wide Parent Involvement: It is crucial to gain the support of family and community members in order to help transform negative bullying behaviors into positive peer relations.

**Classroom Level:** Discussion and enforcement of the 4 anti-bullying rules: Each class has spent time going over the 4 anti-bullying rules, along with the definition of bullying. In this way, students are better able to identify bullying and take steps to prevent it.

Classroom Meetings: Each class in the school district conducts a weekly class meeting, with the purpose of building a sense of community while also discussing various topics that support social-emotional learning. Students look forward to these weekly meetings as a forum for voicing their thoughts and opinions.

**Individual Level:** Once a case of bullying has been identified, appropriate actions are taken to help the person who was bullied, and consequences are given to the person engaging in bullying behaviors. Teachers have also been trained to intervene on-the-spot when bullying behavior is identified.

**Community Level:** As the school year progresses, each building's bullying prevention team will be looking for ways to spread anti-bullying messages to the larger community. The teams are working on ways to connect with the wider community and promote the ideas that are the foundation of the Olweus program.