

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, September 8, 2006

Parents Need To Partner With Schools, Other Parents To Prevent Bullying

SPRINGBORO, Ohio – With the start of the new school year, administrators spent much of August collaborating on better ways to operate the school district and improve student learning. Clearly, the top priority in the area of discipline is to prevent bullying at all nine schools. At our Administrator’s Retreat in mid-August, Resource Office Sgt. Don Wilson and Wendy Ford, our crisis intervention specialist, recounted some of the incidents they had dealt with last year in our schools.

Each of these incidents had a common denominator – bullying.

If there is one area our principals and others have been cautioned about this year are students treating other students with disrespect. It simply will not be tolerated at any level. What may appear as harmless “horsing around” to a passerby could be the culmination of months of taunting, harassment and even physical abuse. As administrators, we cannot tell if it is a first incident – or the 50th – so we will treat each incident as seriously as the next.

Please understand we are not trying to make the proverbial mountain out of molehills. We are trying to keep our students and staff safe. We all have seen the horrifying headlines of a student or students who seek revenge by killing other students, teachers and principals. Every incident of a school shooting was the result of students who were made fun of, bullied, and treated with disrespect. We have been fortunate that there have not been any gun incidents in Warren County. What may appear as harmless name-calling or silliness can lead to an all-out attack. Springboro students are no different than children anywhere in the nation.

The simple fact is, we cannot prevent bullying in Springboro Community Schools without the help of our parents. In the past year and half, some of our bullying issues have started on the Internet. Students create their own web pages through MySpace.com and other such websites. We need parents to monitor what their children are viewing and who they are interacting with on the Internet. We all have heard the stories about predators posing as students to entice our young people into doing illegal and immoral activity. Just as importantly, we need to monitor what are children are doing on the website to make certain they are not harassing others – or are the target of harassment. In the majority of instances, parents of students not involved in the bullying will know about the harassment first. Those parents will be shown the websites and emails by their children, who are simply bystanders of the bullying.

You are the people we need to take action. Your involvement can be minimal; simply email the website information or forward the emails to someone you trust in the school district. If you like, call me personally at 937-748-3960, and we can talk together about what the next step should be. The worst thing you can do if your child points out a bullying incident is to say “not my problem.” True, it might not be your problem this time, but those who bully prey on other students. Next time, it might be your child. Wouldn't you want another parent to step in and protect your child, if they could?

(Editor's Note: Dr. David D. Baker is superintendent of Springboro Community Schools. He has more than 35 years of educational experience, and has been Springboro's superintendent for six years.)

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