

Schools Update: Bullying

By Dr. Ken Cox

One of the ongoing challenges we face at school is that of bullying between students. I can remember being on the receiving end of it myself when I was at school and I doubt that there are many adults that can't say the same thing. While it often starts as friendly banter, teasing or joking around, it can become vicious and very hurtful, especially during the middle school years.

While it is very difficult to eliminate bullying completely, we are working to address it in our schools. In the elementary grades, Mr. Spackman works with students on a regular basis to help them learn how to deal with conflicts between each other. He helps the students understand that "Bullying is unfair and one-sided. It happens when

someone keeps hurting, frightening, threatening, or leaving someone out on purpose." Teasing crosses over to bullying whenever someone who has been asked to stop doesn't. Mr. Spackman also works with the younger children to learn the difference between reporting and tattling so that students will know when they need to report bullying to an adult.

Life gets a little more complicated in middle school where it is not considered 'cool' to talk to an adult about little things, which unchecked, often turn into bullying. The district Positive Behavior Instruction Support (PBIS) team is concerned about this and has reached out to students to get more information from students on bullying at our schools. Mr. Weisel has set up regular small group meetings with some

students and we are looking into ways to do more to address this issue. He also points out that "bullying is not caused by the school. It is a community issue and over time happens any place where children/students congregate (parks, churches, and especially online)."

We are asking two things of you as parents: first, talk to your children about bullying and set the expectation that bullying will not be tolerated; second, please contact your child's building principal at the first report from your child of bullying. It is also important that you work with your child and impress upon them the importance of being open and honest in reporting just what is going on. It is particularly challenging when a principal gets a report of bullying from a parent, and when they visit with the student to find

out more information, all they get is "It's no big deal," or the student denies that there is a problem.

As a parent, I know that it can be frustrating when you see or hear that nothing is happening. When a principal does address the issue they must maintain confidentiality and so can't tell you all that is going on behind the scenes. I would ask that you be patient and if you are NOT getting the results you want, after visiting with the principal, please feel free to contact me and I will find out what I can.

Bullying, in any form, is not acceptable in our schools and we are working to address it. If you have suggestions or ideas please feel free to share those with me or the principals as well. We are here to listen and to do what we can to protect our children.

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many electives as in the past. Reducing the elective requirement would not take away from the required curriculum but would allow more flexibility in scheduling.

SHAW Clinic Report-Sherrie Ford from the Public Health Foundation of Columbia County reported that the Spencer Health and Wellness (SHAW) clinic has been closed due to personnel situations. Ford informed the Board that a new staff member, Physicians Assistant Sandy Kosik would be starting the next day and that the clinic would be reopened on Fridays from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM to provide primary care services. Ford said that a second employee, Nurse Practitioner Carol Opheikens, would be starting after Spring Break and the clinic would be open a second day on Wednesdays from 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Ford noted that during the closure 24 of the 43 students who had established care at SHAW had been seen at the local community clinic. She also noted that an additional 72 school aged children had established care at the Vernonia clinic.

Volunteer Coordinator Report-Volunteer Coordinator Amanda Wolf presented a report to the Board and told them the District has 378 approved volunteers with approximately fifty active. She noted that to date volunteers have logged 1,654 hours of time. She told the Board that a

"Volunteer of the Month" is being recognized in *Vernonia's Voice*. Wolf told the Board that new software used to track volunteer hours has been very helpful. Wolf listed over sixteen school activities and events she has supported and participated in as Volunteer Coordinator. There will be a Volunteer Appreciation Dessert this spring; Wolf invited the Board to attend.

Community Indicator Presentation-Bill Langmaid and Scott Laird made a presentation to the Board on the Vital Vernonia Indicator Project (VVIP). The VVIP is an effort to explore community vitality in Vernonia by setting forth a series of goals that can be used to monitor community progress.

School Schedule Task Force-Members of the Task Force, which will be investigating the possibility of switching to a four day school week, were in attendance. Dr. Cox presented a list of possible outcomes for the Task Force to consider. Board members Jim Krahn, Carrie Levenseller and Tim Bamburg were assigned to work with the group. An initial meeting was scheduled for Thursday March 20th at 7:00 PM at the District office.

Budget Committee Vacancies-Dr. Cox informed the Board that there are four empty spots on the Budget Committee. Anyone interested in serving should contact the District Office.

Vernonia School District Volunteer of the Month February 2014

Gennifer Hanner



Vernonia School District's Volunteer of the Month for February is Gennifer Hanner. Gennifer volunteers in Mrs. Campbell's 5th grade classroom. She has been coming in and spending the whole day on Fridays with Mrs. Campbell and periodically throughout the week. In addition to helping in the classroom, Gennifer has also helped Mrs. Campbell move her entire classroom three times. Gennifer also purchases Mrs. Campbell's kids' incentives for when they have all their work

turned in. She works with kids one on one and helps them when they do not understand an assignment. She corrects papers endlessly without complaint. Mrs. Campbell says, "Gennifer truly cares about our kids. The love, patience and kindness she shows our students is amazing. She is truly dedicated to our school." Thank you Gennifer for all of your time and dedication to our students!



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