

Educating Today
For Tomorrow's World

Marengo-Union Elementary Consolidated School District 165

Marengo Community Middle School
Ulysses S. Grant Intermediate School
Locust Elementary School

October 16, 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian,

October is Anti-Bullying month and while this topic is one we regularly address, we do have some special activities this month to bring even more focus to the topic.

This week your student will be participating in anti-bullying education in Social Studies classes. Mrs. Garrett uses curriculum and video's designed to educate and promote discussion. Other staff will utilize our restorative justice circles as a follow up and to provide opportunities for students to express their thoughts. Mrs. Weeks will be using a program in the computer classes that allows students to express thoughts, opinions or incidents anonymously. All of these activities focus on educating students about what bullying is, and is not. They also promote and educate students about resources here at school.

Did you know we have a reporting system called a PALS report that allows students to share information with the counselor, principal, or teacher either anonymously or in person? We teach students about this valuable tool in the first week of school and reteach it again this month.

Did you know we partner with the McHenry county crisis team and Centegra Health to provide students with the McHelp app information? This app provides a link to counselors in McHenry county 24/7. These counselors are trained to talk with students about bullying, depression, suicidal thoughts, or any other issue they may not want to discuss with the adults in their lives. Additionally, we have been working with Katie Riechers of Rosecrance who will be coming in to do some additional training in the spring.

All of these options are provided daily by the school and are effective to a point. The real learning happens when parents and the school work together to teach children to be kind and tolerant; as well as what to do when others are not.

Middle School has historically been known as a time when students are awkward and sometimes mean. Social media has increased a student's ability to hide behind a computer screen and say things they wouldn't say in person while television shows have become increasingly violent and promote disrespectful behaviors. Neither the family nor school alone can offset the bombardment some students are faced with. However, when the message to be kind and to stand up to bullies is consistent at school and at home, we see great things happen. What can you do to help your student?

1. Talk to your child every day. Even when they say they did "nothing" and talked to "no one," continue to show interest. They will eventually share something!
2. Check your student's phone and other devices. You have the right to know whom they are talking to and what they are saying! You own the device and should know how it is being used so it is OK to check it and set parental controls. Unfortunately these platforms give bullies a stealthy way to attack. We can stop them by educating our kids that it is OK to report and OK to block or delete these posts. A further strategy is to hit the delete button at the FIRST sign of negativity.
3. Share any concerns you may have with the school counselor or principal. We can do many things when we know there may be, (or is), a problem.

Finally, please consider coming to the parent workshop on Monday, October 23rd. We have set the time at 6:00 P.M. to give parents an opportunity to get home from work but still finish at a reasonable time and get ready for the next day. We hope that moving the venue to Trio Grille would give you an opportunity to eat dinner as you participate. The Digital Citizenship series is designed to educate you on what to look for as well as bring people together so we can tackle these big issues together.

Thank you for your part in supporting the school during anti-bullying month! If you have any questions or would like more information, please call Mrs. Beam at 815-568-5720. I hope to see you on Monday night!

Yours in Education,

Tracy Beam