

saying no to bullying in orchard park

by Annette Pinder

About two and a half years ago Eggert Road Elementary School Principal Lisa Krueger was working on her doctoral dissertation on bullying. It prompted her to ask fellow administrators about bullying in Orchard Park, who said they didn't have a problem. Now administrators like House Principal Terence Tryon realize they had to dig a little deeper to find out that they did.

As schools all over the world struggle with the effects of bullying, Orchard Park Central School District (OPCSD) has been at the forefront in addressing the issue for more than 2½ years with the help of a program named after Dr. Dan Olweus, research professor of psychology from Norway, and considered the "pioneer" in bullying research. Dr. Olweus spent decades researching bullying to help keep children safe in schools and other settings. Today the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (Olweus) is the most researched and best-known bullying prevention program available.

Olweus is designed for students in elementary, middle, and junior high schools (students ages five to 15), but it is also effective in high schools with some program adaptation. Students participate in most aspects of the program, while students identified as bullying others, or targets of bullying, receive additional individualized interventions. "Everyone must be trained," says Kimberly Cirillo, an Olweus trainer and administrator for OPCSD, including school bus drivers, teachers, cafeteria workers, and substitute teachers. A Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee (BPCC) oversees the program in each of the school's six buildings.

Goals of the program are:

- 50% or more reductions in student and teacher bullying reports;
- Significant reductions in student reports of negative behaviors including bullying, vandalism, school violence, fighting, theft and truancy.
- Improvements in classroom behavior, and a more positive attitude toward social relationships, schoolwork and school relationships.
- Greater support for students who are bullied, and stronger, more effective interventions for students who bully.

Everyone at Orchard Park Middle School is fully invested in Olweus. They even wear bracelets that say, "Stand



Up for Someone," and standing up they are. Cirillo says, "Olweus has become ingrained into our school's culture, and it has prompted us to make other healthy changes." One of these involves the school vending machines,

which have been all been replaced with healthier snacks and beverages through a partnership with Buffalo Strive Vending, a company owned by former Buffalo Bills player and Orchard Park graduates Jon and Jen Corto.

Meanwhile, Kimberly Cirillo and Terence Tryon hope other area schools will follow their example, and welcome others interested in implementing Olweus in their own schools to contact them. Academics is important, say Cirillo and Tryon, but "It's not just about numbers – it's also about character, and it has made a tremendous difference for us in Orchard Park. Our goal is to use our enthusiasm to shine a bright light on character development and empower others to pay it forward."

To learn about the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, including a series of videos, program materials, a readiness assessment, core components, trainer certification requirements, and more visit www.violencepreventionworks.org.

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