



No More Bullying NEWSLETTER

ideas, resources, and advice for parents

A project of the Washington County Coalition for Children – www.washcokids.org

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Curtis Corner MS going pink Feb. 29 to combat bullying

Staff and students are taking bullying head on at Curtis Corner Middle School, especially during their celebration of Pink Shirt Day on Wednesday, February 29th, 2012.

Pink Shirt Day was started by a pair of Nova Scotian high schoolers in 2007 when they witnessed a fellow student being bullied. Read the inspiring story on page 2.

Everyone will be wearing pink, including hot pink plastic bracelets with the winning slogan from a recent contest: “Pink’s great! Don’t Hate!” Prizes will be awarded for the best pink outfits and for the most creative portrayal of the Pink Shirt Day message.

“Pink Shirt Day is a perfect way to address bullying issues and acceptance,” says CMMS Assistant Principal Jared Vance. “Its message is powerful: every student should feel safe everywhere at CCMS.”

“I’m delighted we are celebrating Pink Shirt Day at CCMS,” adds teacher Ruby Wildes, a member of the school’s Bullying Prevention



Coordinating Committee. “The day adds to the school’s long term goal to educate the entire school community – educators, bullies, their victims, and even ‘bystanders’, how to stop this destructive behavior,” she added.

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“Pink Shirt Day is a day for students to stand up for each other in support of having a Bully-Free environment in which they can grow and learn,” stated Shannon Long, teacher and Coordinator of the CCMS’ Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee.

CCMS is partnering with the Coalition on a multi-part strategy Celebrating Pink Shirt Day is just one of the strategies CCMS is using to combat bullying, a major public health problem among youth. CCMS began partnering with the

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Is your middle schooler being bullied? *How to find out when they won't tell you*

Your son or daughter is coming home from school quieter than usual. He or she is heading right to his or her room instead of stopping to talk for a few minutes.

Or do any of these sound familiar:

- a sudden change in attitude toward school
- unexplained cuts, bruises, etc.
- missing possessions or school supplies
- increased absences from school for stomach or headaches
- decreased motivation to participate in school and community activities
- changes in eating or sleep patterns
- mood swings and angry outbursts
- changes in social patterns and friendships

Typical adolescent behavior? Could be. But they could be signs that your child is being bullied. Like many young people – and victims – he or she could feel helpless, alone, and embarrassed.

Your child needs you. The PACER Center (www.pacer.org/bullying/), a national resource for children with any type of disabilities, and the

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (www.SAMHSA.gov) each offer opening questions for the child reluctant to talk about what's bothering them, such as:

- How was the bus ride today?
- What is lunchtime like at school?
- Who do you sit with? What do you talk about?
- Have you ever been scared to go to school because you were afraid of being bullied?
- Do you ever feel lonely at school or left out of activities?
- Are there a lot of cliques at school?
- What do you think about them?
- Describe what the bullies are like.
- What do you think must happen at school to stop the bullying?

Other options for helping your child discuss bullying:

- talk about recent events in the news
- discuss bullying incidents on TV or in movies

When they do start talking, it's your turn to listen

Once the dam breaks and your child starts talking, you need to listen and act. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (www.Olweus.org) encourages the following responses:

- Never tell your child to ignore the bullying.
- Don't blame your child; don't assume he or she did something to provoke the bullying.
- Empathize. Tell him or her that bullying is wrong and that you are glad he or she had the courage to tell you about it.
- Don't criticize if you disagree with how your child handled the situation. How was he/she to know how best to respond?
- Do not encourage physical retaliation.
- Check your emotions. A parent's protective instincts stir strong emotions. Step back and consider the next steps carefully.
- Contact a teacher, school counselor, or principal at your school immediately and share your concerns.
- Work closely with school personnel to help solve the problem.
- Encourage your child to develop interests and hobbies that will help build resiliency in difficult situations like bullying.
- Encourage your child to make contact with friendly students in his or her class, or help your child meet new friends outside of school.
- Teach your child safety strategies, such as how to seek help from an adult.
- Make sure your child has a safe and loving home environment.
- If you or your child need additional help, seek help from a school counselor and/or mental health professional.

Unplugging the Cyberbully

Quick tips to protect your student

Adapted from an article from the PACER Center (www.pacer.org)

Cyberbullying is when someone uses technology to send mean, threatening, or embarrassing messages to or about another person. It might be in a text, e-mail, instant message, or on the internet. There are steps you can take to prevent it or to make it stop.

The National Annenberg Survey of Youth suggests the 14% of adolescents and young adults who are victims of cyberbullying are nearly four times as likely (27.4% vs. 7.5%) as other youth to consider suicide.

Why it's so potent

Cyberbullying can harass, hurt, embarrass, humiliate, or intimidate another person, in front of a wide audience and by an anonymous perpetrator.

It takes many forms, as the PACER Center points out.

“For example, some young people have discovered sites where they can create a free Web page. Embarrassing pictures, private instant messaging (IM) exchanges, and hateful or threatening messages can be posted on these sites. Some young people also post mean comments at legitimate Web sites’ guest books. Others post blogs, information that is instantly published to a Web site.”

A 3-step plan to protect your kids

As you venture into this new territory, Julie Hertzog, PACER’s bullying prevention project

coordinator, offers three tips for combatting cyberbullying.

1. Raise the topic with your children.

Many children are afraid to initiate such a conversation because they fear you will eliminate their access to the Web and cell phones. Others are scared to admit that they are being bullied. Open the subject for discussion and let your children know that you want them to have some cyber freedom—but that it needs to be safe.

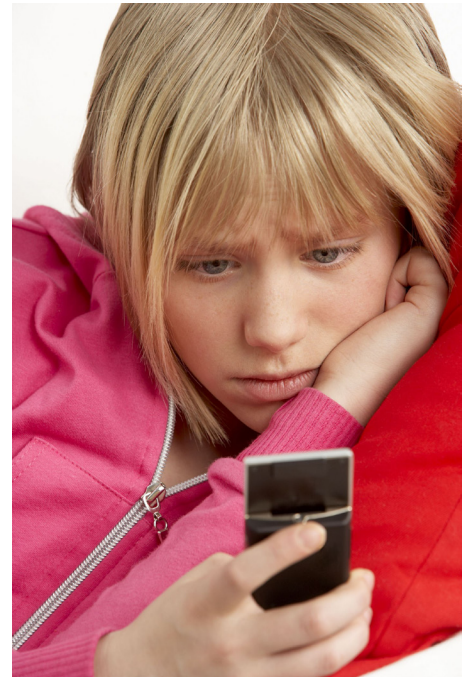
2. Set cyber safety rules.

You set safety rules for your children in the physical world. Do the same in cyberspace. Remind your children they never really know who is on the other end of cyber communication. It could be the person they think it is, or it could be a predator or a bully.

With that in mind, two good guidelines are, “Don’t do or say anything online that you wouldn’t do or say in person. Don’t reveal anything that you wouldn’t tell a stranger.”

An important point to add is **Remember anything you write could be forwarded to countless others without your knowledge or control.**

- Never give out your e-mail password, a photo, or any personal data, such as a physical description, phone number, or address.
- Never share too many personal details. For example, if you keep an online diary, someone could use that information to bully or ridicule you.



- Never share your IM account password with anyone, even your best friend. That friend may share it with other people, or the friendship may end—and your private messages could suddenly become very public. Also, a cyberbully with your password can sign on, pretend to be you, and behave inappropriately with others to embarrass and humiliate you.

3. Know what your children are doing online.

Privacy is important, but safety is more important. As a parent, you have a responsibility to know what your children are doing online. Keep your children’s computer in an open spot, such as the family room, where you can supervise Web activity. If your children have an account on a social networking site such as Facebook, know how to access it so you can monitor the communications.

If you do discover your children are subjected to cyberbullying, document it by printing the e-mails or Web pages, saving electronic copies, and contacting your children’s school or the police.

Great websites to get help

www.MARCcenter.org

The Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center offers research, workshops, and ideas for parents and educators

www.safeyouth.org

STRYVE is led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which takes a public health approach to preventing youth violence. Type "bullying" into the "search" box to find studies and other resources

www.familyinternet.about.com

Tips and strategies for dealing with cyberbullying

www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org

Excellent information about dealing with bullying, with a particular focus on families with children with disabilities.

www.stopbullying.gov/teens/index.html

A clear, vivid site with separate sections targeted for parents, educators, teens, young adults, and children

www.itgetsbetter.org/

A site that speaks directly to the issues faced by bullied LGBT youth. Features "the Pledge".

Curtis Corner Middle School adopts Olweus model

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Washington County Coalition for Children last year to implement the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, a 30-year-old, proven school-wide intervention and prevention program.

"Bullying is an ugly part of childhood," said Susan Orban, Coordinator of the Washington County Coalition for Children, "and for generations, no one knew what to do about it. Now we do, and we're proud to partner with CCMS. CCMS is the first school in RI to implement the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, one of only eleven Blue Ribbon Prevention Programs identified by SAMHSA [Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration]," she added.

The Olweus program involves three essential components:

1. Schoolwide components include an assessment of the prevalence of bullying at each school, the formation of a Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee, and increased supervision of students.
2. Classroom components include establishing and enforcing rules against bullying and holding regular discussions with students.
3. Individual components include interventions with children identified as bullies and victims, and discussions with their parents of involved students.



Pink Shirt Day tradition begins with Nova Scotia student activism

Pink Shirt Day is held annually on the last Wednesday in February to symbolize that we as a society will not tolerate bullying anymore.

The tradition began in 2007. A 9th grade student was bullied for wearing a pink polo shirt at Central Kings Rural High School in Nova Scotia.

After witnessing the incident, Seniors David Shepherd and Travis Price (pictured above) bought 50 pink shirts at a local discount store. That night, they sent messages to their classmates encouraging them to wear pink to school the next day. In the morning, Shepherd and Price were standing in the school's foyer handing out the shirts, when the bullied boy walked in. His face spoke volumes.

"Definitely, it looked like a huge weight was lifted off his shoulders," Price recalled. More importantly, the bullying stopped.

"If you can get more people against them ... to show that we're not going to put up with it and support each other, then they're not as big as a group as they think are," added Shepherd.

News of the incident sparked a movement throughout Canada and around the globe now known as Pink Shirt Day.