Schools Where Everyone Belongs: A Case Study in Bullying Prevention

The Baldwin County Peer Helper Program sponsored by the Jennifer Claire Moore Foundation

Mrs. Patrice Harris, Dr. Cindy Erickson, Laura Ehlert

July 12, 2012
Peer Helper Program Demographics

• Baldwin County Public Schools – 42 elementary, intermediate, middle and high schools, student population of 28,149

• Peer Helper program in every school led by National Association of Peer Program Professionals trained and certified Peer Coordinator (counselor or teacher), supported by the Foundation

• Program is a club in the lower grades, 17-week state-approved elective in high school
Baldwin County Demographics

• Largely rural population, 41.5% free/reduced price lunches, 34% dropout rate

• 1,625 bullying-type incidents reported in 2011/12 (5% of all infractions)

• Most bullying goes unreported. Bullying incidents cannot be mediated by Peer Helpers.

• Need for student-led initiative to address bullying with the goal of beginning a cultural shift toward acceptance of fellow students
Peer Helper Anti-Bullying Summit

Weekend-long summit in camp setting, 32 Peer Helpers from 6 high schools, Project Rebound grant support

Presenters:
• Jessica Brookshire, KARMA founder
• Dr. Patti Agatston, cyberbullying expert/author
• Maureen Underwood, LCSW, Society for Prevention of Teen Suicide
• Heather Love, child advocate, Lighthouse domestic violence shelter
• Patrice Harris, BCPS Intervention Supervisor
• Student speakers and others
Summit Outcomes and Action Plan

• Peer Helper teens discovered anyone could be a victim of bullying – and many of them had been

• Shared their personal, painful stories

• Put together information, skits and age-appropriate videos for younger audiences

• Returned to their respective high schools, developed a presentation plan with their Peer Coordinators and visited middle and intermediate/elementary schools
The Impact of Outreach

Anti-bullying presentations were seen by:

- 4,340 middle school students
- 7,080 intermediate/elementary students
- Students signed anti-bullying pledge
- At least one student came forward after every presentation to seek help for bullying
- Peer Helpers listened, utilized their skills, walked students to counselor’s office
- Peer Helpers were empowered to enact change
Follow-on Activities for 2012/13

• Expanded anti-bullying education for students, teachers, parents, caretakers, community with an emphasis on shift to acceptance of others

• Taped presentations of anti-bullying summit speakers available on school and Foundation websites, DVD sets provided to each school

• County- and school system-wide anti-bullying events including presentations, films, discussion moderated by Peer Helpers, evaluation of impact
Thank You for Joining Us Today

• What we learned

• Q & A

• Can your school benefit from a Peer Helper program?

• Excerpt from expert presentation

• View student-created video