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## **WJCC TO OBSERVE BULLYING PREVENTION MONTH IN JANUARY WITH SERIES OF PUBLIC AWARENESS EFFORTS**

**Williamsburg, VA, Dec. 28** – Guest speakers, a web page devoted to understanding and preventing bullying and a formal resolution adopted by the WJCC School Board are among the public awareness efforts WJCC will undertake to observe the Virginia School Boards Association’s Bullying Prevention Month in January.

“Bullying is a significant problem nationwide,” noted Dr. David Gaston, WJCC’s Senior Director for Specialized Educational Services. “It can cause school absenteeism, mental and physical stress, poor school performance, poor self-esteem, and, in some cases, school violence. Statistics show that 160,000 children in the United States miss school each day as a result of being bullied.”

While WJCC schools are fortunate not to have a significant bullying problem, Gaston nonetheless stressed that increased public awareness of the issue can help the division keep instances of bullying low.

During the month of January, the division will focus on the following topics:

**Week 1:** What is bullying?

**Week 2:** Recognizing the characteristics of a bully.

**Week 3:** Recognizing the characteristics of a bullying victim.

**Week 4:** Summary and next steps.

(MORE)

## Bullying Prevention Month

### Page 2

There will be numerous special activities scheduled throughout January and beyond to increase awareness of bullying, how to recognize it and how to prevent it.

Among them:

- Two community programs will focus on building resiliency and self-concept in our children and ways that we can help them address and prevent bullying in our schools. **Elementary Program:** Wednesday, Jan. 18, Central Office at James Blair, 117 Ironbound Road, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., auditorium. **Secondary Schools Program:** Thursday, Jan. 19, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., Lafayette High School, 4460 Longhill Road, auditorium.
- WJCC will adopt the internationally-acclaimed and research-based Olweus Anti-Bullying program in our middle schools for the 2012-2013 academic year. Training materials have been purchased from the company for all three middle school sites and the training and implementation process will begin this spring and summer with certified Olweus trainers working with our faculty and staff.
- Every middle school student will complete a short online questionnaire in January that will serve as a needs assessment for the implementation of the Olweus program. Students will have online access to this survey through the month and responses will be collected, tallied, and reviewed both by the support staff at Olweus and our school faculty, staff, and administration to assist with planning and training.
- During the week of March 12-16, Ronnie Bachmann, who shares his personal story of struggle and success against intolerance and bullying throughout his childhood with students around the nation, will speak to our middle school students. His powerful presentation was given to WJCC high school and elementary school students last year; his presentation this year to middle schoolers will complement last winter's presentation by John Halligan.

(MORE)

## **Bullying Prevention Month**

### **Page 3**

- The Division will review and revise its current anti-bullying policy and will craft a cyberbullying policy with the assistance of the School Board attorney. The Student Code of Conduct, which underwent extensive revisions this past year, also will be reviewed and edited to ensure that bullying, harassment, and inappropriate conduct is properly addressed in its current language and disciplinary practice.

A special web page dedicated to resources and information about recognizing and understanding the various types of bullying, how to deal with bullies and assisting and supporting those being bullied will be posted at the beginning of January.

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