

Students "Speak" Out Against Bullying

By: Vicki McKiernan

Teaching Team: Maria Murray and Vicki McKiernan

School: Alexander Hamilton Academy, Paterson, NJ

Grade Levels: Grade 8
Language Arts

**Academic Focus/
Core Curriculum Standards:**

Language Arts Literacy: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5

Comprehensive Health and Physical Education (2.1, 2.2)

Computer and Information Literacy (8.1)

Consumer, Family & Life Skills: 9.2 A, B, C, D.

Core Ethical Values:

Citizenship, Respect, Responsibility, Teamwork, Empathy

Project Description:

As a gift from our partner school, Montgomery Upper Middle School, we received a class set of the novel Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson. The students in Ms. Murray's eighth grade class read and discussed this novel extensively in class. The topic of the novel is the main character is raped by someone she knows. She is afraid to tell anyone and suffers greatly. The students in the class related this topic to bullying which is an issue in our own school. In an effort to put a stop to bullying the students decided to do research on ways to stop and prevent it. They will then use that research to propose a policy for the school to follow.

Target Audience: Students at Alexander Hamilton Academy and other schools with bullying issues.

Timeline: 1-2 months

Project Scheduling: The project will take place during scheduled class time; some work done after school.

Equipment Needed:

Class set of Speak novels, computers for research and publication, pamphlets/brochures about bullying and other social issues for children, poster board, markers, paper, and art supplies.

Academic Focus

Language Arts (3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5): Students will develop greater proficiency in these areas through reading, research, analyzing information, discussion, writing and presenting.

Comprehensive Health and Physical Education (2.1, 2.2): Students will present information about bullying using a multimedia approach. Gaining the information will improve students' decision making skills and once the program is implemented other students will learn to develop their decision making skills and handle bullying situations in a healthy manner.

Computer and Information Literacy (8.1): Students will use technology while conducting research, developing interview questions/questionnaires and designing brochures/pamphlets about their bullying program.

Consumer, Family & Life Skills (9.2 A, B, C, D): Students will develop critical thinking & problem-solving skills as well as demonstrate character through their participation in this project.

Hurdles Encountered:

Hurdle: Finding the time for students to complete the extensive research necessary to complete this project.

Solution: The language arts teacher will collaborate with the health teacher and the technology teacher in order to gain extra time for conducting research.

Hurdle: Having all students truly understand the effects of bullying.

Solution: Discuss empathy and relate bullying to the novel "Speak". Find speakers to give personal accounts of bullying and its effects.

Celebration: Meeting/lunch with students from Montgomery Upper Middle School

Recognition: Students will be given credit for their efforts by being rewarded with certificates and an appropriate prize. The district newsletter will also recognize their efforts.

Key Findings: Students can work together to solve problems in society. Being part of the solution is more rewarding than being part of the problem.

Educational Strategies:

Cooperative Learning: The students will have to work together to complete research and to come up with ideas of ways to stop and/or deal with bullying. They will also work together to create the brochures and posters to raise awareness about bullying and to promote their solution.

Interdisciplinary Approach: Students will need to use information and skills learned in health and technology to create, complete and effectively implement a bullying program in their school.

Personal Growth Outcomes:

The students will gain a better understanding about the real life issue of bullying and will better understand the effect of their words and actions. By realizing the problem and working toward a solution the students will feel empowered and will learn how to deal with real life situations. Students will also learn about empathy and begin to realize that changing the future lies in their hands. One person can make a difference.

Community Involvement:

The students will contact organizations that deal with social issues and bullying. They will also interview teachers, parents, community members and other students when working towards a solution.

Reflection Activities:

The students will implement their plan, if approved, and observe the results of their plan. If the plan is not approved the students will look at the reasons and attempt to fix their plan so that it can be implemented. The students will write journal entries about the process and about their thoughts on bullying.

Means of Assessment:

A rubric evaluating all aspects of the project. A reflective essay and participation in a group conversation.