



# Principal's Bulletin

February 2, 2014

## Teaching and Learning: Socially, Emotionally and Behaviorally

Thanks to the support of our PTA, we were recently able to provide Heather students an outstanding assembly entitled *"Be An Ally"* presented by the [Soul Shoppe](#) organization, focused on building character and creating safe schools. The *"Be an Ally"* assembly was an interactive presentation helping students learn skills that help them to be an ally when they see bullying or any kind of unkind interactions. They learned that *"being an ally means standing up for a safe, fun and bully-free school. It doesn't mean taking sides, tattling or "snitching"*. An ally means standing up for everyone feeling safe at school. They reviewed how to identify bullying and what to do when it happens at school. Students also learned intervening strategies and how to know when to get an adult for help.

Teachers were provided posters for their classrooms and bookmarks for students to help remember the common, community language of, ***"We don't do that at our school, please stop."*** and ***"Do you need help?"*** or ***"Do you need a friend?"***

I think our Heather kids walked away from this assembly with some great tools to use on the playground when they see unfair or unkind play, or even bullying, and staff walked away with some great resources to help empower our kids to be advocates for each other and working together to keep our campus a safe and fun place to learn and play.

## What is bullying anyway?

It is also important to note that bullying is very rare at Heather. We have a skilled staff of teachers, paras, counselors and a principal who are knowledgeable and trained in identifying and addressing bullying situations, supporting not only the "target", but the "bully" and "bystanders" as well.

But I want to shed some light on this term, "bullying", and caution parents on the use of the term. In general it is concerning how many people use the word "Bully" in the wrong context. Teachers and I get quite a few communications from parents saying their child is being bullied, when in fact they might have been involved in an "unkind" or even hurtful incident. The so-called "bully's" behavior was far more likely to be the result of impulsivity and lack of self-control in a frustrating situation than actually bullying. We need to remember we are working with young children who are still learning social and behavior skills.

The dictionary describes the word "Bully" as ***a person who is habitually cruel or overbearing to others. It also says – antagonist, browbeater, bulldozer, coercer, harrier, hector, insolent, intimidator, oppressor, persecutor, rascal, ruffian, teaser, tormenter, tough – all done on a continual basis.*** The majority of situations where a parent has called in was after they heard their child tell them that "so and so", did "such and such" and how it upset them. Children rarely come home and share their own role in these interactions. It is understandable that then the parent, worried about their child, will contact the teacher or principal to complain or to express a worry about a bully. I don't want to discourage parents from making those calls, but I do ask for parents to be cautious of using the term, "bully" and to have a better understanding of child development and the learning still very much in progress. We do appreciate the communication, as it is our job, along with yours, to ensure that all students are learning these critical social, emotional and behavior skills as well as academics. It is also very important that parents encourage their children to communicate any issues immediately to the adults at school—on the playground and then back in the classroom to their teachers. If we aren't aware of behaviors in a timely way it becomes more challenging to help.

Social, emotional and behavioral education is embedded in every teacher's classroom, as well as through our school Friendship Group program and is a part of our district's [Strategic Plan](#) and our own [Heather Site Plan for Teaching and](#)

[Learning](#). Our school counselor, Meredith Larsen, works closely with students on the playground, in the classrooms and in her Friendship Group sessions. Mrs. Larsen is at Heather every Monday and Thursday and every other Wednesday. (We share her with Arundel.)

## Parent Education, March 12

Mark your calendars for **Wednesday, March 12**. Heather School is joining White Oaks, Arundel and Brittan Acres to put on an exciting parent education event with Digital Tat2, which will be held in the Tierra Linda Gym. We'll be talking about how to teach your child responsibility and ethics online, how to ensure children are aware of their actions, and how to parent in the digital age. It will cover common sense strategies for cyber-safety and managing media in your family, as well as providing tools to navigate cyber-bullying, social networking sites and digital reputations. More information will be coming out soon.

Meanwhile, please know that I enjoy being "hands-on" with Heather kids and being available to parents. So please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or insights to some of the topics I presented in this issue of my Principal's Bulletin.

Sincerely

Pamela Jasso  
Principal

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## Upcoming Dates to Remember

- February 3 R.O.P.E.S. Orientation, (6:00 pm Grade 4, CMS Mustang Hall)
- February 3, 4, & 6 Zero Waste Lunch Days
- February 5 100th Day of School
- February 7 Movie Night (6:30 pm)
- February 11 PTA Meeting (7:00 pm)
- February 17-21 Presidents' Week – school vacation
- March 1 Spring Fling
- March 12 Parent Ed Night: Digital Tat2

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For questions or comments regarding anything in this Principal's Bulletin, please contact [Pamela Jasso](#).

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