“Take A Stand”

The Situation
Seven years ago, I became aware of a growing bullying problem in our local school. Students were cutting themselves, skipping school, and seeking mental health treatment for depression. After visiting with the elementary guidance counselor, we decided to address this issue to see if we could make a difference.

Extension Response
The “Take a Stand” Curriculum is a curriculum developed by Texas Extension 4-H Specialists to reduce bullying in schools. The Bottineau County Extension Agent initially taught this course to the sixth grade students, where incidents of bullying were occurring frequently. The program, a ten-session course, covers the topics of conflict resolution, bullying, communications, empathy, respect, manners, teamwork, consensus, cultures, and harmony. Hands on learning and skill building activities are included in the course.

Impacts
The program improved the student’s knowledge and awareness of good character. It empowered the participants to change bullying behavior and responses to bullies.

- 85% of the students reported that they had learned how to work together to eliminate bullying in their school

In response to the success of this program, another ten-week program was added for fifth graders. Now students were getting two consecutive years of the “Take A Stand” program.

- 90% of the students reported that they knew what to do if they were being bullied
- 83% of the class reported that they knew how to help someone who was bullied
- 86% of the participants stated that they had rethought a decision to be a bully

During the program, the guidance counselor reported that the students were “getting it.” She said that the incidences of bullying had decreased among the students. She related that the students looked forward to the classes and actually implemented the life skills which the agent taught.

Feedback
Student responses to the programs included:

- “These were very valuable lessons!”
- “Everyone deserves respect.”
- “Stand up for what is right. Think of other people.”
- “Thank-you for teaching us better ways to prevent bullying and other things.”

Public Value Statement
Preventing bullying, decreases incidences of depression, substance abuse, suicide and mental and physical health costs.

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