

PRESS RELEASE

New partnership will work with Florida schools to fight problem of bullying

TALLAHASSEE, FL. (December 5, 2008)—The 2007 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey revealed that 27 percent of students in Florida have reported being bullied and 23 percent report bullying others. This means that as many as half the students in a typical Florida school classroom have been involved with bullying in some way. To address this tremendous problem, a unique partnership among the Florida Association of School Administrators (FASA), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Foundation and the Hazelden Foundation has been formed to bring critically-needed anti-bullying resources to Florida schools.

This partnership, the Florida Bullying Prevention Initiative, funded by a \$250,000 contribution by Hazelden, has begun plans to implement the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (OBPP) in as many as 25 schools in Florida, with the possibility of expanding to more schools in the near future. Hazelden, a national nonprofit organization that helps people reclaim their lives from the disease of addiction, is the publisher of OBPP, the most researched and best-known bullying prevention program available today.

Earlier this year, the Florida legislature passed the Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act, which requires schools to adopt policies to discourage bullying and harassment. “While the passage of the anti-bullying law has provided a strong motivation for schools to address the issue of bullying, the ability of schools to fund bullying prevention efforts has been greatly hampered,” according to FASA Executive Director Jim Warford. “The need is great and schools are now mandated to address bullying, so this kind of partnership that allows us to implement OBPP is critical.”

“We’re proud to be a partner with these organizations to bring OBPP to Florida schools,” said Nick Motu, Hazelden publisher. “We know that schools that have implemented the program have found reductions of 50 percent or more in student reports of being bullied and bullying others.”

“This is a fine example of the public/private partnerships the NAESP Foundation seeks to employ which provide opportunities to our members while serving the interests of children,” said Ernie Mannino, chief executive officer of the NAESP Foundation.

The initiative will pay for program materials and training for two to six schools per Florida school district or consortium to implement OBPP. FASA is now accepting online applications at www.fasa.net/fbpi from schools that are interested in participating. Up to 25 schools will be awarded in this first round, with a goal





of committing more funds to award additional schools in 2009 and 2010. Applications received now will be considered for this first cadre of schools, or may be considered for later funding, if available.

The initiative is also funding 10 positions at an OBPP Training of Trainers event that will take place in early 2009 in Florida. “This will help in building state training capacity,” Warford said, “which will result in greater sustainability for the program in Florida.”

In addition, for those schools selected, schoolwide coordinating committees and all staff from the schools will be trained in OBPP, some by external certified Olweus trainers and others by district staff trained in early 2009.

According to Motu, OBPP, developed by Dr. Dan Olweus of Norway, has over 35 years of research behind it and has been implemented throughout the world, including all 50 states in the U.S., as well as Canada, England, Mexico, Iceland, Germany, Sweden, Croatia and Norway. “Besides bullying, the program has also shown reductions in other antisocial behaviors, such as vandalism, fighting, theft, and truancy,” Motu said. “The program also results in improvements in classroom social climate and more positive attitudes among students toward schoolwork and school.”

OBPP is recognized by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence as one of only eleven Blueprints Model Programs and by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as a Model Program—two of the highest honors a prevention program can attain.

The initiative will be accepting applications from schools at its web site through December 15. Selected schools will be announced in February 2009.

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