



Cheney Unified School District 268

Cheney Middle School

Ron Orsak, Principal

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Blue Ribbon Task Force on Bullying:

Thank you each for taking your time to serve on this committee. I attended the meeting in Clearwater on May 28th, but left at the lunch break. This was the first time attending a task force meeting, and it was not really what I expected. I was disappointed in the portion I attended. However, following things on social media, I saw items which needed to be talked about come up in the public comment session. This is an important issue, and it needs to be addressed. Every individual student needs to feel safe and welcome in the school they attend.

Having students want to be in school is the main reason I became an educator. It is important for everyone to have an opportunity to learn. Sometimes fellow students will make their peers feel unwelcome or bad about themselves. This is unacceptable, but it does not necessarily mean bullying. This word is over used and constantly misused. It has become the go to word anytime someone's feelings get hurt. KSDE has defined the word bullying, but I think we have not done a good job of educating everyone or in sharing the meaning.

This should be the number one item on the task force list. Educate everyone (students, parents, teachers, admin, etc.) on what bullying is and is not. We have a definition given by KSDE, and it should be how each instance of accused bullying is judged. The communities that care survey data is great. However, I think the results are flawed in the area of bullying. Students are responding to questions and giving ratings, when they don't even truly understand the word being used. We must educate all stakeholders in what bullying truly is.

Secondly, we need to teach students resiliency, self-confidence, proper responses, and how & who to report their experiences. Mandated state testing has too many schools and people in education worried about getting through all the set curriculum. Someone who leaves school well educated in curriculum, but unable to properly interact with others or in social situations will not be successful. Data from employers show they want employees who know how to deal with other people, properly communicate, work in groups, and self-regulate. All of this goes right along with the Social-Emotional Learning and Characteristics. We need to teach students to understand, not everyone will say nice things to us and how we should deal with these situations. Students cannot constantly rely on an adult to solve every issue. At the same time, they need to know they can come to an adult when it is something which has crossed the line.

Lastly, when bullying is properly identified, it needs to be dealt with in a serious manner. Consequences need to be in place and consistently followed. In addition, counseling should be mandated for the bully and for the victim. Punishment for the action is not enough to solve this issue. We need to find out why the student chose this type of behavior and help them work through those feelings if we hope to make any change. We also must help the victim and give them strategies to not find themselves in a similar situation.

Once again, I want to thank you for your time and willingness to serve on this task force. I also appreciate you allowing me to share my thoughts on the topic. It is ironic; we must educate to solve a problem in our schools. Once people learn what bullying is and is not, students learn resiliency and other skills, and we provide counseling for those involved, we will be able to better deal with the topic of bullying.

Sincerely,

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