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Subject: Bullying testimony
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The middle schools in Andover, Kansas (Andover Central Middle School and Andover Middle School) respectfully submit the following testimony to the Bullying Task Force.

> Both of our middle schools use Capturing Kids Hearts (Flippen Group) as a basis for building and maintaining positive relationships and self-managing groups. This model provides students with strategies and tools for connecting with other students and adults, and if done correctly, empowers students to hold themselves and others accountable.

> Both of our middle schools use the WEB (Where Everybody Belongs) program to help 6th graders and new students become connected with others. Peer mentors are valuable resources for students new to the middle school environment and provide meaningful leadership experiences for our 8th graders as well. Student aides in our Functional Applied Academics (FAA) program and our Trojans Together (mentor for FAA) program help our students with special needs to partner with regular education peers, forming positive connections that focus on similarities rather than differences.

> Both schools incorporate social/emotional learning through either an advisory or middle school transition program. Curriculum focuses on resilience, tolerance, and self-regulation.

> Bullying does occur in our schools. We do, however, work with students and parents to distinguish between bullying and mean behavior. The definition of bullying (imbalance of power, happening over time, etc) is often misused. Both types of behavior are unacceptable and are addressed to the best of our ability at school.

> We continually work with students to advocate for themselves and to report bullying to an adult in our school. These reports are always addressed and always taken seriously.

> Some stakeholders in our schools have an expectation of “zero tolerance” which may be interpreted differently by all parties. We do NOT tolerate bullying in any form and we address all reports. This does not, however, mean that all students who bully will be suspended or expelled. We work with both the bully and the victim on appropriate responses to bullying behavior.

We continue to work to help all of our students to manage the social/emotional landscape of adolescence. Our primary focus is on giving our students the confidence and foundation to be successful young adults.

Middle School Administration from Andover USD #385

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