



April 2008

JISD Takes Proactive Steps to Deal with Topic Of Personal Safety and Dating Violence

Texas House Bill 121, new legislation that was implemented with the 2007-2008 school year, is the law requiring school districts to develop a policy on Dating Violence. The Jacksonville ISD School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) met at the beginning of the year and drafted the policy which was adopted at a regular meeting of the school board.

Jacksonville had been proactive in including dating violence in with programs that were presented at our campuses last year with Safe and Drug Free monies. Each campus in the district schedules a variety of programs on personal safety and dating violence. These programs are age appropriate and are presented by professionals in their fields. For the 2007-2008 school year the following programs have been sponsored by the campuses:

All PK, K., 1st and 2nd grade students at the elementary schools attend a personal safety program entitled "It's My Body". The program is presented by Donna Justice with the Crisis Center of Anderson and Cherokee Counties. 3rd and 4th grade students attend a program on bully prevention, which is also presented by the Crisis Center. Students are taught specific skills to utilize such as to pretend the bully doesn't bother you, tell the bully to stop, stand up with a friend, ignore and walk away or tell an adult. In addition, the elementary counselors begin each school year, working with children on skills for conflict management; taking turns, sharing, chance, waiting, avoiding, I-messages, saying I'm sorry and getting help. All classrooms have a poster displayed with these skills listed so that students can reference when needed. And of course they also talk about avoiding conflict/violence each month during the "It's Your Choice" guidance lessons covering the monthly featured character trait.

In February, Nichols Intermediate worked with the Cherokee County Crisis Center to present a program on bullying to both the fifth and sixth grades. Dating Violence was also a theme of the presentation.

This school year JMS held a 12 week Ethics program titled "Put the Pieces Together by Steve Goode. This comprehensive ethics program covered dating violence. Specifically speaking to dating violence the program discussed violence in families, personal relationships, the causes of, trends, national statistics, and included Texas statistics. Students were taught about healthy relationships and their choices, different patterns of abuse, perpetrator characteristics, realities, and given strategies to avoid this type of partner. This program used perception exercises and case examples as students explored these topics. The focus of this program was self-acceptance, citizenship, respect for self and others, and responsibility. A parent night was held on

JACKSONVILLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
P. O. Box 631
Jacksonville, TX 75766
Telephone (903) 586-6511



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January 22, 2008 at JMS to discuss the program. Parents were provided an overview of the program and given highlights about students perceptions of the various topics discussed. The program has three primary targets the student as an individual, the student as a family member, and the student as a community member. Topics that youth face were threaded together in a comprehensive manner and focus was on the individual and their character.

At Jacksonville High School, a motivational video "Behind the Faces" which addresses dating violence was shown to all students in September 2007. In January 2008, a grant through ESC Region 7 provided JHS and the Compass Center with speaker Ellen Fowlkes, with 30 years experience as a health teacher in public schools, she brought the subject "Your Health, Your Choice". Topics included were dating violence and sexually transmitted diseases and making healthy choices for overall health. Parents were invited to hear Ms. Fowlkes in an evening session. JHS counselors also talk with students individually if an issue arises.

All of these programs help build knowledge about staying safe and secure. All children have a right to be safe without being afraid. Children who have been taught to think for themselves are the safest children of all.

Yearly Reports for 2007-2008 will be given at a joint meeting of the District Educational Committee and the School Health Advisory Council on May 8, 2008 at 3:45 in the district board room. These committees are made up of JISD teaching staff, nurses, counselors, parents and community members.

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