



# *Press Kit*

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for *children*™



For Immediate Release

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## Washington State Schools Embark on Comprehensive Anti-Bullying Program with Committee for Children

### John Stanford International School Joins Partnership to Put an End to Bullying

Seattle, WA—April 20 marks the four-year anniversary of the Columbine High School tragedy: Two boys, apparently relentlessly bullied by their peers, killed 12 of their classmates and a teacher in Littleton, Colorado. Suddenly the issue of school bullying was at the forefront of public discussion. Spurred into action, 32 states swiftly moved to adopt anti-bullying laws.

By August 1, 2003, all 296 school districts in Washington State are required by law to have anti-bullying policies in place. “No law by itself can end bullying,” says State Attorney General Christine Gregoire. “Only when that law is tied to solid, whole-school bullying prevention efforts can schools start to effectively tackle this long-standing issue.”

Five schools, including John Stanford International School in Seattle, are participating in an unprecedented partnership with Committee for Children to take action against bullying in Washington State.

“All schools have bullying,” says Karen Kodama, Principal of John Stanford Elementary. “Most of it goes unreported or unrecognized by adults. Working in partnership with Committee for Children and the *Steps to Respect* program, we can get a clear picture of what bullying looks like in our school and the tools needed to address it.”

Over the course of the school year, Committee for Children—a national leader in the field of bullying prevention—will donate resources, classroom materials and ongoing consultation and training support to its five statewide partnership schools. “This effort is about building a network of schools that are actively addressing bullying behavior,” says Sheryl Harmer, Director of Program Development at Committee for Children and former Washington State Principal of the Year. “Working together, we hope to set a new standard that says that bullying doesn’t have to be part of the social fabric of schools any longer.”

Grounded in the latest research, Committee for Children’s approach to bullying gives children the skills to spot, report and address bullying and improves the way adults respond and work on solving this problem.

Committee for Children, a nonprofit organization, has developed award-winning violence prevention programs since the mid-1970s. Committee for Children’s programs are used in more than 20,000 schools across North America. Translated versions are in use throughout the world.

Press Release



Committee for Children Partnership Schools:

- John Stanford International School  
Seattle, Washington
- Quil Ceda Elementary School  
Marysville, Washington
- Finch Elementary School  
Spokane, Washington
- Arcadia Elementary School  
Deer Park, Washington
- Badger Mountain Elementary School  
Richland, Washington

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## Washington State Schools Take Action Against Bullying

### Columbine Tragedy Puts Childhood Bullying into National Spotlight

April 20 marks the four-year anniversary of the Columbine High School tragedy, the nation's most deadly incidence of school violence. Two students killed 12 classmates and a teacher, wounded 23 others, and then turned their guns on themselves. The Columbine tragedy raised critical questions about what needed to be done in order to better protect the safety of students in our nation's schools.

Reports showing that both Columbine attackers had been bullied and ridiculed at school prompted many states to enact anti-bullying/harassment legislation. The intent of this legislation was to try to reduce bullying and harassment behavior that can lead to acts of violence in schools.

*The Safe School Initiative*, a 2002 study done by the U.S. Secret Service with the Department of Education, found that bullying played a major role in two-thirds of the 37 school shooting incidents it reviewed.

A recent survey of states, "State of the States," conducted for *Education Week (Quality Counts 2003)* reports that 32 states and the District of Columbia now have school anti-bullying laws or policies in place.

### Washington State's "Anti-Bullying" Law

Washington State's "Anti-Bullying" law was signed by Governor Locke on March 27, 2003. It requires that all 296 school districts in the state ban bullying, harassment, and intimidation as outlined by the law, no later than August 2003.

Under the law (SHB 1444), *harassment*, *intimidation*, or *bullying* is defined as "any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, including but not limited to one shown to be motivated by [race, color, religion, ancestry, or sensory handicap], or other distinguishing characteristics, when the intentional written, verbal, or physical act:

- Physically harms a student or damages the student's property.
- Substantially interferes with a student's education.
- Is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment.
- Substantially disrupts the orderly operation of the school."

Major provisions of the law require that:

- School districts have an anti-bullying policy in place by August 1, 2003.
- School districts notify students and staff of the policy.



### **Moving from Policy to Action**

Research shows that to most effectively address bullying, schools must take a comprehensive, proactive approach involving every adult in the school.

Childhood bullying is a harmful act that adults rarely see. A key to prevention is for adults to learn how to distinguish bullying from everyday conflicts—such as rough play or disagreements between friends—and address it proactively.

A successful bullying prevention program gives children and adults a shared understanding of bullying and the roles they play in putting a stop to it. Children learn ways to respond to bullying and get help. Adults learn strategies for helping children work through bullying incidents.

### **Committee for Children School Partnership Program**

Five schools have agreed to participate in an unprecedented partnership with Committee for Children to take action against bullying in Washington State.

“This effort is about building a network of elementary schools that are proactively addressing bullying behavior,” says Sheryl Harmer, Director of Program Development at Committee for Children and former Washington State Principal of the Year.

The goal of the partnership is to set a new standard that says bullying no longer has to be part of the social fabric of our schools.

Committee for Children will donate resources, classroom materials, and ongoing consultation, training support, and guidance over the course of the school year.

The five partner schools are:

- John Stanford International School  
Seattle, Washington
- Quil Ceda Elementary School  
Marysville, Washington
- Finch Elementary School  
Spokane, Washington
- Arcadia Elementary School  
Deer Park, Washington
- Badger Mountain Elementary School  
Richland, Washington



This spring the five partner schools will form steering committees to help with such tasks as accurately assessing the school's current situation; establishing an anti-bullying policy; setting procedures to support the policy; and making plans for staff training and parent involvement.

In the fall each school will roll out the *Steps to Respect* program, which includes staff development and training as well as classroom lessons for students. Committee for Children will provide ongoing guidance and consultation throughout this year-long process.

The *Steps to Respect* bullying prevention program is based on research. It engages the entire school and includes classroom lessons for students, program materials for parents, staff development workshops, training for adults at the school, and step-by-step procedures to help school leaders design and put anti-bullying policies into action.

Committee for Children is a nonprofit organization seeking to improve children's lives by providing research-based violence prevention, anti-bullying, and child abuse/personal safety programs for schools, families, and communities.

### **Resources**

*Education Week* (2003). *Quality Counts 2003: "If I Can't Learn from You."* *Education Week*, 22(17). Bethesda, MD: Editorial Projects in Education.

U.S. Secret Service and Department of Education (2002, May). *The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States.* Washington, DC.

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### What Is Bullying?

Bullying is a serious form of aggression. It's one-sided and unfair. Left unchecked, bullying can have long-lasting harmful consequences for children who bully and their targets as well. Most bullying incidents go unreported or unrecognized by adults. The key is for adults to distinguish bullying from everyday conflicts—such as rough play or disagreements between friends—and address it proactively.

#### Here are some distinguishing features of bullying:

- Bullying involves a power imbalance. Children who bully have more power due to such factors as age, size, support of the peer group, or higher status.
- Bullying is usually a repeated activity in which a particular child is singled out more than once and frequently in a chronic manner.
- Bullying is carried out with an intent to harm the targeted child.
- Bullying includes physical aggression, verbal insults, the spreading of malicious rumors or gossip, and threats of exclusion from the peer group.

### How Prevalent Is Bullying?

Bullying happens in parks, at shopping malls, in rural areas and inner cities, and more frequently in our schools than you might guess.

- Video footage of elementary school playgrounds reveals that a bullying incident occurs every seven minutes.<sup>1</sup>
- Ten to 20 percent of American students are chronic targets of bullying at school—that's 40 to 80 children in a school of 400.<sup>2</sup>
- Each day at least 160,000 children in the U.S. miss school due to bullying.<sup>3</sup>
- Six out of ten teenagers witness bullying in school at least once a day.<sup>4</sup>

### Is Bullying that Serious a Problem?

The effects of bullying on targeted children are devastating and increase over time.

- Research has established a link between being bullied and having both emotional and academic difficulties.
- Children who are bullied tend to have lower self-esteem and feel more depressed, lonely, anxious, and insecure than nontargeted children do.
- Being the target of peer aggression has been shown to lead to emotional problems in children as early as the preschool and kindergarten years.
- Academic problems in targeted children include avoidance and dislike of school, leading in later years to a greater risk of truancy and school dropout.
- Feelings of loneliness often persist even after the bullying stops.
- Finally, chronic bullying can lead to life-threatening consequences for some children.

When adults fail to intervene, some victims ultimately take things into their own hands, often with grievous results. In its recent analysis of 37 school shooting incidents, the U.S. Secret Service learned that a majority of the shooters had suffered “bullying and harassment that was long-standing and severe.”<sup>5</sup>



## References

<sup>1</sup>Craig, W. M., and Pepler, D. J. (1999). "Peer Processes in Bullying and Victimization: An Observational Study." *Exceptionality Education Canada*, 5, 81–95.

<sup>2</sup>Pellegrini, A. D., Bartini, M., and Brooks, F. (1999). "School Bullies, Victims, and Aggressive Victims: Factors Relating to Group Affiliation and Victimization in Early Adolescence." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 91, 216–224.

<sup>3</sup>Vaol, K. "Words That Wound." (1999). *American School Board Journal*, 186(9), 37–40.

<sup>4</sup>Wirthlin Worldwide (2002, December). "Survey of 500 Teens." Conducted by Wirthlin Worldwide for the National Crime Prevention Council.

<sup>5</sup>U.S. Secret Service and Department of Education (2002, May). *The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States*. Washington, DC.



# Parent Tips on Bullying

## **1. Encourage your children to report bullying incidents to you.**

- Validate your children's feelings by letting them know that it is normal to feel hurt, sad, scared, and angry.
- Let your children know that they have made the right choice by reporting the incident(s) to you and assure your children that they are not to blame.
- Help your children be specific in describing bullying incidents: who, what, where, and when. (Look for patterns or evidence of repeated behaviors that are unfair and one-sided.)

## **2. Ask your children how they tried to stop the bullying.**

## **3. Coach your children about possible alternatives.**

- Avoidance is often the best strategy.
- Play in a different place.
- Play a different game.
- Stay near a supervising adult when bullying is likely to occur.
- Look for ways to find new friends:
  - > Support your children by encouraging them to extend invitations for friends to play at your home or to attend activities.
  - > Involve your children in social activities outside of school.

## **4. Treat the school as your ally.**

- Share your children's concerns and specific information about bullying incidents with appropriate school personnel.
- Work with school staff to protect your children from possible retaliation.
- Establish a plan with the school and your children for dealing with future bullying incidents.

## **5. Encourage your children to seek help and to report bullying incidents to someone they feel safe with at the school.**

- Adult in charge of a specific activity or area (for example, playground, lunchroom, field trip, bus, gym, classroom)
- Teacher
- Counselor
- Principal

## **6. Use school personnel and other parents as resources in finding positive ways to encourage respectful behaviors at school.**

- Volunteer time to help supervise field trips, the playground, or the lunchroom.
- Become an advocate for schoolwide bullying prevention programs and policies.

## **7. Encourage your children to continue to talk with you about all bullying incidents.**

- Do not ignore your children's reports.
- Do not advise your children to physically fight back. (Bullying lasts longer and becomes more severe when children fight back. Physical injuries often result.)
- Do not confront the child who bullies.
- Do not confront the family of the child who bullies.



## **Second Step®: A Social and Emotional Learning Program**

Preschool/Kindergarten–Grade 9

The award-winning *Second Step* program teaches children how to deal with emotions, resist impulsive behavior, resolve conflict, solve problems, and understand the consequences of their actions. This research-based, teacher-friendly program includes engaging classroom lessons, posters, and videos; teacher's guides; and parent-education components.

### **Skills**

- Empathy
- Impulse control and problem solving
- Anger management



Preschool/Kindergarten Kit

## **Steps to Respect®: A Bullying Prevention Program**

Grades 3–6

The *Steps to Respect* program is a comprehensive curriculum that engages the entire school. It includes training for adults on how to effectively deal with bullying while teaching children to develop caring, respectful relationships and decrease bullying behavior.

### **Skills**

- Coping with bullying
- Reporting
- Friendship skills
- Emotion management
- Bystander intervention



## **Talking About Touching®: A Personal Safety Curriculum**

Preschool/Kindergarten–Grade 3

The newly revised *Talking About Touching* program is a research-based personal safety curriculum that teaches children skills for sexual abuse prevention and lessons on traffic, fire, and gun safety.

### **Skills**

- Assertiveness
- Decision-making
- Asking for help
- Reporting





## Overview

Committee for Children is a nonprofit organization seeking to improve children's lives by providing research-based violence prevention, anti-bullying, and child abuse/personal safety programs for schools, families, and communities. Our programs are used in more than 20,000 schools, reaching more than 10 million children in countries throughout the world, including the United States, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, Iceland, Sweden, and the Philippines.

## Organization Facts

Founded: 1978

Employees: 75

## Key Programs

*Second Step*®: A Social and Emotional Learning Program (Preschool/Kindergarten–Grade 9)

*Steps to Respect*®: A Bullying Prevention Program (Grades 3–6)

*Talking About Touching*®: A Personal Safety Curriculum (Preschool/Kindergarten–Grade 3)

## Key Partners

20,000 schools reaching more than 10 million school children in North American and around the world.

## Budget

\$10 million annually, with the majority of revenue raised through program sales and training.

## Key Organizational Milestones

### 2001–Present

- Committee for Children programs reach more than 10 million children across the United States, Canada, and around the world.
- *Steps to Respect*®: A Bullying Prevention Program is released and soon reaches more than 350,000 students across the United States and Canada.
- Researchers at the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning award high marks to the *Second Step* and *Steps to Respect* programs.

### 1996–2000

- Committee for Children celebrates its 20th anniversary.
- Committee for Children programs are distributed in all 50 states, every province and territory in Canada, and 12 other countries.
- The *Second Step* program and *Segundo Paso* supplement for Spanish-speaking children reach approximately 7 million students.
- Approximately 70,000 educators in 70 cities receive training in Committee for Children programs.
- *Second Step* materials are introduced in Norway and Germany.
- The *Talking About Touching* curriculum reaches children in the Philippines.
- The PARTNERS project, a program to grant *Second Step* curricula and staff training to under-funded schools, serves 5,000 elementary students.
- The *What Do I Say Now?* parent video is produced to accompany the *Talking About Touching* program.



### 1990–1995

- The family component of the *Second Step* program for elementary grades is created.
- The PARTNERS project is developed to donate programs to a limited number of financially needy schools.
- Regional training is offered for educators teaching Committee for Children programs.
- The *Segundo Paso* Spanish-language supplement to the *Second Step* program is created for Preschool through Grade 5.
- An educational video, *Facing Up*, is produced to help prevent bullying and youth violence.
- The *Second Step* program expands to serve Grades K–8.

### 1969-1986

- The organization formally becomes Committee for Children.
- Judicial Advocates for Women changes its name to Seattle Institute for Child Advocacy, with a mission of preventing child and adolescent victimization. Its curriculum is updated to include a broader reach, a Spanish-language Emmy award-winning video, and presentations to educate about sexual abuse.
- With funding from Washington State and the Junior League of Seattle, Committee for Children creates the *Talking About Touching* program, a skills-based personal safety curriculum for Kindergarten through Grade 6.
- The review committee unofficially refers to themselves as the Committee for Children.
- Seattle COYOTE changes its name to Judicial Advocates for Women and forms a curriculum review committee to research sexual abuse prevention.
- Researcher Jennifer James and a group of University of Washington social scientists collaborate with Seattle COYOTE to conduct a research project on youth entrance into prostitution.

### Awards and Accolades

Researchers at the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) award high marks to the *Second Step* and *Steps to Respect* programs in 2002.

The *Second Step* program is rated “Exemplary” by the U.S. Department of Education’s 2001 Expert Panel on Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools. (Only 9 programs out of 132 received the top “exemplary” rating.)

The *Second Step* program is described as “a model program” for school violence protection by the White House “1998 Annual Report on School Safety.”

The *Second Step* program is lauded as effective in the 1997 summary of the three-year research study on the impact of the *Second Step* program, entitled “Effectiveness of a Violence Prevention Curriculum Among Children in Elementary Schools,” published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

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