

From the Desk of Melanie Raneri Woods

Dear Alexandra,

I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your recent letter to me about bullying. First of all, your passion about this very important topic comes through completely. Second of all, you have so many sound reasons why bullying is bad for everyone. And lastly, you help me to consider ways to help prevent bullying at PS 29.

Bullying is a problem that has been around for a very long time—much longer than you and I have been around. In other words, it is a problem that has existed throughout history, both with children and adults. It is a very sad problem and each and every day, we see how people get hurt by one another.

I often wonder what it is about bullying that makes it so common. Is it that people—both young and old—just want to have control over people? Is it that they feel insecure? I am not sure but I do know that it is BAD for everyone, including the bully! The worst part, Alexandra, is that when people are bullied, they feel so hurt and powerless. I think that is what makes it so sad. It is why we have to help.

You have really compelling reasons why we should solve this problem. Your example, seeing one child shove another against the schoolyard gate, really shows how bad bullying can be. And what you said about kids getting hurt both ways (physically and emotionally) says it all. I agree that they do feel like they have no friends. That is a terrible feeling to have.

Your suggestions for helping to fix this problem are really good ones. I agree that sometimes the people who are supervising kids in the schoolyard are talking to one another. I know that sometimes they are talking about kid issues but sometimes, as we all do, they may not be paying attention as they should and then miss something that happens. This is something that we talk about with them on a regular basis. We will definitely talk more about it, though. It makes a lot of sense.

For the past few years we have been working with the PTA to add more grownups to the schoolyard. And this year, we have added administrators. And recently we have a new young man, Paul, who is

doing community service for his high school. The idea of more adults is better, for sure.

I absolutely LOVE your idea about *No Bullying Week*! I especially love it because it is preventative. In other words, it gets at the heart of the problem. Helping kids to stop themselves from bullying—not simply disciplining them when they do—is a smart way to go. We want kids to learn what to do when they are bullied and we want the bullies to learn better ways to cope with their feelings. I will speak with our administrative team, including Cara, our school counselor, about this possibility. If we go ahead with it, do you think you can help us to plan some activities for this event?

Something tells me that you have already read these books, but in case you haven't, I would recommend *My Secret Bully* and *Say Something*. These books have both been Schoolwide Read Alouds so Andi, I am sure, has them both in your classroom library!

I just also want to tell you that no matter what, bullying will exist, but your letter reminds me that we can all work together to make it happen less frequently at PS 29. It reminds me that we all have the power to make our school an even better place! I look forward to talking more about this with you.

Thank you again, Alexandra, for your wonderful and helpful letter. Have a great day!

Love,


Melanie

By the way, thank you for helping at the Talent Show on Friday night collecting donations to our school! Little acts of kindness like this go a long way!