

# Breaking Down Barriers

Anti-bullying program builds understanding and acceptance among high school students



## SESSION: FLIP IT FORWARD — A BULLYING PREVENTION MODEL

**Presenters:** Hudson School District: Laura Love, principal; Dana Krahenbuhl, AODA coordinator (pictured)

**H**udson School District's Flip It Forward program is a bullying prevention model aimed at bringing high school students together. The program gets its name because students "Flip" their thinking toward more understanding and acceptance, and it moves students "Forward" to get more engaged in school. The program is Hudson's interpretation of a California program called "Challenge Day" and the MTV show "If You Really Knew Me."

Flip It Forward is a leadership program with a purpose of transforming school culture into one that promotes understanding and acceptance. It includes time for students to: be involved in an icebreaker introduction, define cliques and consider what gives them power, tell personal stories, "cross the line" (a visual representation showing that all have some shared experiences), share in small sharing circles, and debrief and determine action steps.

When defining cliques, students

consider whether they feel trapped by their identification in a clique and whether it is their comfort zone. Students and adult participants "Cross the line if you are proud of your accomplishments." And, as students are able to handle sharing deeper issues, "Cross the line if you know someone who has been bullied."

In the sharing circles, students complete the sentence "If you really knew me, you would know..."

"Kids want to share, they want to have their voices heard," said Dana Krahenbuhl, AODA Coordinator for the Hudson School District.

During these steps, one adult facilitator and other adults participate alongside students. Confidentiality is critical; students are told they may share the experience but not the details. All that is shared during Flip It Forward is confidential and the staff says they have not had a breach in that trust.

District leaders say the Hudson School District has seen positive

changes during the two years they have implemented the program. Through a survey, the district found that 91 percent of students believe the program will positively change the school environment. When students were asked to provide a one word response to the program, they most commonly said "united" and "understanding."

Students learn that they all have genuine connections with each other and they learn to break down barriers and be less judgmental between groups of students and groups of students and staff. The district employees notice increased participation in school activities and mutual respect.

Flip It Forward also affects bystanders so they choose to stand up for their classmates and check on any victims of bullying. Employees believe there is even a carryover to the home environment, as students chose to talk and share with their parents. ■

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