

School speaker encourages students to address bullying

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Today is Pink Shirt Day, Canada's anti-bullying movement, and students at one local school have been preparing for weeks. For over one month, students at A.W. Neill Middle School have been learning how to recognize bullying behaviours and what to do when they witness them.

Yesterday they were treated to an anti-bullying presentation by Jim Jordan, a motivational speaker who believes that witnesses have the power to stop bullying. His talk was the highlight of the school's six week anti-bullying campaign, which will wrap up at the end of next week.

Despite the end of the anti-bullying campaign, principal Nora Moncur said that combatting bullying is a daily activity.

"In order to really effect change, it has to be something over the long term," she said.

Jordan's presentation involved the students through games, magic and videos. Each time he asked for volunteers, hundreds of arms shot up in the air and youngsters begged to be picked. Woven throughout his talk was a recurring message for those who witness bullying but fail to intervene.

"When they are complacent, they are complicit," he said.

Jordan encouraged the students to report bullying to their teachers, parents and principal and to work together to address the problem through eliminating silent bystanders.

His presentation was met with enthusiasm from the students, many of whom crowded around him after he concluded, asking questions and competing for attention.

"Will you be my dad?" one student asked.

Jordan's presentation is one of a series of anti-bullying initiatives that staff at A.W. Neill have arranged. Today each student will receive a pink bracelet in celebration of anti-bullying day, and at the end of the week they will begin painting a mural throughout the school. The mural, based on the theme of standing up to bullies, will feature prints of all of the students' and teachers' feet going up the walls. It is expected to be finished by the middle of March. Later this week students will also have the chance to make a pledge to end bullying, a commitment Moncur hopes the students honour.

For more information, visit Jordan's website at www.reportbullying.com