

Dear Family,

For the past several months, our school has been teaching the *Steps to Respect* program, a schoolwide bullying prevention program. The primary goal of the program is to help create a safe, respectful, caring learning environment that is bullying-free for all students.

As part of this program, our class is studying literature lessons that reinforce many of the concepts the children have learned in the program. We are reading the book *The Well* by Mildred D. Taylor. This book was specifically selected because it provides historical perspective on racial bullying. It illustrates a time when racial bullying pervaded and great strides were made toward equality. The emphasis in the novel and in the lessons is on racial bullying and its effects. Several examples of power imbalance demonstrate bullying and how it affects people. The racial bullying is representative of the time period, and a certain amount of ugliness exists.

Racial bullying is a sensitive issue, and the lessons that accompany the reading have been carefully constructed to teach children positive ways of handling bullying situations. The lessons in this unit teach children to take responsibility for creating a caring school by:

- Empathizing with the characters and developing a greater understanding of racial bullying and its effects.
- Generating ideas for helping someone with a different background feel respected.
- Reaching out to children who are bullied.
- Determining whether it is safe to speak out against bullying.
- Identifying the consequences of being a silent bystander to bullying.
- Practicing bullying-refusal strategies.
- Identifying when to get help from an adult by reporting bullying.
- Using a problem-solving process to evaluate and select solutions to a problem.
- Generating ideas for being part of the solution to the problem of racial bullying.

We know that all children worry about bullying—even if they are not directly involved. This novel allows children to discuss the topic in a safe and productive way. When we address bullying directly, students are more likely to be able to handle bullying situations when they arise.

We encourage you to discuss the book and the lessons with your child.

Thank you,

Classroom Teacher