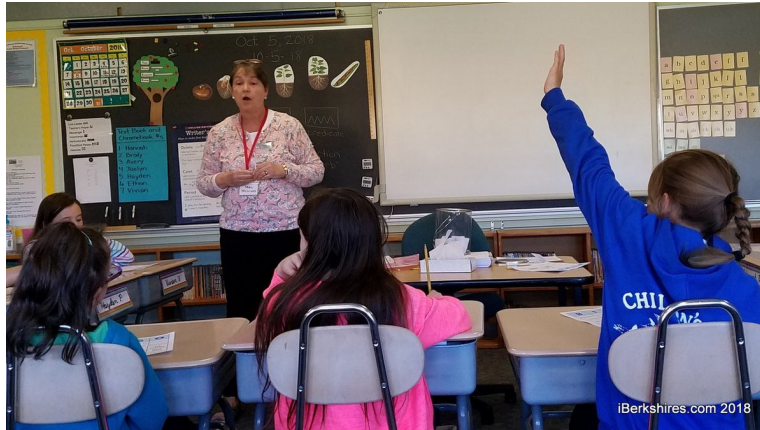


Send news, tips, press releases and questions to info@iBerkshires.com (<mailto:info@iBerkshires.com>)
Send sports news to sports@iBerkshires.com (<mailto:sports@iBerkshires.com>)

[LOGIN \(/members/login.php\)](/members/login.php) | [REGISTER \(/members/signup.php\)](/members/signup.php)

Adams
COMMUNITY
BANK

New Limited-Time Offer - Special CD Rates



Carol Mulcahy of the Berkshire district attorney's office leads third-graders through a bullying prevention-themed bingo game on Friday..

A bingo game is

Gabriel Abbott School Starts Off School Year With Anti-Bullying Blitz

By Tammy Daniels

iBerkshires Staff

04:01AM / Monday, October 08, 2018

[Print Story](#) | [Email Story \(/rec.php3\)](#)

FLORIDA, Mass. — The class of third-graders at Gabriel Abbott Memorial School were quick to raise their hands on Friday as their bingo square was called out.

This game wasn't about numbers but about attitudes, empathy and safety.

Each block had a word or phrase related to bullying and relationships like verbal and emotional, trusted adults, walk away, kindness and "think before you click."

"Our words can really hurt someone," said Carol Mulcahy, director for community outreach and education for the Berkshire district attorney's office, describing the feeling of being bullied as "feeling it in your heart."

The children had a good handle on the different components of the game, readily answering questions about the aspects making up the bingo card. It's not surprising because the bullying prevention program has been part of their curriculum since kindergarten.

The program through the district attorney's office has been a part of the school's educational program since 2009, said Principal Heidi Dugal.

"It's a great program that has grown through the years so there's multiple layers," she said. "They're doing our life skills training as well."

Students in Grades 3 through 8 receive the Botvin LifeSkills Training Program, a substance abuse prevention program, as part of their curriculum. The program also offers certification and training for teachers and a companion evening presentation for parents.



Children in the kindergarten/accelerated preschool class make lion and mouse puppets to learn about kindness and friendship.

Dugal said there's a number of layers in the collaboration with the district attorneys office, such as the school's participation in the state's Project 351 student leadership program that dovetails with the district attorney's Strive Leadership Program.

"I am just so fortunate to have these ladies," she said of the team working in the school on Friday morning. "We have a very personal connection, the students as well as the staff, with the district attorney's office. They have been wonderful for us."

Mulcahy said the office likes to do a daylong "blitz" at the beginning of each school year in participating schools to set the tone. The age-appropriate presentations are designed to get kids thinking about how their words and actions can affect others.

"Evidence-based prevention education basically diverts kids from making bad choices and that's what we're trying to do: support schools in social-emotional learning that will help kids make good decisions," she said.

"This is a good example of a school not just calling us in when something happens as an intervention."

The trainers explain that there's going to be some teasing or jokes or students sometimes feeling excluded. The goal is to get the children thinking about how others feel so these actions don't get repeated.

"We explain to them if it happens over and over again, it's bullying, but why would you treat another person like that," Mulcahy said. "Just try to be kinder to one another and if we do that our school, our community would be a better place."

Across the hall, kindergartners were making lion and mice puppets to go along with the Aesop fable story about "The Lion and The Mouse," a lesson about kindness and friendship. Farther down the hall a quieter group of seventh- and eighth-graders were discussing the perils of social media, such as oversharing private information or cyberbullying.

Kimberly Blair, a youth education and prevention specialist, was sharing a video with the older students showing how easy it was for an individual named "Jack" to find and pose as acquaintances to teenagers by repeating what he'd read on their Facebook pages.

Dugal said she can tell the program's had an impact largely by the language used in the school.

"I think the language that students use that's what you see, the carryover of the language students use with each other or their mediation of incidents and their understanding of what's really bullying," she said. "We know there's teaching that goes on here and there."

Tags: [bullying](#), ([/story.php?tag=bullying](#)).

[Like](#) 76 people like this. Be the first of your friends.

Support Local News

We show up at hurricanes, budget meetings, high school games, accidents, fires and community events. We show up at celebrations and tragedies and everything in between. We show up so our readers can learn about pivotal events that affect their communities and their lives.

How important is local news to you? You can support independent, unbiased journalism and help iBerkshires grow for as a little as the cost of a cup of coffee a week.

Support iBerkshires

([/donation/donation.php?color=blue](#))



0 Comments

iBerkshires.com welcomes critical, respectful dialogue; please keep comments focused on the issues and not on personalities. Profanity, obscenity, racist language and harassment are not allowed. iBerkshires reserves the right to ban commenters or remove commenting on any article at any time. Concerns may be sent to info@iberkshires.com ([MallTo:info@iberkshires.com?subject=Facebook%20Comments](mailto:info@iberkshires.com?subject=Facebook%20Comments)).