

Anti-Bullying Campaign at Clinton Public School District

At Clinton High School, the anti-bullying campaign is more than just policy enforcement. As part of the district's anti-bullying efforts, last year the CHS Thespians chose to perform the play "Thank You For Flushing My Head in the Toilet: And Other Rarely Used Expressions" by Jonathan Dorf. "All of the students connected with the characters on a certain level," said CHS theater teacher Emily Metcalf. "We talked about bullying in school and spent a week in the library researching the topic."

The play is about students Achilles and Helen, who are bullied at school. "Achilles regularly has his head flushed in the toilet and Helen invents reasons to arrive late to school so she can avoid a vicious clique," Metcalf said. One of the "cool kids," Glinda, magically materializes and offers to turn them into the very people who have bullied them.

"This play is a comedy, but it does have underlying serious themes," Metcalf said. As part of play preparations, students looked at the long-term effects of bullying on both the victim and the bully, as well as the connection between bullying and school violence and other topics. "After they did their research, they wrote scripts and original scenes for public service announcements that were age-appropriate for the elementary level," Metcalf said. "We produced the PSA on the anti-bullying pledge and sent it to the junior high school." Included in the PSAs were statistics that the students found during their research.

Dr. Phil Burchfield, superintendent, said the anti-bullying theme was timely. "On the district level, we just adopted a new policy against bullying, both in person and electronically," he said. "New policy is one thing, but activities like the ones done by Mrs. Metcalf's students bring home the purpose behind the policy. It teaches kids in a fun way that certain actions are wrong, and the damage that bullying can do." He said the Jonathan Dorf play was a step in the right direction. "We were the first high school in Mississippi to perform this play," he said. "We enjoyed it because it played on a theme that the students could connect with and really learn from."