

Full Details

National Documentary on Bullying Will be Filmed at Franklin



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Bullying is an age-old problem, but today it's about more than bumps and bruises. Franklin Middle School principal Carol Stack knows students are now terrorizing through text messages and emails. "We have a lot of different forms of bullying we didn't have 20 years ago," Stack says. So Stack, a filmmaker and a University of Illinois professor teamed up Thursday to give Franklin's staff a brush-up on modern-day bullying. It's a documentary where Australian students re-enacted their own experiences on camera. Experts say parents and teachers need more resources like that to understand the problem. "Lots of curriculum and bullying prevention programs are out there. Unfortunately most of them are written by adults who have no idea what

happens in the hallways in the middle school," says U of I Associate Professor of Educational Psychology Dorothy Espelage. That's one reason students at Franklin will soon turn their stories into a teaching tool for kids all across the country. With the help of some professors and filmmakers, eighth-graders there will make their own documentary. "Really get into their lives of what happened, how a bullying event kind of unfolds, how it escalates, how it may involve cyber-bullying," Espelage says. "We know from the research that we've done at the U of I that many kids are involved in bullying, whether they're the bullies, they're the victims, or they're the bystanders standing around kind of tolerating this." It may be a touchy subject, but Franklin's principal says it's worth it to find out what goes on behind closed doors. "It's a nice instructional resource for teachers; it's a nice resource to work with parents from a parent perspective when you recognize your child might be a victim," Stack says. The project will start this fall. It'll take seven weeks, and kids will get credit for recreating their experiences on camera. Organizers are also incorporating the project into the curriculum so students will still be learning. Filmmaker Christopher Faull says his project has already worked in Australia. Students there made the documentary Franklin teachers watched Thursday. That film is now used in about a quarter of schools in Australia to teach parents and students about bullying.