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8-10-2012

# UNH Researchers Announce Success of Bullying Prevention School Curriculum

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*UNH Media Relations*

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## Recommended Citation

Mantz, Erika, "UNH Researchers Announce Success of Bullying Prevention School Curriculum" (2012). *UNH Today*. 4010.  
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/4010>

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UNH News Release: UNH Researchers Announce Success of Bullying Prevention School Curriculum



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August 10, 2012

UNH Researchers Announce Success of Bullying Prevention School Curriculum

DURHAM, N.H. – Researchers at the University of New Hampshire believe they have made a significant breakthrough in reducing bullying and meanness in middle school students. A study of the Courage to Care program, which was developed by UNH Cooperative Extension, found students who participated in the program were less likely to emotional pick on other students.

Nearly 180 Granite State seventh graders in the Courage to Care groups were pre and post tested on their ability to show empathy and on the number of incidents of bullying and meanness they were involved with. In addition an equal number of students who did not go through the program were pre and post tested over the same nine-week period. The scores of the two groups were compared to see if there were differences between those that participated and those that did not.

“There was significant improvement in empathy, caring for others and a decrease in the likelihood that the Courage to Care participants would emotionally pick on other students,” said Patrick Shannon of the UNH Department of Social Work. “The results are very promising for this program as a means to combat bullying and meanness in schools.”

The teaching units cover issues like showing kindness and empathy, understanding groups, cliques and stereotypes, demonstrating courage and civility online in cyberspace, being more “mindful” and issues related to social and emotional learning, as well as manners and civility. “We believe kindness, empathy, and civility can be taught,” said Malcolm Smith, co-director of the project. “What we seem to be experiencing is a compassion deficit among our school children. And, just like similar deficits in math scores or science scores, our schools need to address our students’ lack of abilities in getting along with others.”

Matthew Saladino, a guidance counselor at Gorham Middle High School and one of the leaders of the Courage to Care test at his school, agrees. “The gains our seventh graders made in getting along, caring for others and creating a positive school culture during the past semester were phenomenal. The great thing is that everyone in the school, staff and students, noticed that change and it became contagious.”

The students’ teachers and guidance counselors were trained last December in how to use the Courage to Care curriculum and it was implemented this past spring in middle schools in Gorham, Charleston and Wolfeboro. Students participated in the program for one hour per week for nine weeks.

The Courage to Care program was developed by Smith, Rick Alleva and Thom Linehan of UNH Cooperative Extension along with Jeff Frigon of the UNH Browne Center for Innovative Learning, and Patrick Shannon of the Department of Social Work.

On August 15, 16, and 17, 2012, a new group of teachers and counselors from across New England will participate in the first of many Courage to Care Leadership Institutes to be offered around the country to certify educators in using the Courage to Care program. The program has drawn interest from educators across the nation, and trainings are in the works in Kentucky, Kansas, and Missouri. A second New Hampshire training will be offered in mid-October. Four hours of UNH graduate and undergraduate credit are being offered by the UNH Department of Education.

“In 30 years of research on youth violence and peer meanness, this is the most promising program I have ever been involved with,” said Smith. “We are definitely on the road to tackling the bullying epidemic. Our next challenge will be to develop similar programs for pre-schoolers and college students. We believe we are really on to something here.”

More information and a brochure about the Courage to Care program is available at [www.courage2care.com](http://www.courage2care.com).

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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*Editors: Members of the media are invited to attend the training at the Browne Center Aug. 15, 16, or 17 between 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Please call Malcolm Smith, director of the Courage to Care Project, at (785) 865-9046 or [malcolm.smith@unh.edu](mailto:malcolm.smith@unh.edu).*

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