

REGION

THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 2011
THE PRESS OF ATLANTIC CITY

WILDWOOD TRIES TO COMBAT BULLYING



Staff photos by Dale Gerhard
Eileen Crescenzo, left, and Barb Jackson, both of New Jersey Child Assault Prevention, speak with first-grader Ava Troiano on how to deal with a bully situation after a role-playing skit.

Pupils told to stand up for themselves, others

By TRUDI GILFILLIAN
Staff Writer

WILDWOOD — Everything was going just fine in Liz Wade's first-grade classroom until Eileen Crescenzo came along.

Barb Jackson was busy drawing when Crescenzo started teasing her. "You can't draw. You can't draw."

But Jackson didn't have to stand up to Crescenzo alone.

"Don't make fun of her drawing like that," said 7-year-old Ava Troiano.

Fellow 7-year-old Joshua Vargas had plenty to say, too. "Don't call her names."

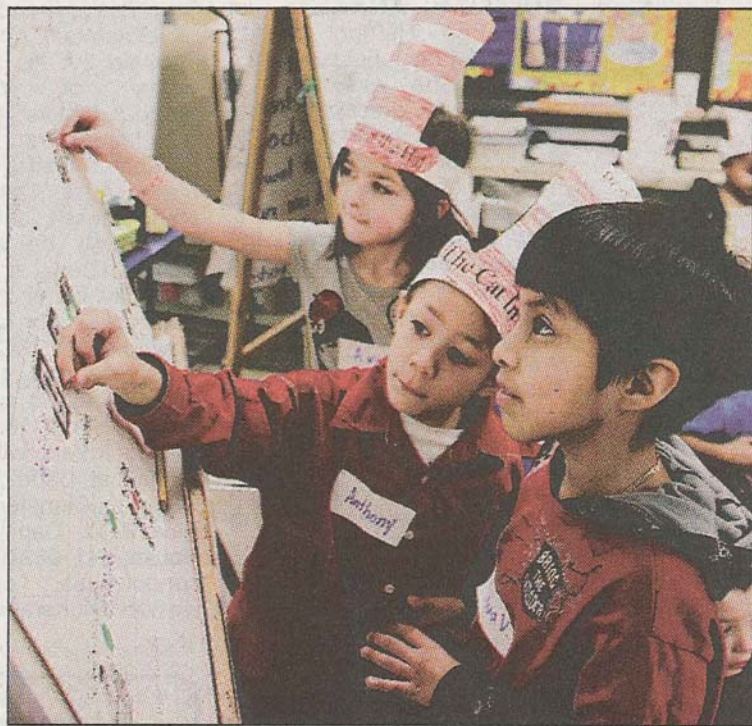
And Anthony Freeman, also 7, suggested they tell the teacher.

Then came the applause and the smiles.

Jackson and Crescenzo, grown-ups and friends, credited the children with playing their parts well in the exercise designed to show the first-graders at Glenwood Avenue Elementary School that there are ways to cope with bullying in schools.

Jackson and Crescenzo were visiting the school this week as facilitators with New Jersey Child Assault Prevention, a statewide education program hosted locally by AtlantiCare Behavioral Health.

Pam Celenza, county coordinator for the program, looked on as the women led Wade's students through a series of exercises



First-graders Ava Troiano, back, Anthony Freeman and Joshua Vargas put red stickers on a school map to illustrate areas where bullying may occur.

In The Schools

We want to hear about what's going on in your school. E-mail intheschools@pressofac.com

as part of the No More Bullies, No More Victims presentation. "All the children have the right to be safe, strong and free. That's

our motto," Celenza said.

The two-day program involved students throughout the school with the goal of encouraging children to stand up for themselves and others who are experiencing bullying.

"I have three special rights you see. They are safe, strong and

□ See Bullying, C4

Bullying

(Continued from C1)

free," the class sang, as Crescenzo and Jackson reviewed what they learned on day one.

The song was another way to remind students that they don't have to simply accept being bullied.

On Tuesday, the students spent time reading a story about a young girl who is bullied and how others could help.

On Wednesday, they talked about where they feel safe and who to turn to when those feelings of safety disappear.

The role-playing exercises took them through classroom settings and bullying at the

Watch the event

See video of Wildwood students as they learn how to stop bullying with this story at:

PressofAtlanticCity.com

'Our attempt here is to empower the kids.'

Eileen Crescenzo, facilitator with New Jersey Child Assault Prevention

lunch table to the playground.

Celenza said the program puts together workshops for parents and staff to help them recognize and cope with bullying, and then focuses on students and ways to empower them.

The words "no" and "stop" are emphasized as the program focuses on what children can say and do to prevent bullying.

At the close, they drew pictures related to bullying and had a chance to speak one-on-one with Crescenzo and Jackson about bullies.

"Our attempt here is to empower the kids," Crescenzo said.

Emely Osoria-Dejesus, 7, was starting to work on her drawing and said she had learned how to handle a bully should she have to face one.

She learned, she said, "how to be strong."

Contact Trudi Gilfillian: 609-463-6716
TGilfillian@pressofac.com