College of Education Inclusion Committee Enhances Grand Valley Community

Clayton Pelon

Grand Valley State University

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One of the major events hosted by the College of Education Inclusion Committee in the 2010-2011 academic year was a screening of the movie “Bullied.” The purpose of the committee is to create an inclusive environment within the COE that supports diversity. It is co-chaired by Dr. Deepak Subramony and Clayton Pelon.

In January the screening of the Southern Poverty Law Center’s movie “Bullied” drew over 150 community members, faculty, students, and staff. The panel was moderated by WGVU's Shelley Irwin and featured: Denise E. Brogan-Kator, Interim Executive Director for Equality Michigan; Dr. Michele Coyne, consultant; Kay Waters, Counselor Coordinator for Grand Rapids Public Schools; and Sue Verduin-Miller, School Social Worker for Sparta Publics Schools.

Panelists reacted to the movie and addressed the crowd’s questions. According to Denise Brogan-Kator, “The movie is extremely relevant in Michigan and around the country…Particularly as we look at legislation in Michigan on hold due to naming of types of bullying.” She indicated that LGBT youth, like the film depicted, are much more likely to be bullied than others.

Kay Waters indicated that she wasn’t surprised by the depictions of bullying in the movie. Mrs. Waters said, “While the problem is recognized in society, how do we make schools safe?”

The panel discussed many strategies for dealing with the issue and Dr. Coyne has contributed to this issue to help answer that question. In addition, more resources are available online from the Southern Poverty Law Center. The movie is available for free to teachers as well as discussion guides and plans at www.tolerance.org/bullied.

The event was a great success and the committee plans to host similar events next year. If you have any suggestions, please email Clayton Pelon at pelonc@gvsu.edu.

**Bullying by the Numbers**

- 160,000—Estimated number of U.S. students who skip school daily to avoid being bullied
- 32%—Students who report being bullied at school during the school year
- 86%—Gay or lesbian students who report being bullied
- 70%—Teachers surveyed who say that educators “almost always” intervene when bullying occurs
- 35%—9th graders who believe their teachers are interested in trying to stop bullying
- 66%—Bullying victims who believe school professionals responded poorly to the bullying they observed
- 10-20%—Bystanders who provide any real help
- Compared to their peers: kids who are bullied are five times more likely to be depressed, bullied boys are four times more likely to be suicidal; bullied girls are eight times more likely to be suicidal

Find more statistics and information from www.tolerance.org/bullied.