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## Expert on violence says cooperation can deter bullying

By ELIZABETH SIMPSON, The Virginian-Pilot

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CHESAPEAKE - James Garbarino has gleaned his lessons about harassment and violence from the experts: bullies and their victims.

Some are as well-known as those from Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., where student-led shootings erupted in 1999.

Others have been youngsters at quiet high schools where anti-bullying campaigns were launched in response to the massacre.

Garbarino, a psychologist and the author of "See Jane Hit" and "Lost Boys," shared what he has learned from 30 years of research on child violence Thursday at the annual Chronic Illness Conference sponsored by Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters.

The Columbine shootings, and incidents of school violence since then, have raised awareness of bullying and harassment, with a variety of initiatives launched to combat violence. Garbarino - who is also a psychology professor at Loyola University Chicago - has seen anti-bullying methods that work and many that don't.

He said zero-tolerance policies and a "war against bullies" mentality tend to cause more problems than they solve.

"Sensible educators will not go along with them," Garbarino said during his keynote address at the Chesapeake Conference Center. "Simple answers are not enough."

A better approach, he said, is nurturing a climate of acceptance, cooperation and belonging, rather than one of competition and rejection.

As an example, he described a physics teacher who required students to sit in the order of their latest test scores, a policy that breeds resentment.

Another teacher, though, organized an event that required the cooperative skills of athletes, artists, academics and vocational students, which created a sense of solidarity between different groups of students.

Rather than just posting "Character Counts" slogans, teachers should work with students to get them to help one another, he said.

"Get bystanders to intervene and stand up for victims and say, 'We do not treat people like that in our school,' " Garbarino said.

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