

# STMS not tolerating students who bully, want adults to stop

By Kathryn Reed

*"Why do you bully each other mentally and verbally if you are telling us not to?"*

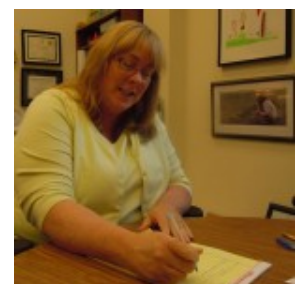
*"If you continue bullying, what kind of message will you be sending to the children of the world?"*

*"The commercials you have been making are like cyber bullying."*

*"Our school is trying really hard to defeat bullying and you are not helping us."*

Those are excerpts from letters sent by South Tahoe Middle School sixth-graders to lawmakers. Teacher Cindy Cowen has been engaging her students in a discussion about what bullying is so the incidents decrease.

But students don't understand why adults – especially those who espouse to be leaders – are bullying their opponents and others. They hope their letters will sink in with the politicians to show them that leading by this example is not a great idea and a bit two-faced considering they all seem to say bullying is a bad thing and then they do it.



**Beth  
Delacour**

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Principal Beth Delacour is trying to change the culture by quashing bullying and in turn hopes it will carryover with the eighth-graders when they enter high school.

“It’s all about relationships. I want to see how far we can take this and see if we can go to the community,” Delacour said. “We are trying to defeat bullying and build compassion and kindness, which can be difficult at this age.”

Bullying comes in many forms. Physical is often the easiest to identify, as are verbal taunts. Sometimes what might seem like innocent teasing is really bullying. Laughing at someone and not letting him have a seat at lunch – more bullying.

Delacour recounts a recent struggle at her school where a boy was in her office crying. It had been a long day. Four incidents, which taken individually might not have seemed like much, were in the end too much to handle without help.

Delacour called in the perpetrators. They listened. Hearing how their actions had a compound effect on a fellow student

visibly moved them. They seemed to get what they were doing was bullying and that it was wrong.

What's good about this example is that it was resolved without the victim doing harm to himself or others. But what worries educators and other youth advocates is what happens to the person – young or old – who doesn't have someone to talk to, or doesn't have a way to peacefully change what is going on.

On Nov. 9 South Tahoe Middle School is having two morning assemblies for the entire student body called Rachel's Challenge. The public is invited that night at 7pm to hear the same message in the multipurpose room.

Rachel Scott was the first person killed at Columbine High School in April 1999. Her father, Darrell, founded Rachel's Challenge as a way to stop bullying and violence.

Delacour said she was in tears the first time she saw it.