



Exploring Prevention Audio Library:
Series 2, Episode 1 Transcript

Exploring Story-Based Prevention with Jackson County SART

Total time: 29min 55sec

GUEST SPEAKER

Kyndra Laughery
Jackson County SART Prevention Coordinator

Meg Foster 00:00

Thank you for listening to this short recording. In this audio series we connect each month with people across Oregon to explore creative violence and abuse prevention ideas. In this recording, we connect with Jackson County SART to discuss the way to do a story-based K-5 prevention curriculum. We are joined today by Kyndra Laughery, prevention coordinator at Jackson County SART. Kyndra welcome.

Kyndra Laughery 00:22

Hi!

Meg Foster 00:23

Hello! Do you want to start by introducing yourself and what you do?

Kyndra Laughery 00:27

Sure. My name is Kyndra, my pronouns are she/her and I'm the coordinator of the prevention program for Jackson County start as well as an educator, so I go into the classrooms as well. And yeah, Jackson County SART is a victim service organization here in Jackson County. So we serve Medford, Ashland, Gold Hill, River, and surrounding areas.

Meg Foster 01:01

Great, thank you. I reached out to you all because you're implementing a pretty cool K-5 prevention program. Can you tell us a little bit about your story-based curriculum and the K-5 program overall?

Kyndra Laughery 01:15

Sure. So what we did is we have four lessons for each grade, to meet that the Senate bill mandate of four points of contact. And what we created was a way that we would do one lesson in the class that we would teach, we would come in and teach, and then leave a lesson behind for the teacher to do. Then we come in another time to teach a lesson and then leave one behind for the teacher.

So those four lessons, what we did was split them into two levels. So there's like the level one with one lesson we teach, one lesson the teachers teach, and then a level two, same situation. The level one focuses more on socio-emotional aspects of how to be a good citizen, just how to be an

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awesome person, a good friend. We talk about personal space, we talk about consent in relation to playing with your friends. We talk about how to say sorry, and change your behavior. We also talk about empathy and peer pressure, and all sorts of stuff. Oh, and also cyber bullying, we look at bullying and how to be an ally and the difference between tattling and telling. So we really tried to set that stage of just that idea of respect. Then the teachers do a lesson that follows up on that and reiterate those ideas.

Then when we come back, our level two, gets a little more into the specifics of safety. So that's where we're talking about bodily autonomy. Your body belongs to you. We have a little song we sing in kindergarten, that's really fun. And then we also talk about good touch, bad touch or comfortable touch, uncomfortable touch, secrets, we start talking about Internet safety in regard to folks pretending to be someone they're not on the internet. And then we also talked about grooming, that process that people use to get close to a young person to harm them.

All of that is based on stories or scenarios. So kindergarten through third grade, we have a story for each lesson that we come in and teach. When the teachers teach, it's more of a discussion that they do or an activity, but when we come in and teach, we do link it to a story. Then in fourth and fifth grade, we're really talking more scenario-based, so we try to get them in situations or we show them a video where someone is behaving a certain way and then we talk about it. We start to, in the fourth and fifth grade, we actually extend our lesson time from 30 minutes, which is what we do kindergarten through third grade to 45 minutes and that way, we have a little bit more space to get them talking and discussing and we kind of start that process to get them ready for when we come into their middle school classes and on. So we are really establishing that relationship with the students kindergarten through fifth grade, they see us every year, it's kind of fun to walk into some schools, they start to be like, "Oh, it's the bubble lady" and which I think is the best thing ever. So that's a big part of it. We just certainly work with the teachers and with the administrators and create those relationships in that space, so that when we go on, we can have the deeper conversations in middle school. So this curriculum is really just laying a foundation of some of these key concepts like recognizing when a friend is, when they're hesitating that means to check in instead of just saying, "oh, okay, I'm gonna go play with blocks because you reluctantly said okay," it's recognizing that your friend is doing the, "okay, I guess" kind of answer and exploring that and checking in and recognizing that if you were to go set up the blocks or whatever it was you just asked them, that it wouldn't be fun because both people don't want to be there.

And so we do a little role playing. We also bring in some role playing where we have them practice saying no to an adult in a way that's like pretending like for instance, I'm a family friend and they just don't feel like hugging me. It's not that I'm creepy or anything they just want to say "No thanks." And so we have them practice that and when they do that, I always accept their no and and say thank you and offer another option like waving or high five or something like that. And then we also have them practicing no in the way that maybe I'm somebody who's trying to get them to come talk to me or get close to me and they're happy to say no. So we try to bring in a lot of those roleplays also in the time we have. In Kindergarten through third grade, we do have 30 minutes and in fourth and fifth we give it 45 so that seems to be as much as the students at that point can really sit still, and or not sit still,



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but be engaged in something without having... Plus, honestly, that's also really the time slot that schools often have that is very small for us to go into.

Meg Foster 06:17

Very cool. I would love to learn a little bit more about how you developed the stories and like what led you to this model. Before I ask that question, though, I'm really curious why you're called the bubble lady.

Kyndra Laughery 06:32

Oh, yeah. Good question, because with no context, yeah. Part of it is that we talk about how you have a space bubble. So when we talk about personal space, we link that to a book called personal space camp, which is an excellent book and for this conversation, it's about a young person who is having a hard time figuring out what personal space is and keeps making mistakes which we talk about when you're in kindergarten, first, second and third grade, you're still learning how to be in a space with other people. And so you're gonna make mistakes from time to time. So we talk about that and how that's saying sorry, and changing your behavior. But in that book, there's a point where a teacher who's trying to explain personal space is blowing bubbles. So we talk about how it's almost like you're in an invisible bubble, and then that sort of extended into the song that has your own personal space bubble. And so yeah, we do a lot of talking about bubbles in kindergarten through second grade, I think and so they see me and they'll either call me the personal space lady or the bubble lady.

Meg Foster 07:42

That is amazing. I really love blowing bubbles. So I appreciate that metaphor. So thank you.

Kyndra Laughery 07:48

Thank you, I take that happily.

Meg Foster 07:54

So circling back, like what led you all to this model of using stories and what was your process in developing it?

Kyndra Laughery 08:05

Well, one thing is, I talked to Susan, my executive director a little bit about our conversation today and she was saying the education started because Jackson County SART started out as a response based program responding which a lot of us in the state do and that idea of going upstream, that idea of where can we, how can we eliminate some of this that's happening? Where can we go have these conversations earlier? So it started, first of all, in the high schools and middle schools, and again, through that education, I think it was acknowledged that we need to be planting some seeds of these conversations earlier.



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So Susan, and I had worked on some other projects when I worked with a different organization called Lotus Rising Project and I worked with teens doing a lot of theater and we did a lot of bullying prevention work using interactive theater. So using a lot of roleplay and bringing students in, so it's just always been kind of a way that I've used to educate about violence prevention, is let's look at these situations and figure out how to respond. Also I was an early childhood educator, a kindergarten teacher for many years well at like a Montessori private school, so I'm not state accredited or anything, so just having stories in those lessons.

So Susan approached me and asked if I would be interested in doing some research over the summer looking at just how we could have some of these conversations in the earlier grades. That was about 2015, just before the Senate bill was passed, I had done all this research looking at how to have these conversations earlier. And so it was a beautiful thing when the senate bill passed because we were prepped and ready because we'd already been doing this research. What we realized was that a lot of this is like more socio-emotional in those grades, like talking about personal space, talking about asking before you give a hug or talk, these sorts of things. And, and when your friend says, No, don't respond with, I'm not gonna be your friend anymore, which is a very common thing you hear as a kindergarten teacher. And so having those conversations.

So I just did research looking at health standards and socio-emotional learning. There was a curriculum that the schools were using that escapes my mind right now and I'm so sorry, that's terrible. But it was a social emotional learning based curriculum. And so and then just did research on best practices on how to talk about child abuse, how to have these conversations, looking for people around the states who were already doing this work, and I found a website, school counseling with heart. And it was a counselor who had just put some resources on about things that she had done.

So that was a seed that I followed. So I just sort of kept following all these little seeds and other people who have been doing some of this work and this counselor person had linked A lot of it to stories. And so that was like, oh, okay, well, then that's what I want to do. And then we just started looking for the stories. We started thinking about what's age appropriate at each time, what are some of the first things we want to get them talking about, what is in line with the state mandated social emotional learning standards. And also what are the Erin's law recommendations at each age, so we just put it together that way. And we've adjusted it. We've gotten input from teachers and just fellow preventionists. So it's been a work in progress. It's a living, breathing document, but I really think the core of it stands pretty firm.

Meg Foster 12:16

That's really cool. Do you want to share any other examples of like, the stories or how you use those in your programming?

Kyndra Laughery 12:25

Yeah, sure. I mean, I would even be happy if there was a way to provide a list of books that I would, I'd be happy to make available for anyone that was interested, that we use.



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Meg Foster 12:36

We can definitely linked that to this recording if you want.

Kyndra Laughery 12:41

Great, it will be a Word doc list type thing, nothing too fancy, but I'm more than happy to share. So we read in kindergarten and first grade, we read similar books that are basically, there's one book called Hands Off Harry and then the other one is Personal Space Camp, and both of those are, this is in the level one lesson. So this would be the social emotional conversation. And those are all about somebody who's having a hard time and keeps making mistakes and has to be talked about like, this is what personal space is. And then and the end finally understands it and puts it together and makes better choices. So we talked about the importance of changing behavior. When you've done something and you've heard someone saying, sorry isn't enough, you need to change your behavior.

We also in every single lesson, we really highlight the need to have adults to turn to and talk to and what that looks like. We have them brainstorm teachers at the school that they feel safe with, we have them think about people outside of the school they feel safe with and then have them think of their top three people so that we can remind them that and then I'll ask them, why do I have you think about more than one adult? And often, the students know right away, they just know well, if one person's busy or can't help me, I'll go to someone else. And so just really implementing that idea that you might have to ask more than once to get the help you need.

And so then in second and third grade, we start looking at books like the invisible boy because we talk about empathy, which is just such a sweet, sweet story. And then there's a bullying book called Nobody Knew What To Do, where a young person is being bullied. And we talk about what are our options as people who want to help and then recognizing that if we don't do anything, how the person who's being harmed feels like nobody cares and the person causing harm, thinks they can do whatever they want. So we really try to plant those seeds of the importance of listening to people and reporting.

And then in fourth grade week, that's where we start watching a video, we watch a video where somebody cyber bullies using social media, and we discuss it. We talk about how consent plays out on social media. And I'll tell you, I know for some people, it sounds really early to have this conversation in fourth grade about social media. And I will tell you, they do know, in every class I go to I do a quick survey, we do talk about how I understand that we're at an age where some of you are not at all allowed to go on the internet, and some of you can. So we have a lot of different stuff in the room, but inevitably, in every class I go in, there's at least one or two students that are accessing the internet. And a lot of them have smartphones that go on the internet. So that idea of Hey, let's talk about it now before it gets really scary. So planting those seeds and having those conversations and then in the fifth grade, we use scenarios to talk about social bullying and peer pressure and how sometimes people get influenced in picking on someone and targeting them and how, if you find yourself in that situation, how can you handle that with integrity? How can you stick up for somebody in one of those types of situations. And then when we come back, we read more books like Your Body Belongs to You, My Body is Private, those are our kindergarten/first grade books, where we really are talking about bodily autonomy. We do say private parts. We, the schools that we're in are uncomfortable with us using



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medically accurate information, which is fair, I understand a lot of people are uncomfortable with that. So we solved it by just saying private parts and really encouraging parents, and some of our parent material that goes home while we're doing these lessons, that they teach those words at home and that's how we kind of met with some of our more worried or just some of those communities that are a little bit more scared to bring us in because of the content.

And then in second and third grade, that's where we start reading... There's a book called squeakers. It's really sweet about a little squirrel, Mr. Mole, and we talk about how you don't have to be polite to all adults. If you feel unsafe or scared, it's okay for you to just say no and walk away. And that's where we get up after we've read the story and do a little roleplay, where I pretend to be Mr. Mole, and their job is to walk right past me, no matter what I say. Which they have, I always try to leave each lesson when we're talking about more serious stuff and I always try to leave them feeling good, like laughing or giggling or within reason not laughing at what we're talking about. But we really couch all of those conversations in, we're going to have one of those kinds of safety conversations where we're going to talk about something that doesn't always happen, but you have to talk about it just in case like a fire drill. And so we sort of link it to we're going to have this conversation about something that might be kind of scary to think about, but we're just talking about it in case these things ever happen. And it might never, that kind of a setup. and we take some deep breaths and shake off any tension at the end because that's another worry that schools have had is that students might be sad about the information and we certainly don't want to leave the room while they're feeling down. So we try our best to leave them feeling as good as we can.

Then third grade, oh, we start to do secrets and so we read a book about secrets and then we have an activity where there are little secrets in an envelope and we have the students decide if this is an okay secret to keep or not an okay secret. Then we look at the evidence and we come up with a conclusion because we're detectives and the evidence is always that there are more bad secrets or not okay secrets than there are okay secrets.

And that's a fun lesson and then in fourth and fifth grade again, we're going back to the video or I guess in fifth grade we do read a story again. We talk about grooming. And then we read a story about a man who gets kind of close to a young girl, nothing happens really he just he really gets into her space and doesn't listen to her boundaries. And so we break that down and help them kind of try to help them understand like, how can you tell if this is an adult that means harm or a well meaning adult? And what are your signals? What's your instinct? And then who are the people that you can turn to if you're confused about it. And that's how we end every lesson, is just really getting them to think of who are their resources, who is their support system.

Meg Foster

That is really cool, as I've mentioned to you before, like, I love this idea of creating this really cool library that has just this expansive collection of books. So I love how you're using those and that you're using those. Do you want to share any like successes that you've experienced with this program and this model?



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Kyndra Laughery 19:58

Yeah, well, the biggest thing, a couple of the biggest things is just the relationships that get built doing this. We've been in the central point School District, which I didn't mention at the beginning. So I'm glad I get to mention that now. We've been in their district for a long time, probably in the K through five capacity the longest. We've been in other school districts and middle school and high school, but they were the first district to bring us in and they're a more, I want to say conservative type community. And so there was a lot of worry and concern about what we were bringing in and we met with the principals and the curriculum development and walked into a room of very tense, scared adults and then talked to them about what we were doing. And they were like, "oh, okay, that's great. Let's do it." So, which is one of my favorite things.

But throughout the years, we've really built a rapport with them. And we've shown them that we meet them where they're at. We're like, what are you comfortable with? That's what we're gonna do because the most important things that were in there were having those conversations. So that is, this is a success to me, is the schools. I think it was 2016 when we started, so it's been about four years. So the students are starting to remember us year to year. The teachers, when I come in, they say, "Oh, I'm so glad you're here again." Whereas before, when we started, we were kind of an intruder in a way, someone from the outside coming into their classroom to talk about some scary stuff.

So that's a success, and then on the relationship end when we've had students that we've been talking to since third, fourth or fifth grade, and then we see them again in middle school where we start talking about heavier stuff, we start talking about sexual harassment a little bit more and sexual assault in seventh and eighth grade. They trust us, there's a trust there. They're like, Oh, it's the bubble lady. And there she is. And then they're like, and finally now we can know what SART means because they always want to know what SART means kindergarten through fifth grade. And I just I don't, I can't, I don't feel comfortable just saying Sexual Assault Response Team and having the teacher-- it just I worried about what the, the backlash of that would be not that it's not a thing, but the communities, people are nervous about that stuff. And I think the biggest part of any K through five program is that you've got to understand that and respect that and find your place in that.

Then we've also had some disclosures that have been directly linked to some of our lessons, especially that third grade secrets lesson. I think we've had maybe two or three disclosures from different schools where somebody had told a friend that they were being hurt. And that friend remembered the secrets lesson. I mean, they actually said this to the teacher, the adult that they reported to, that they remembered in the secret lesson, they were told that that wasn't an okay secret to keep. So they were reporting. So it means a lot for that family that that happens to but in the long run that's what we're doing this for, is to get children to speak up when things are happening to them so that we can get them help as soon as possible. And then also we are just seen as a resource. I have teachers and parents reach out to me, they email me and ask me for book recommendations, and those sorts of things. So that's, I know I gave you a lot. Okay, it was successes. You have plural.

Meg Foster 23:48



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That was really awesome. Just thinking about if anyone, because I think that you really are highlighting some of those pieces that people are really interested in today, like thinking about socio-emotional learning as a part of prevention efforts, thinking about how our prevention efforts can align with age appropriate education styles, as well as like the law and all those pieces of like the standards and performance indicators for health education and Erin's law. So if there are other folks that are interested in doing something similar or utilizing this model or learning from you all, do you mind sharing some of the maybe lessons you've learned? What did you struggle with along the way? Or what may maybe made you think differently about this work and how you do it?

Kyndra Laughery 24:36

Yeah. Well, I think one of the big things that, like I said earlier, when we had the curriculum, I'd done all this research, and then the Erin's law passed the Senate bill passed here in Oregon. And so schools were like, "Oh, we need to get someone in here." And we happen to be doing this work. So the couple of the first school districts that we went into I feel like we went in really fast even though we met with the administrators we met with the principals we met with the curriculum people. So we met with all the high up folks and maybe would go in for a staff meeting. But I think, when one of the lessons I learned is the most important relationship at the schools to make aside from the admins is with the teachers before you go into their classrooms if possible. If not, we've made a model or with all this time we have now we're going to be working on a model [unclear], create a welcome letter that says, Hi, this is who I am. These are my credentials. This is what I'm coming into your classroom to teach. Right now, we're pretty much the schools know who we are, but if I were to do it again, that would be one thing is just to really don't let the rush stop you from building those relationships and really having that time to go to the, and I did go to staff meetings, I did go to some, but in that first school district, I didn't. And that's what made us make sure that we told the schools that started bringing us in that we really want to sit down and at least let the staff see us, explain what we're doing, and ask us any questions. And I would even go a step further to really, to spend some time getting to know the teachers or send them a letter to the classroom or something like that, whatever is doable with the school.

I mean, that's the other thing. A lesson that I learned is you're not on your schedule, you're on the school's schedule and that's it. And they have very tight schedules and anything can happen. So you have to be really ready to walk into the school and go have them say, "Hey, that fifth grade lesson you were going to teach it this morning? It's actually gonna be a first grade lesson. And then the fifth grade is going to be this afternoon. Is that okay?" It's like, yes. So be ready to teach anything and that honestly makes... it can be frustrating, but that's what makes you a really good school partner is to go with the flow of what's happening with the schools, because they really are. I mean, that's their every day, that anything can happen. It's just really making sure to have that relationship established with the staff, with the teachers, specifically. Also the best you can get parent nights and give them an opportunity for parents to come talk to you before you go into the school. And again, that can be tricky, depending on if parents show up or not. But even if no one shows up the fact that you tried to like, "hey, let's have a parent night to talk about this curriculum before we go in." That just shows I think that shows up better than not doing that so so that I think those were probably some of the bigger struggles



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along the way was learning that we really need to make sure that teachers and parents are okay and have an opportunity to check in with us and ask questions before we go in to the classrooms.

Meg Foster 28:05

Awesome. Thank you so much Kyndra. Do you have anything else you want to add about the program or your your efforts in Jackson County?

Kyndra Laughery 28:16

I guess not really, I mean, other than just, I think the best place to start is just wherever you are, and just start from there. And I'm more than happy to be a resource. And if people want to reach out and get information or ideas or have a conversation, I'm more than happy to be open to that, because I really think the more that we can start these conversations early, I will tell you, I cannot express enough how wonderful it is to go into those middle school and high school conversations with students having these basic ideas, understanding what consent is, understanding that hesitation and silence is not consent. There's a basic understanding of empathy and that idea of grooming and talking about all of those things so that when you're in those middle school and high school classes, you really can, of course, go over that again, but really start looking at more cultural things and you're not having to, like, have an argument about what consent is, or not an argument, sorry that was rude. A discussion, a lively discussion. Hopefully fellow preventionists fully understand what I just said.

Meg Foster 29:30

I definitely do.

Kyndra Laughery 29:32

Those lively discussions about things like that. But you don't so much when you've already established that relationship and given them some of that information early on.

Meg Foster 29:44

Thank you so much, Kyndra. This was super awesome to hear all about your work, and I look forward to hearing more about it in the future.

Contact Us

Oregon Sexual Assault Task Force
3625 River Road North, Suite 275
Keizer, Oregon 97303
taskforce@oregonsatf.org
Phone: 503.990.6541
Fax: 503.990.6547

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