

Schools hope to educate students about violence

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When Joyce Payne moved her family to Georgia more than three years ago she never thought it would cause her daughter so much pain.

But from the first day of school at Pointe South Middle School in Riverdale, her daughter seemed to act unlike herself - wanting to stay home from school and pretending to be sick.

Payne thought it was the shock of the move, but when her daughter came home from school crying and ashamed because other girls had dumped ice cream over her head in the school lunchroom and threatened to beat her up, Payne was filled with rage.

"I was so upset that she had suffered," she said. "It took a lot for

WHAT TO KNOW

- Morrow Middle School will host a seminar on the recognition and prevention of gangs for students and parents today at 1:30 p.m. at the school.
- Kendrick Middle School will host the first of five seminars on violence prevention on Saturday Feb. 20 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the school.

me to calm down."

Payne was mad at first because her daughter had been ganged up on for being the "new girl" but what really made her upset was

she felt like she had let her daughter down by not seeing the signs.

Now she is helping with a new project at Kendrick Middle School designed to help students understand how to handle violence in school and how to fight against it.

As part of the program, 60 students will be trained in conflict resolution, leadership skills and peer mediation.

Kendrick Middle is not alone. Several schools in Clayton County are recognizing and trying to fight against violence in schools through student and parent training and peer mediation.

Evelyn Florin, principal at Morrow Middle School, has also implemented a program in her

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school to help with the problem of violence and gang disturbance.

Florin said although it is impossible to reach every student, any efforts made by educators to help

students and parents recognize signs of gang violence is important.

"Every school has 'wannabe' gang members," she said. "But the more we know and recognize particular things as symbols, we can help."

Today she will host a gang recognition and prevention tech-

niques seminar for her entire school with the help of Jack Holliday, a national expert on gang criminal activity and violence.

Holliday founded the Gang Intelligence and Prevention program for the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, the first of its kind in the nation.