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PRESS RELEASE

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Barbara Coloroso Engages Superior-Greenstone DSB Teachers & Communities Around District

MARATHON, Ontario – More than 800 people attended the speaking engagements of Barbara Coloroso, the internationally acclaimed speaker and author in the area of parenting, teaching school discipline, non-violent conflict resolution and reconciliatory justice. Her visit, sponsored by the Superior-Greenstone District School Board was organized as a full-day public workshop on October 26 that was attended by area agencies, parents and students. Her presentation entitled *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander* was also delivered to Superior-Greenstone DSB teachers and staff on October 27 as the main event for the board's scheduled professional activity day. A large contingent of Superior North Catholic DSB teachers also attended this highly informative and entertaining opportunity

Coloroso's day-long workshops saw both live and off-site audiences linked via videoconference from five area high school sites around the north shore listen and interact with Coloroso. A former educator herself, Coloroso's session provided an insightful and compelling exploration on the subject of bullying in schools. Her book, *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander: From Pre-School to High School –How Parents and Teachers Can Help Break the Cycle of Violence* is the third among a volume of publications she written on parenting, children and education and the negative behaviours that can present.

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One evening session held at the Marathon High School featured information on another of Coloroso's books entitled, *kids are worth it! Giving your Child the Gift of Inner Discipline*.

Planning for the event began last spring said Director of Education Patti Pella. "Our Safe Schools Committee was working on the Anti-Bullying Policy and had the opportunity to see Ms. Coloroso in Thunder Bay. The committee was amazed that she answered so many of their questions with a straight forward and logical approach. The group felt strongly then, that the parents and educators in our communities needed to hear her speak so that collectively, we could tackle the issue of bullying."

"I am thrilled that the Board's IT department, managed by Brad Ross was able to broadcast each session via videoconference to our five high schools providing access to all ten of the communities that Superior-Greystone DSB serves," said Pella. "We were able to reach a lot of people and many of them in their home communities."

During her day-long workshop, Coloroso described with amazing clarity the different character of the roles played out by the bully, those being bullied and the bystanders. She explained that bullying is not exclusively a matter of children acting out in anger, but rather behaviours that may affect a sense of control of power. Bullying can be more than just physical or verbal abuse. Subtle and more difficult to detect are behaviours that include ignoring, isolating, excluding or shunning people.

The bullied can become withdrawn and reclusive, often assuming or being relegated to the role of "loner". Life-long difficulties in socialization can be a direct result with these victims themselves becoming abusers or bullies in adulthood. Tragically, some young people being bullied may take revenge with catastrophic results as she cited with the Columbine and Tabor, Alberta school shootings.

Tantamount in these painful childhood events is the role of the bystander who she explained can often be the individuals who are the key to putting a stop to the victimizing. Bystanders she notes may be witness to an event or may be involved by virtue of their association or intimidation by the bully. These bystanders can and should report as witnesses to bullying, but often cannot decipher for themselves the difference between reporting and "ratting out" on someone.

Educators and parents need to teach and model behaviours that help children develop the courage and moral independence necessary to take a stand against bullying. As well as enlightening her audience

as to the roles that children may be inclined toward, Coloroso provided guidance and advice on how to address the conflict each of the roles is apt to present.

At one point, Coloroso used a live demonstration with students in attendance to help the audience understand the differences in bullying behaviour, that is, the difference between teasing and taunting, and telling or reporting something versus tattling.

“The professional activity day for teachers was outstanding,” said Pella who attended the teachers’ professional development held live at Lake Superior High School in Terrace Bay, “I believe that if we take only one thing from the workshop, that is to help students discern the difference between tattling and telling, and if we respond to the telling by looking beyond physical situations, we will make an incredible impact on the lives of our students,” she said.

During her evening presentation, *kids are worth it!*, *Parenting with Wit and Wisdom*, Coloroso presented the largely parent-based audience with information to help families create an environment where children can become self-disciplined, compassionate and responsible. Mutual respect between adults and children in families is central to helping children become resourceful, resilient human beings who can act in their own best interest, stand up for themselves and exercise their own rights while respecting the rights and legitimate needs of others.

Dave Tamblyn, Principal of Terrace Bay Public School and key organizer of the event, sent over 100 letters of invitation to community partners. He said, “The excellent response was great to see. The practical strategies that Ms. Coloroso articulates for parents and educators who may need to deal with the bullying behaviours are remarkable.”