

Read About *Why* the SungateKids Prevention Program Matters:

He has soft brown curls and dark brown eyes, and a dimple in his left cheek. He files into the library along with the rest of his third-grade class, unaware that his teacher is watching him carefully today. She's been worried about him lately. Something about him seems different – anxious, maybe, but she just can't figure it out. When she's asked him if everything is ok, he always says yes, but something he said recently about Little League made the hair on the back of her neck stand up. He told her that "Coach" gave him an iPad, even though it wasn't his birthday or Christmas, or any other occasion, and told him it was because he was "special." She hasn't been able to shake that uneasy feeling since he told her.

So today, as they file in to the library to watch the SungateKids SafeKids School-Based Prevention Program, she's watching to see if maybe the lessons about body safety, the "uh oh" feeling and learning to speak up and speak out to a safe grown up will resonate with him – all the while hoping that she's just being silly and overprotective of her students, seeing danger where there isn't any.

She looks over at him again – there's that dimple. He's smiling, relaxed, participating in the question and answer part of the program. But then the puppet "kids" start to tell their stories, and she sees his demeanor start to change. He grows quiet and shrinks down in his spot. He pulls up the hood on his sweatshirt even though the library is warm, and pulls on the strings so his face is nearly hidden. But when the puppet kid talks about the "uh oh" feeling and the "games" her mother's ex-boyfriend made her play, he looks up sharply.

After the assembly, SungateKids' Prevention Specialists invite any of the children who have questions or just want to talk to stay behind. He stays. His teacher sees. "Do you want me to wait for you?" she asks. He nods yes. He waits until all the other children have left, and then confirms his teacher's worst fears. He tells the SafeKids Specialist that Coach makes him play games like the ones Joanne had to play. He says they give him the uh-oh feeling. He says he wants them to stop. He says he's afraid. His teacher kneels down in front of him. "I'm proud of you, so proud of you. You're the bravest kid I know. We're all here to help you. Don't be afraid." He nods his head and gives just the smallest hint of a dimple.

His story is unique, but his circumstances are not. Without the SungateKids SafeKids Program, he might never have told. He might not have had the words. He might have been too afraid. Even with a caring, devoted teacher, he might not have known who to trust. The SungateKids SafeKids Program gives children the language, the tools and the opportunity to learn and to be empowered.

But it's not just children who need the program – adults need it, too, because children should live in a world where grownups know how to talk about preventing sexual abuse and how to respond appropriately when a child talks about abuse. So SungateKids created the SungateKids SafeTalks Program, which is designed to help parents and caregivers of younger children feel more comfortable talking to their children about the important building blocks to child abuse safety.

With a quarter of a century of treating child victims of abuse and working with their non-offending caregivers, SungateKids has the knowledge, the expertise and the skills to work with children and

families in our community to stop abuse before it ever starts. Join us today and become a part of the solution. Join us and make our community better and safer for kids.

To learn more about this program, contact us at sungate@sungatekids.org or visit our website at www.sungatekids.org. You can also reach us by telephone at 303-368-1065.