

FOR TEACHERS: BULLYING: WHAT EVERY TEACHER SHOULD KNOW

BULLIES IN MY CLASS? Maybe

School violence is down; school bullying is up. Surveys indicate that more children are using physical force and verbal threats to gain power over classmates.

Bullying is a form of peer abuse. It is repeated aggressive behavior that should be taken seriously.

In this country, 15 to 25 percent of students are bullied while 15 to 20 percent of students bully others with some frequency. The odds are that some of these children attend your school.

Children who bully have problems. These may stem from home or from their inability to cope in social situations. Children who bully may show leadership skills, be smart and have a network of friends. These friends often support their behavior.

Children can disagree and fight but bullies want power and choose children unable to defend themselves. Bullies can be physical (hitting or punching), verbal (teasing or name-calling), non-verbal (excluding children from social groups or using gestures). Bullies also use e-mail to tease and to threaten.

Children who bully can be loners. While they may exert power in their own circles, they avoid new friends. They single out children who are different because they are smaller, have some physical problem, don't do well in school. Sometimes bullying begins by making the child who is bullied believe the bully is a new friend.

Boys are more likely to bully than



girls. Girls use words more often than fists although words are every bully's weapon. Words are easier to hide from adults and to use than physical force. Girls use rumors and gossip while boys are more likely to tease or threaten.

Whatever tools they use, bullies don't belong in your school.

BULLIES: What They Do To Others

The stress of being bullied interferes with a child's learning. Loneliness, depression and low self-esteem are some feelings that make it impossible for a child being bullied to study and participate in class.

Children who are bullied are often afraid. They avoid bathrooms, hall-

ways and school buses. They avoid clubs, sports and social activities.

Even children who are not being bullied suffer. Bullying creates a climate of fear and increases disrespect in schools. This combines to make learning difficult and classroom management challenging.

Studies show that children who witness bullying want to help the victim. They don't know what to do and may fear the bully so they do nothing.

Schools should be safe and comfortable learning environments. Bullies make them places of fear.

TEACHER RESOURCES

- www.adapp.org
- <http://www.nea.org/home/NEABullyFreeSchools.html>
- <http://www.stopbullyingnow.com/>

WHAT A TEACHER CAN DO

Children who are bullied are often the quiet ones who stand apart because of academics, some disability or physical trait. If you notice a child who is choosing to be alone, avoiding social interaction, staying clear of group work, find out why.

Children who are being bullied want help but are often afraid to ask. They think no one will listen. They believe they have caused it to happen. They are afraid that telling on the bully will bring worse

consequences.

Children need to know that bullying is wrong and that the adults in school will stop it. How? By changing the school's climate. By taking steps to listen to children and accepting that they are telling the truth.

When a child reports an incident of bullying, ask questions. When you see an indictment of bullying — STOP IT.

When you suspect a child

is being bullied, step in and take action. Follow the guidelines in your handbook and be sure to call the parents/guardians of both the children involved.

Work with your colleagues and administration to develop clear rules and action steps related to bullying. Involve parents and make sure class time is spent discussing it with children.



Children should not be expected to deal with bullying on their own.

SOME MYTHS ABOUT BULLYING

Bullying isn't serious or "kids will be kids." Bullying can affect the mental well-being, academic work and physical health of the children targeted.

Bullying can't happen here. It may be more common in some schools than in others but it can happen *anywhere* children are.

Bullying is a city problem. It's an equal opportunity activity. It ignores ge-

ography, race, income.

Bullying happens on the bus not in school. Surveys show that most bullying occurs in school or on school grounds.

Children who are victims will tell an adult. Only 25 to 50 percent of children being bullied will report it.

Children being bullied need to deal with it on their own. Some children

have the skills and confidence to stop being bullied; many don't. Children should not be expected to deal with bullying on their own.

Children who see another child being bullied will always tell an adult.

While many children will report incidents of bullying, many won't because they are afraid of becoming the bully's victim.

STEPS A SCHOOL CAN TAKE

Bully prevention is the job of everyone: teachers, administrators, support staff, lunchroom workers, custodians, aides. They create school's climate; they can send the message that **it isn't okay to bully here.**

Begin by determining the "hot spots" for bullying in your school. An anonymous student survey can identify these places and gauge how widespread bullying is. It will

also convince school personnel that bullying is a problem.

Bullying prevention requires the support of staff and parents. Work together as a team to adopt clear, straightforward rules about bullying and enforce them. Increase adult supervision in hot spots and intervene on the spot to stop bullying. Hold follow up meetings with the children and parents involved.

Bullying has to be understood to be stopped. Staff should be aware of how bullying works, what causes it and the way to respond. Share this information with parents.

The Olweus Bullying Prevention program has been successful in increasing a positive school climate, reducing bullying and school violence. Ask ADAPP for more information.



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