

How to Effectively Prevent and Respond to Bullying Behavior in Schools

KARI A. OYEN, ED.S., NCSP
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST
KARI.OYEN@K12.SD.US

Objectives

- ▶ Characteristics of Bullying behavior
- ▶ Ways for schools to prevent and respond to bullying behavior
- ▶ Implicit or "hidden" bullying behaviors that impact our students
- ▶ Tips for parents to effectively communicate with schools if bullying behavior is occurring

Why Invest in Bully Prevention?

- ▶ More than 160,000 children skip school every day because they feel threatened by another student.
(National Association of School Psychologists)
- ▶ The National School Safety Center (NSSC) called bullying the most enduring and underrated problem in U.S. schools.
(Beale, 2001)
- ▶ Nearly 30 percent of students have reported being involved in bullying as either a perpetrator or a victim.
(Nansel, et al., 2001; Swearer & Espelage, 2004)
- ▶ Victims and perpetrators of bullying are more likely to skip and/or drop out of school.
(Berthold & Hoover, 2000; Neary & Joseph, 1994)
- ▶ Victims and perpetrators of bullying are more likely to suffer from underachievement and sub-potential performance in employment settings.
(Carney & Menzel, 2001; NSSC, 1995)

Consequences of Bullying:

- ▶ Depression and anxiety
- ▶ Increased feelings of sadness and loneliness
- ▶ Changes in sleep and eating patterns
- ▶ Loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy
- ▶ Health complaints
- ▶ Decreased academic achievement
- ▶ Truancy

*These issues may persist into adulthood.

Why invest in **School-wide** bully prevention?

- ▶ Most Bully Prevention programs focus on the bully and the victim
 - ▶ Problem #1: Inadvertent "teaching of bullying"
 - ▶ Problem #2: Blame the bully
 - ▶ Problem #3: Ignore role of "bystanders"
 - ▶ Problem #4: Initial effects without sustained impact.
 - ▶ Problem #5: Expensive effort

Scott Rusk, University of Oregon

- ▶ What do we need?
 - ▶ Bully prevention that "fits" with existing behavior support efforts
 - ▶ Bully PREVENTION, not just remediation
 - ▶ Bully prevention that is sustainable.

Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support: The Foundation

- ▶ Bullying behavior occurs in many forms, and locations, but typically involves student-student interactions.
 - ▶ Bullying is seldom maintained by feedback from adults
- ▶ What rewards Bullying Behavior?
 - ▶ Likely many different rewards are effective
 - ▶ Most common are:
 - ▶ Attention from bystanders
 - ▶ Attention and reaction of "victim"
 - ▶ Access to resources (materials, activity)
 - ▶ Self-delivered reward

Scott Rusk, University of Oregon

**Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support:
The Foundation**

- ▶ Consider the smallest change that could make the biggest impact on Bullying...
- ▶ Remove the "pay off" (e.g. praise, attention, recognition) that follows bullying.
- ▶ Do this without (a) teaching bullying, or (b) denigrating children who engage in bullying.

Scott Roper, University of Oregon

Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support

**Essential Components of effective
bully prevention**

1. Defining bullying
2. Understanding the roles of the student who is targeted, the student who bullies, and the bystanders
3. Responding to bullying with school-wide procedures
4. Providing adequate supervision for needed locations
5. Reporting incidents of bullying with school-wide procedures
6. Monitoring implementation effectiveness
7. Communicating and collaborating with parents

Defining Bullying

Bullying is when a person or group of people **repeatedly** uses words or actions to intentionally cause physical or emotional harm to another person.

Types of bullying:

- ▶ Physical
- ▶ Verbal
- ▶ Relational
- ▶ Cyberbullying

Key Features of Bullying

- ▶ Involves aggressive behavior
- ▶ Typically involves a pattern of behavior repeated over time
- ▶ Involves an imbalance of power or strength
- ▶ Typically, boys bully boys and girls. Girls bully girls.

© Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Teacher Guide, 2007

Understanding the roles of the student who is targeted, the student who bullies, and the bystanders

- Student who bullies-** someone who engages in repeated negative actions towards one or more students
- Student who is targeted-** someone who is victimized by the person who is bullying; may be submissive or provocative targets
- Bystander-** someone who witnesses the bullying; may include the defender of the student who is targeted, the possible defender, the follower, the supporter of the person who bullies, the passive supporter, and the onlooker

Children at increased risk of being bullied

- ▶ Youth perceived by peers as being different
- ▶ Youth perceived as weak/unable to defend themselves/having low self-esteem
- ▶ Specific groups at increased risk:
 - ▶ -LGBT Youth
 - ▶ Youth with special needs, i.e. special health needs, learning disabilities, autism or autism spectrum disorders, etc.
 - ▶ Racial, ethnic, or religious minority groups

Possible Indicators of Bullying Others

- ▶ Having friends who bully others
- ▶ Getting into physical or verbal fights
- ▶ Becoming increasingly aggressive
- ▶ Getting sent to principal's office or to detention
- ▶ Having unexplained extra money or belongings
- ▶ Not assuming responsibility for actions/Blaming others
- ▶ Overly competitive/Excessive focus on reputation or popularity

(www.stopbullying.gov)

Empowering the Bystander

- ▶ Younger students and girls are more likely to take positive action
- ▶ Younger children are also more likely than older children to report bullying behavior to adults
- ▶ Bullying prevention programs can be effective in increasing bystander intervention behavior in bullying situations

Responding to observed or reported bullying incidents with school-wide procedures

STOP		Tell the person to stop and use a hand signal.
WALK		Walk away.
TALK		Talk with a staff member right away!

Why does non-respectful behavior keep happening?

- ▶ Discuss why kids exhibit problem behavior outside the classroom

Peer attention comes in many forms:

- ▶ Arguing with someone that teases you
- ▶ Laughing at someone being picked on
- ▶ Watching problem behavior and doing nothing

The candle under a glass cup

Stop, Walk, Talk

- ▶ A clear, simple, and easy to remember 3 step response

Teach the "Stop Signal"

- ▶ If someone is directing problem behavior to you, **or someone else**, tell them to "stop."

- ▶ Because talking is hard in emotional situations... always include a physical "signal" to stop.

- ▶ Review how the stop signal should look and sound

- ▶ Firm hand signal
- ▶ Clear voice

Teach "walk away"

Sometimes, even when students tell others to "stop", problem behavior will continue. When this happens, students are to "walk away" from the problem behavior.

- ▶ Remember that walking away removes the reinforcement for problem behavior

- ▶ Teach students to encourage one another when they use the appropriate response

Teach "getting help"

Even when students use "stop" and they "walk away" from the problem, sometimes students will continue to behave inappropriately toward them. When that happens, students should "talk" to an adult.

- ▶ Report problems to adults
 - ▶ Where is the line between tattling, and reporting?
 - ▶ **Talking** is when you have tried to solve the problem yourself, and have used the "stop" and "walk" steps first:
 - ▶ **Tattling** is when you do not use the "stop" and "walk away" steps before "talking" to an adult
 - ▶ **Tattling** is when your goal is to get the other person in trouble

Teaching a Reply (What to do when YOU are asked to "stop")

- ▶ Eventually, every student will be told to stop. When this happens, they should do the following things
 - ▶ Stop what they are doing
 - ▶ Take a deep breath
 - ▶ Go about their day (no big deal)
- ▶ These steps should be followed even when they don't agree with the "stop"

The Staff Response

- ▶ Immediately stopping the incident, supporting the student who is targeted, and responding to the bystanders
- ▶ Follow-up procedures for parental notification, for the student who is targeted, the student who bullies, and the bystanders involved in the incident

Framework for Staff Response

Intervene

- Maintain physical proximity and inform the students to stop the behavior
- Ensure that all students involved are safe

Teach

- Remind all students that the behavior goes against school-wide expectations
- Name the appropriate expectation, using the school-wide common language

Support

- Get support for the student who is targeted
- Praise the bystanders supporting the student who is targeted
- Report the student who bullied

Supporting Staff Behavior

When any problem behavior is reported, adults follow a specific response sequence:

Reinforce the student for reporting the problem behavior (i.e. "I'm glad you told me.")

Ask who, what, when and where.

Ensure the student's safety.

- Is the bullying still happening?
- Is the reporting child at risk?
- Fear of revenge?
- What does the student need to feel safe?
- What is the severity of the situation?

"Did you tell the student to stop?" (If yes, praise the student for using an appropriate response. If no, practice.)

"Did you walk away from the problem behavior?" (If yes, praise student for using appropriate response. If no, practice.)

Providing adequate supervision for needed locations

- Assess locations in need of supervision
- Supervision plan developed and implemented

Reporting incidents of bullying with school-wide procedures

-Explicit systems for effective response to inappropriate behavior can be effective in maintaining equitable schools.

Monitor implementation effectiveness

-Is our prevention and response system working?

What about the "hidden" bullying?

- ▶ Often referred to as "relational" or "social" bullying in research
 - ▶ is often harder to recognize and can be carried out behind the bullied person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation.
- ▶ It includes:
 - ▶ lying and spreading rumors
 - ▶ negative facial or physical gestures, menacing or contemptuous looks
 - ▶ playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
 - ▶ mimicking unkindly
 - ▶ encouraging others to socially exclude someone
 - ▶ damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance.

<https://www.anti.org.au/bullying-odr/what-bullying-for-parents/types-of-bullying/>

What can parents do?

1. Emphasize your child's talents and abilities to build self-esteem and resiliency.
2. Encourage your child's participation in sports and in civic and service activities.
3. Create opportunities for talking with your child about what he (she) experiences and observes in school.
4. Take your child's reports of bullying seriously.
5. Encourage your child to report concerns about bullying to an adult at school.
6. Report your concerns to a teacher, the school counselor, or the school principal.

What to do if your child has been bullied...

1. Be alert to signs such as torn clothing, unexplained injuries, school avoidance, anxiety, sad mood, low self-esteem.
2. Let your child know that bullying is not his (her) fault.
3. Promote avoidance of bad situations and negative peers.
4. Don't encourage retaliation. Instead, emphasize the need to walk away and seek help from an adult at school in difficult situations.
5. Report your concerns to the school and provide all the factual information. Check back with your child and the school to make sure the bullying has stopped.
6. Consult with a mental health professional if you observe continuing behaviors of concern—persistent sadness, health problems, school avoidance, or thoughts of suicide.

If your child has bullied someone...

1. Let your child know that bullying is not appropriate behavior.
2. Be consistent in establishing rules, boundaries, and consequences.
3. Become familiar with your child's friends and their behavior.
4. Teach the importance of empathy, compassion, and the ability to see someone else's point of view.
5. Model empathy and non-aggressive responses in your own behavior.
6. Consult with a mental health professional if problems with aggressive behaviors continue.

If your child has been a bystander...

1. Teach your child that he or she should not be a passive bystander or show support for the student who bullies.
2. Help your child develop empathy, show support for the student who is targeted, and become a defender.
3. Encourage your child to walk away and get help from an adult if they witness a bullying incident.
4. Emphasize that it is not tattling to seek help when someone is being bullied. It is doing the right thing because you are responding when someone is in danger of being harmed.

Tips for Dealing with Cyberbullying

1. Talk regularly with your child about online activities and cell phone use.
2. Tell them that cyberbullying is harmful, unacceptable, and can be a crime. Ask them to tell you if they become aware of cyberbullying or other inappropriate online activity.
3. Monitor computer and cell phone use . Access communications and usage history if there is reason for concern.
4. Caution your child not to respond to negative messages.
5. Keep records of inappropriate messages and pictures and try to identify the sender.
6. Notify the school administration, your internet service provider, and possibly the police about inappropriate activities, particularly if your child has been threatened.

Tips for Working with your Child's School to Solve the Problem

- ▶ Keep a written record of all bullying incidents that your child reports to you. Record the names of the children involved, where and when the bullying occurred, and what happened.
- ▶ Ask to meet with your child's classroom teacher and explain your concerns in a friendly, non-confrontational way.
 - ▶ Ask the teacher about his or her observations: Has he or she noticed or suspected bullying? How is your child getting along with others in class? Has he or she noticed that your child is being isolated or excluded from playground or other activities with students?

(Olweus, 2007)

Tips for Working with your Child's School to Solve the Problem

- ▶ Ask the teacher what he or she intends to do to investigate and help to stop the bullying.
- ▶ If you are concerned about how your child is coping with the stress of being bullied, ask to speak with your child's guidance counselor or other school-based mental health professional.
- ▶ Set up a follow-up appointment with the teacher to discuss progress.
- ▶ If there is no improvement after reporting bullying to your child's teacher, speak with the school principal. Keep notes from your meetings with teachers and administrators.

Navigating a school's response

- ▶ School staff should investigate the bullying.
- ▶ After investigating your concerns, they should inform you as to what they plan to do about it.
- ▶ School staff should never have a joint meeting with your child and the child who bullied him or her.
 - ▶ This could be very embarrassing and intimidating for your child.
 - ▶ They should not refer the children to mediation. Bullying is a form of victimization, not a conflict. It should not be mediated.

(Olweus, 2007)

Navigating a school's response

- ▶ Staff should meet with your child to learn about the bullying that he or she has experienced.
 - ▶ They should develop a plan to keep your child safe, and they should be watchful for any future bullying.
 - ▶ Educators should assure your child that they will work hard to see that the bullying stops.
- ▶ School personnel should meet with the children who are suspected of taking part in the bullying.
 - ▶ They should make it clear to these children that bullying is against school rules and will not be tolerated.
 - ▶ If appropriate, they should administer consequences to the children who bullied and notify their parents.

Navigating a school's response

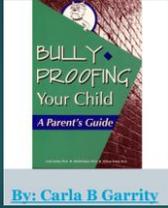
- ▶ Educators and parents should be careful not to "blame the victim."
 - ▶ Bullying is never the "fault" of the child who is bullied, and he or she shouldn't be made to feel responsible for being bullied.
 - ▶ However, if your child is impulsive or lacks social skills, talk with a school counselor. It is possible that some students who are bullying your child are reacting out of annoyance. This doesn't make the bullying right, but it may help to explain why your child is being bullied.
- ▶ Give the school reasonable time to investigate and hear both sides of the story.
 - ▶ Sometimes, a child who bullies will make false allegations about a child as an additional way of bullying them.
 - ▶ Educators should not jump to hasty conclusions and assign blame without a thorough assessment of the situation. This entire process should not take longer than a week.

(Olweus, 2007)

Navigating a school's response

- ▶ If bullying continues, write to the school's principal or administrator and include evidence from your notes to back up your complaint.
 - ▶ Putting a complaint in writing is important so there is a record of your concern. Most administrators and staff are responsive to bullying concerns.
 - ▶ However, if your school administrator is unable or unwilling to stop the bullying, write to your school superintendent for assistance.
 - ▶ Be persistent. You may need to keep speaking out about the bullying that your child experiences

Resource: Bully Proofing Your Child



- ▶ www.stopbullying.gov
- ▶ Information for schools wanting to implement Bully Prevention within a Positive Behavior Support system: <https://www.pbis.org/resource/712/bully-prevention-in-positive-behavior-support>

Questions?

- ▶ Kari Oyen, Ed.S. NCSP
- ▶ School Psychologist
- ▶ Contact me at: kari.oyen@k12.sd.us
