
Direct From the Field: A Guide to Bullying Prevention



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**A Joint Project of
The Governor's Task Force on Hate Crimes,
The Massachusetts Commission on
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth,
and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health**

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Introduction

You must be the change you wish to see in the world.

Mohandas Gandhi

Evidence-based research gleaned from respected institutions, media reports, and the hallways of our nation’s schools all point to the same truth: Bullying has devastating effects. Just a quick look at statistics reveals the depth of the problem:

- Analysis of high-profile school shootings such as Santana, Columbine, and Virginia Tech reveals that that up to 71 percent involved attacker(s) who felt bullied, persecuted, attacked, or injured.¹
- Around 160,000 school children stay home from school each day out of fear, often without telling their parents why.²
- Children targeted by bullies experience higher than normal levels of insecurity, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and physical and mental symptoms.³
- Adults who were bullies as children have higher rates of substance abuse, domestic violence, and other violent crimes.⁴
- The percentage of students who report being bullied rose 50% from 1983 to 2003.⁵

In short, bullying is an act that cannot be ignored if we are to safeguard our nation’s schools and young people.

Prevention and Intervention

While the problem is prevalent—up to 80 percent of adolescents report being bullied during their school years—students report that 71 percent of teachers or other adults in the classroom ignore bullying incidents.⁶ Adults often either justify their lack of action with long-held myths (“bullying is a part of growing up”) or are simply unprepared to intervene effectively.

Equipping administrators and teachers to respond more effectively is part of the answer, but the problem is complex and defies simple solutions. The majority of bullying incidents happen outside of the eyes and ears of school personnel—on buses, on sidewalks on the way home, at sporting events, and in bathrooms and locker rooms. Complicity among young people not to share knowledge of incidents of bullying with adults is common, often due to fear of retaliation. Ironically, while targets are disempowered by this code of silence, bullies gain power and prestige from it.

A joint study of the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education titled “The Safe School Initiative” (2002)⁷ points to the need to create an environment in which students feel safe enough to break the code of silence—thus giving voice to the silent majority of bystanders who disapprove of the bully’s actions.

Multiple national studies show it is critical to create an environment of caring and respect in the classroom and school—an environment where children and adults have zero tolerance

for acts of disrespect. A culture of caring and respect is fundamental, and to create such a culture, character education and teaching of pro-social values like tolerance, altruism, and empathy, and self-assertiveness are essential. And to ensure students' emotional and physical safety, administrators and teachers can learn effective classroom management and discipline techniques.

Goals of This Guide

This Guide, *Direct from the Field*, was developed to help you create a bullying prevention program that meets the unique needs of your site, your teachers, your students, and their families.

Many research-based bullying prevention programs exist, and while we draw from these resources and their insights, this guide goes beyond the simple matching of a site to a pre-packaged program. In discussions with educators across the Commonwealth, we've seen that some of the best solutions to bullying and its destructive consequences are home-grown. This guide includes the collective wisdom of schools across Massachusetts that have discovered ways to make the culture of their classrooms and schools one of caring and respect. From their failings and successes comes the body of knowledge presented here.

Both traditional research about bullying and the experiential wisdom of actual schools are combined here to highlight practical classroom and school-wide strategies for administrators and teachers to:

- Nurture pro-social skills in children—including conflict resolution, appreciation for diversity, communication, cooperation, and assertiveness—that are related to intervening in acts of bullying.
- Utilize character education and put the culture of caring into action through service learning and other moral action models.
- Intervene in acts of harassment and bullying with strategies for working with targets and strategies for working with bullies.
- Work effectively with both families of targets and families of bullies.
- Involve families and school personnel in supporting a culture of respect.
- Develop appropriate consequences for bullies and complicit bystanders.
- Widen the circle of caring and involvement to include your larger community.

How This Guide Was Developed

We surveyed every middle school in Massachusetts and visited elementary and middle schools, both public and independent, to learn about:

- Programs in bullying prevention they have used or developed
- Strategies and tools
 - ⇒ developed onsite to deal with specific issues and meet goals
 - ⇒ that have been most effective (and why)
 - ⇒ that have been least effective (and why)

- The nature of the problem at their sites
- Progress made in addressing bullying problems.

We spoke with principals, professional development coordinators, health educators, guidance counselors, bullying prevention coordinators, classroom teachers, bus monitors, parents, and students. Some sites had been doing this work for years, while others were just starting out. Some sites were using a comprehensive program, while others were using components of different programs or had tailored their own solutions. At some schools, this work fell under violence prevention efforts, and at other sites it was part of character education. Some sites were rural, others suburban or urban. Some had grant money to address this issue, while others were trying to launch efforts without much fiscal support. While there was great diversity in sites and solutions, many common themes emerged.

In general, young people said a better job could be done at keeping them safe at school, pointing to places in schools they avoid, such as bathrooms, certain hallways, and parts of the cafeteria. They worry the adults in the building don't understand the full scope of the problem. Most said they thought the adults cared about them, but they speculated that the adults lack the knowledge and resources to address an issue as complex as bullying. Bullying from a young person's perspective can feel like a problem one simply has to deal with alone.

Adults reported being worried that despite their best efforts, a culture of ridicule and disrespect prevails outside the building. They said change comes slowly and stressed the importance of buy-in from all school stakeholders, including often neglected constituents such as bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and parents. Teachers and administrators doing this work see progress is possible—that efforts to teach children pro-social skills pay off. But they worry about how to fit bullying prevention into a day already crowded with competing goals driven by high-stakes testing. They point with frustration to grants that launch programs that are difficult to sustain once monies have run out.

Still, an atmosphere of hope prevails. Young people and educators across the State believe in the vision of caring and respectful schools. And they believe their efforts to create such a community will pay off.

Research That Informs This Guide

The strategies, tools, and processes presented in this Guide come from two sources:

- Traditional research on social and emotional learning, including the fields of bullying prevention, violence prevention, and character education
- Knowledge collected from the field through an action research model

The action research model is likely something you use all the time. We all learn from experience, and action research is an inquiry-based method of research that relies on:

- Self-reflection
- Reflection on one's social system to develop specific action plans

By asking educators across the State to reflect on what has, and what has not, been working in their bullying prevention efforts, we can offer you a practical knowledge base from which to design your own efforts.

How to Use This Guide

The tools and features presented in this guide are designed to lead you through a process of discovery. This Guide will help identify roadblocks to your success and plan strategies to overcome them. Examples of policies, activities, and other tools and stories from schools across the State are offered, along with guidelines for customizing these tools to meet your schools' needs. Throughout the text you will also find the following features:



Reflections: Questions for reflection are provided. They are meant to heighten your awareness and help your staff share their knowledge and insights about bullying. The reflections can be used privately or as staff training activities.



Things to Think About: These sections include considerations relevant to fine-tuning and customizing your efforts and gathering support from key players in your school and wider community.



Delve Deeper: Resources are offered for further exploration of many topics. Many of these resources are URLs for web-based information free of charge.



School Spotlights: Real illustrations and insights shared by educators and sites across the State are interposed throughout the text.



By the Numbers: This feature links practice to research and provides hard data to support your efforts.



Home Connections: Included throughout are ideas for bridging the gap between home and school and boosting parental support of your efforts.

Chapter-by-Chapter Overview

Chapter 1 presents:

- Common bullying myths such as “it’s all part of growing up,” “being a target of bullying builds character,” and “kids can work it out among themselves.”
- The real cost of bullying to schools, young people, and society.
- What the growing body of research on bullying tell us about what it takes to prevent this unnecessary “rite of passage.”
- Ways to address varying types of bullying, including harassment directed at gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth; sexual harassment; hate crimes; cyberbullying; and hazing.

Chapter 2 presents:

- Ingredients and tools for successful bullying prevention practice.
- Ways to create a caring school culture.

- Proven bullying prevention strategies.
- Discussion about how bullying prevention links to character education
- The legal obligations related to harassment
- Ways to tie together all of your prevention efforts
- Recommended bullying prevention programs and criteria for selecting a program.

Chapter 3 presents:

- Tools for classroom teachers to help young people develop the pro-social skills, including constructive discipline tips and classroom management techniques.

Chapter 4 presents:

- Effective intervention strategies: What should you do when you witness a bullying incident? How can teachers, administrators, and parents work with a target, bystander, and bully to leverage the teachable moment and repair damage before it gets out of hand.

Chapter 5 presents:

- Information for young people, including tools for students to explore the power dynamics of bullying at their school and ways become an ally to targets.

The Importance of Language

Throughout this guide the term **“target”** is used to describe those who are victims of bullying. The term “victim” can be problematic for those at risk for internalizing the victimization and seeing themselves as weak and ineffectual, so the term is avoided.

With other forms of violence, the term “survivor” is often used. However, the term survivor carries with it the assumption of distance from the act—something that cannot be assumed in the context of bullying. The word “target” is also problematic; it is a view through the eyes of the bully and does not give voice to the experience of the person being bullied. We have, however, chosen to use the word “target” for expediency and because no better alternative exists.

Similarly, we use the term **“bully”** for ease of reference. In the spirit of separating the person from the behavior, it’s helpful in your own efforts to avoid such labels and refer to “bullies” as “perpetrators of bullying,” and “victims” or “targets” as “people who have been bullied.” This language is particularly important when addressing complex cyberbullying behaviors; given that the speed of the message and the invisibility of the bully can engage other participants, it is often difficult to determine the message’s originator, and the message gains momentum when other people choose to respond.

It is most constructive to identify the behaviors of the participants and to avoid viewing the roles of bully, bystander, and target as fixed personality traits.

Throughout the Guide we use the term “**parents**” to refer to all legal guardians, family members, and significant adults in young people’s lives.

A Word Before You Get Started

The real experts on bullying at your school are the students, your staff, and you. Take what we offer here, add your own wisdom and experience, and make it your own. At the heart of best practices in bullying prevention are authenticity, self-direction, and determination. As you refine your practice and learn what works at your site, find ways to share your experience with others—direct from the field.

This Guide was researched in 2002-03, and a rough draft completed in 2003. Following a loss of funding, the Guide was edited and prepared for publication by Don Gorton over the period 2005-07. While the Guide has been updated to reflect newly developed information that became available after the initial research and write-up, it is important to note that cyberbullying has taken on larger and more troubling dimensions in the first decade of the 21st century. Educators, parents, and students alike should take notice of this phenomenon and ensure that anti-bullying practices respond to harassment effected over the Internet or by use of cellphone and other portable communication devices. Cyberbullying is specifically addressed at Chapter 1.

Chapter 1: Understanding Bullying

“Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.”

— Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*.

Common Myths About Bullying

Myth #1: “Bullying is just a part of growing up.”

Sadly, this observation holds true for most young people, and for many of the adults in young people’s lives whose childhoods were marred by bullying. But it need not be true. In fact, one of the greatest obstacles to children’s development of pro-social skills is the belief by important adults in their lives that a certain amount of abuse of young people from their peers is a normal fact of life.

Some adults even believe bullying can be beneficial—in toughening up children or helping them to learn to stand up for themselves—mistakenly thinking abuse somehow leads to the development of character and social skills. Research does not support this belief; in fact, it shows the opposite. Children who either witness or are subjected to physical and emotional abuse over time, without the caring intervention of adults, may perpetuate those behaviors in their dealings with others—in extreme cases leading to dramatic acts of violence such as those witnessed at Columbine High. These children also may turn their anger inward and manifest symptoms of depression, an inability to cope with life’s challenges, and low self-esteem. In extreme cases, targets may resort to suicide.

Children who are targets often exhibit poor social skills, opening them up to further isolation and torment. Such isolation and taunting begin a downward spiral where a target’s plummeting self-esteem and lack of social support deprive him or her of the means necessary to improve his or her social and emotional health.



By the Numbers

- 60% of students said they agree bullying helps students become tougher.⁸
- 30–45% felt bullying taught others about unacceptable group behavior.⁹



Reflection

Many of us are not consciously aware of how our beliefs about bullying and teasing affect our interactions with young people.

- When you were a child, what were the messages you received from adults in your life about bullying and teasing?
- In your work with young people, think back to a time when you did not intervene in a bullying or teasing incident that you now wish you had.
- To what do you attribute your lack of action?

- What would you like to say to that target now?
- What would you like to tell the bully now?

Myth #2: “Bullying affects a small number of kids”

Studies documented in *The Bullying Prevention Handbook* reveal 75 to 90 percent of adolescents report being bullied during their school years.¹⁰

While this figure alone is compelling, all students in a school climate where emotional safety is not assured suffer a diminished capacity to learn.¹¹ In his book *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman discusses emotional hijacking—a state where we are flooded by our emotions when an event resonates with other painful emotional events in our past. Brain research shows that during moments of emotional flooding, we are unable to engage cognitively or to learn.¹² Further research presented by James Garbarino and Ellen deLara in their book *And Words Can Hurt Forever: How to protect adolescents from bullying, harassment, and emotional violence* shows the level of pain and humiliation felt by both targets and bystanders can be deep and long-lasting.¹³

In *The Bullying Prevention Handbook: A guide for principals, teachers, and counselors*, John Hoover and Ronald Oliver note that students in schools that don’t effectively address bullying form negative views about school, school personnel, and even learning. These students then grow to be adults with similar feelings about school, pass those biases on to their children, and become more reluctant to get involved in their children’s schooling.¹⁴ It’s a negative cycle affects future generations of students.

It’s important to realize bullying does not merely affect individuals. Taunting, exclusion, and other acts of aggression contaminate the whole school environment. It’s vital that prevention and intervention efforts be aimed not merely at the individual bullies and targets, but at the entire school culture.



Reflection

Think back to when you were in middle school

- Describe a time when you either witnessed or were part of a bullying incident (either as a target or bully).
- How did it make you feel?



By the Numbers

- 22% of 4th–8th graders felt their academic difficulties were related to peer abuse.¹⁵

Myth #3: “Kids can work it out themselves or just tell an adult who will take care of it.”

“I really believe strongly that it's adults' responsibility, not the responsibility of the victim certainly, and not just of the student body, to deal with bullying. It's an adult responsibility.”

—**Dr. Susan Limber**, Bullying Expert, Clemson University¹⁶

The Maine Project Against Bullying found that students report 71 percent of the teachers or other adults in the classroom ignored bullying incidents.¹⁷

Much bullying happens outside of the ears and eyes of caring school personnel—on sidewalks on the way to and from school, in the schoolyard, on buses, in bathrooms, and on playing fields. All bullying prevention programs must find ways for adults to step up supervision and intervention (including training school personnel to identify and then effectively intervene in bullying), but only a small portion of the problem can be addressed solely by increased adult intervention. It is more critical to shift the culture of the school to a caring environment, one where students are less likely to taunt or isolate other students and where student bystanders intervene on behalf of targets.

For anti-bullying programming to work it must have the participation and investment of the entire school community. This is not to imply in any way that children are responsible for keeping a school safe—that responsibility rests on the shoulders of adults. But children need to be invested as partners in creating a caring culture.

Many adults assume children will not “tattle” on other children who bully, but research shows this is incorrect. Children who believe adults will intervene effectively on their behalf are willing to share critical information regarding bullying events. It’s therefore critical that adults learn to effectively handle incidents of bullying—with targets, bullies, bystanders, and their families—in a way that maintains everyone’s physical and emotional safety. (See Chapter 4 on interventions for more information.)

Myth #4: “Our schools are safe.”

In many ways our schools are safer than most Americans think. A survey presented in *Youth Today* reported that 71 percent of Americans believe a shooting is likely in local schools, while in reality children have a 1 in 2,000,000 chance of being killed while at school.¹⁸

But ask any child if s/he feels safe at school and you are likely to hear the answer “no.” Children feel at risk from all sorts of hurtful conduct—from peers and certain teachers. Even if they aren’t actual targets of abusive conduct, children who witness the abuse of others fear they might be next.

Young people often go to great lengths to avoid school bathrooms, locker rooms, certain hallways, or the floor or domain of upper classman for fear of abuse. And our efforts to ensure children’s safety—from the installation of metal detectors to disaster response drills—ironically have the opposite effect if they are not handled sensitively.

Children, like adults, often perceive the threat to their physical safety as greater than it is in actuality. Strikingly, a study by Garbarino and deLara revealed that children who were asked what made them feel most unsafe at school most commonly answered “teachers.”¹⁹

While many of our prevention efforts seek to correct the children, it’s clear that one important place to start is with the adults in the building. Any efforts to bully-proof our schools must also address both real and perceived threats to young people and their emotional and physical safety.



By The Numbers

- Bullying appears to be on the rise. A follow-up study of bullying by Dan Olweus in 2002 showed the percentage of victimized students **had increased by 50%** since 1983. Serious bullying (in both degree and frequency) was **up by 65%**.²⁰
- Bullying begins in elementary school and **appears to peak in middle school**.²¹

Myth #5: “Most targets are kids who are overweight, odd looking, or have some sort of physical problem.”

Research has established that overweight and special needs youth are indeed at higher risk for being targets of bullying.²² But so are gifted children²³, and overweight youth are just as likely to be perpetrators of bullying as they are its victims. The physical characteristic which puts children most at risk is being physically smaller and weaker than their peers.²⁴ But the social dynamics of bullying transcend obvious physical differences between bully and target, and center on perceived power imbalance. Those who bully choose verbal harassment or violent behaviors that exploit existing systemic inequalities in our society, such as those relating to race, gender traits, biological sex, disabilities, sexual orientation, and economic disadvantage. (For more information on strategies for teachers in dealing with youth with special needs, see Chapter 3, page 96.)



By the Numbers

The number one reason adolescent boys and girls give for being targeted for abuse is “I just didn’t fit in.”²⁵

A study in *School Psychology International* reported that 60 percent of students agree with the statement that targets of bullying “brought it on themselves”—even some targets felt that way.²⁶ The tendency in our culture to blame the victim has clearly been internalized by many children. For this reason, the focus should always be on the bullying behavior, not the presumed attributes of the people targeted. The most effective and long-lasting strategy to eliminate bullying is to create a school climate intolerant of harassment and disrespectful behavior. All students can learn to contribute to the school community in ways that widen their social support networks. And everyone can benefit from social learning that builds self-esteem and confidence, skills that will empower youth throughout their lives.



Reflection

Think about the variety of ways young people express themselves and develop unique opportunities for students to contribute to a positive school environment.

Myth #6: “Bullies have low self-esteem.”

Studies by leading bullying researcher Dan Olweus show bullies are generally as popular and possess similar levels of self-esteem and intelligence as more well-adjusted young people.²⁷ While the prevalence of bullying peaks in middle schools, many researchers believe the tendencies to such aggression arise in early childhood and are then reinforced through the early grades. By the time bullies are in middle school, they have already established clear patterns of abuse.²⁸ Rewarded for their aggression by small clusters of peers and others (and often the victims themselves), many bullies have an inflated sense of their own power and worth.

The roots of bullying are complex, and research indicates a combination of factors are involved. While the temperament a child is born with is a risk factor, the majority of the contributing factors for bullying are related to socialization. Bullies are not born bullies—they learn bullying behavior. Many bullies learn to be aggressive from the way they are treated by bigger or more powerful people in their lives—usually their parents or other authority figures, but also peers.

Bullies tend to come from families characterized by what Olweus calls “too little love and care and too much freedom.” These families’ parenting is usually characterized by inconsistencies. Parenting that relies on freedom where there should be guidance, and physical punishment or violent outbursts where there should be consequences and calm instruction, leaves children confused, at risk for similar outbursts, and dependent on power assertion to get their needs met. Research shows children are born with the capacity for empathy, but erratic and unsympathetic parenting and the resulting anxious attachments to their caregivers can inhibit its development. Many bullies seem to show little concern for their victims, are unable to take the perspective of others, and lack the everyday filters of conscience that keep other young people from hurting others. Many bullies also tend to misinterpret social cues from other children, seeing the threat of aggression in neutral acts. A brush against someone in the hall can feel like a threat to a bully and therefore serve as a justification for his or her behavior, beginning a pattern of abuse and leading to a proclivity to blame the victim: “He had it coming to him.”²⁹ Research reported the *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* suggested bullies are sometimes created by peer pressure that repeatedly reinforces their aggressive behaviors.³⁰

Widening out from the immediate context of peers and family surrounding the bully are the cultural messages from wider society. Popular music, TV shows, movies, and video games often glorify violence and aggression and reinforce a bully’s actions. Racism, sexism, ageism, classism, homophobia, and other institutionalized forms of oppression are also common themes in pop culture, and in turn are often part of the dynamic between bullies and their targets. Such power dynamics may arise at the most insidious and unconscious levels, making it difficult for adults and children to name and address what is really happening in many

incidents of bullying and harassment. (See “Is it a Hate Crime?” on page 20 for more information.)

Sometimes even otherwise well-behaved children engage in bullying behavior. Research shows this is more likely to happen when certain group dynamics are in place:

- Students have seen bullying modeled and rewarded.
- Students’ sense of individual responsibility is decreased because other young people are also doing it. (That is, joining in with a group tends to ease each person’s sense of guilt—spreading it across the group.)³¹



Reflection

“Environmental factors including the attitudes, beliefs, and actions of adults in schools can determine the extent to which bullying problems manifest themselves.”

—**Dan Olweus**, bullying researcher

Myth #7: “Once a bully, always a bully”

“When I stopped, I felt bad, and I thought to myself, next time I’ve got to stop and think about what I’m doing.” — **from a bully**

Research shows that without intervention, myth #7 is often a reality—bullies who are identified by around age eight are at risk of a lifetime of bullying³². But prevention and intervention efforts can make a difference.

Because bullies learn to be bullies, they can also learn alternative pro-social skills. Many bullies get locked into their behaviors by their own lack of skills and the expectations of others. They need help finding a way out. While it’s true that in many cases bullies lack a sense of remorse for their actions, other bullies (and bystanders who join in on the abuse) express discomfort about their actions. Some bullies are actually seeking social connection through their actions, and underlying their behavior is the need for acceptance from peers and the approval of others. We can teach bullies alternate ways to meet these needs by:

- Intervening immediately with constructive discipline
- Creating opportunities for bullies to feel powerful in positive ways (e.g., making a difference in the life of others, protecting more vulnerable youth)
- Nurturing empathy
- Teaching pro-social skills (e.g., communication, expression of feelings, problem solving, nonviolent conflict resolution)

(See Chapter 4, “Interventions for Helping Bullies, Targets, and Their Families.”)



Reflection

Think about the bullies in your school. What are the common characteristics among them? What social skills could you help them acquire? How can you help them acquire such skills?

Myth #8: “Boys will be boys”

Like all gender stereotypes, myths abound when it comes to who does the bullying in schools. When many people hear the term bullying, their first image is that of physical violence and intimidation by boys. But studies show girls are involved in bullying almost as often as boys. Girls are more likely to suffer from cyberbullying.³³ A study reported in *Educational Leadership* showed some differences—girls’ bullying is more often related to social aggression such as exclusion and gossip and boys’ to physical aggression³⁴—but it’s important that stereotypes about who bullies are be challenged whenever possible.

Our expectations for young people can be powerful self-fulfilling prophecies. Many schools ignore the more indirect forms of bullying girls engage in, instead creating policies that only address physical aggression and violence. But research shows indirect bullying can have effects just as devastating on their targets as more direct forms.³⁵

Inherent to this myth is what William J. Pollack, M.D., calls “The Boy Code.”³⁶ His book *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myth of Boyhood* explains that boys are socialized into a narrow range of behaviors that glorify aggression, violence, and toughness. Much of bullying and teasing in middle school centers on children’s attempts to enforce the “Boy Code” among their peers. Boys whose behavior or appearance falls outside of this narrow definition of masculinity are mercilessly shamed.

Girls have their own narrow definition of acceptable behavior and shame to contend with for behavior or physical appearance outside the norm. For adolescents grappling with sexual and gender identities, teasing of this type can be particularly painful, creating a legacy of humiliation that is carried into adulthood. Psychologists believe it is these adults with a legacy of shame and unresolved issues who most strongly reinforce such stereotypes for young people.



By the Numbers

Researchers J. B. Kupersmidt and C. J. Patterson found that boys with low self-esteem who were not accepted by their peers were at greatest risk for bullying; and girls who were unpopular with their friends and were aggressive were most likely to bully.³⁷



Delve Deeper

See *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls* by Rachel Simmons (Harcourt, 2002) and *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood* by William Pollack (Random House, 1998) for more information about the impact of gender and gender stereotypes on bullying.

How Bullying Affects Young People

There are high costs for everyone involved in bullying. In schools where there is rampant bullying, a culture of shame and fear permeates.

Young people quickly learn that to be different or to speak up in defense of another opens them to the risk of being targeted. Some students have compared the feeling of being in such schools to walking on eggshells. They are ashamed of their own inability to act when faced with the humiliation of others. And they frequently voice their belief that adults in the building either “don’t know what’s going on” or “will do nothing to change it.” Faced with such a lack of effective adult intervention, a sort of self-regulating system develops within the group: a system whereby young people maintain and police the prevailing norms and values themselves. Only the smallest percentage of students at the top of the social order benefit from this system. Rigid rules develop that dictate aspects such as dress, appearance, interests, and manner of speech. At the very least, a lack of adult intervention results in what is called “learned helplessness.” Students describe themselves as resigned to the prevailing adolescent social pressures. The difficulty is that they do not always possess the skills or resources needed to be resilient.

The line between target and bully blurs as the cycle of shame is perpetuated. A 2002 *Washington Post* article stated that 30 percent of students reported being somehow involved in bullying, and 6 percent of students reported they were both a target and a bully.³⁸ Researchers are often most worried about the last population—one that may be at risk for violent outbursts such as those evidenced in high-profile school shootings. It isn’t known which comes first, being a target or being a bully; but many researchers concur that these bullies are most likely passing along behaviors they experience from important adults in their lives or from peers.

The Effect on Targets

- Approximately 160,000 school children stay home each day out of fear, often without telling their parents why.³⁹
- Targets of bullying experience higher than normal levels of insecurity, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and other physical and mental symptoms.⁴⁰
- The stress brought on by chronic bullying leads to a diminished ability to learn.⁴¹
- In extreme cases, targets can resort to violence and suicide.

The Effect on Bystanders

- 75% of students report feeling ashamed when they witness bullying.⁴²
- 48% of students agreed that coming to the aid of a victim reduces their social standing.⁴³
- Being exposed to violence and maltreatment is associated with “increased depression, anxiety, anger, post-traumatic stress, alcohol use, and low grades.”⁴⁴

The Effect on Bullies

- Adults who bullied as children have higher rates of substance abuse (including alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes), domestic violence, and other violent crime.⁴⁵
- Bullies identified by age 8 are six times more likely to be convicted of a crime by the time they reach age 24 and five times more likely to end up with a serious criminal record by age 30.⁴⁶
- Bullies achieve less academically, occupationally, and personally.⁴⁷
- Bullies can be quite popular in middle school, but by the time they get to high school bullies are less popular. In adulthood, they tend to have few friends and appear to perpetuate the cycle of violence in their children by rewarding aggression.⁴⁸
- Bullies have more negative attitudes about school and tend to pass those attitudes on to their children.⁴⁹
- One study showed bullies have higher rates of suicide than their targets.⁵⁰

How Do You Know It's Bullying?

Barbara Coloroso, in her book *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander*, identifies four markers for bullying:

- Imbalance of power between target and bully
- Intent to harm
- Threat of further aggression
- Creation of an atmosphere of terror.⁵¹

Dan Olweus defines bullying as repeated exposure, over time, to negative actions from one or more other students. Negative actions can include physical, verbal, or indirect actions that are intended to inflict injury or discomfort upon another including hitting, intimidation, taunting, exclusion, or spreading rumors.

While one-time incidents of taunting, exclusion, or aggression between young people who are peers tear at the fabric of your community, they do not in themselves constitute bullying. As you launch your bullying prevention efforts, it's helpful to explore what constitutes bullying with administrators, students, parents, and all involved constituents so everyone has a common definition.

Is it a Hate Crime?

Hate crime is a criminal offense committed against persons or property, motivated, in whole or in part, by an offender's bias against an individual's or a group's race, religion, ethnic/national origin, sex, age, disability, or sexual orientation.⁵² Law enforcement agencies, reporting groups, government agencies, and other victim assistance organizations use a number of guidelines to determine whether hate motive is involved in an incident or attack; these are referred to as "bias indicators." Below are some of the more common factors to consider.

Massachusetts law states: “In some instances, one bias indicator may be sufficient to support an inference that a crime was motivated by bias or bigotry (e.g., bias-related epithets or markings). In other cases, more than one bias indicator may be necessary to warrant such an inference.”⁵³



Things to Think About

- Were the offender and victim of different racial or religious groups, ethnic/national origin, or sexual orientation?
- Did the victim appear to be a member of a particular race, religion, ethnic/national origin, or sexual orientation, even though s/he in fact is not part of that group?
- Were there bias-related comments, written statements, or gestures made by the offender?
- Were bias-related drawings, markings, symbols, or graffiti left at the incident scene?
- Were certain objects, items, or things that represent bias used or left behind at the incident scene (e.g., hoods, Confederate flags, burning crosses, swastikas)?
- Has the offender been previously involved in similar hate incidents, or is the offender a member of a hate group?
- Does the perpetrator have an understanding of the incident's impact on the victim, the victim's family, or the community?
- Did the victim's family recently move into the area? Is the victim's family acquainted with their neighbors and local community groups?
- Was the victim a member of a race, religion, ethnic/national origin, or sexual orientation that is overwhelmingly smaller than other groups where the victim lives or the incident took place? This factor may lose some significance with the passage of time (i.e., it is the most significant when the victim first moves into the neighborhood, becoming less significant as time passes without incident).
- Was the victim visiting a neighborhood where previous hate crimes have been committed against other people of his or her race, religion, ethnic/national origin, or sexual orientation?
- Was the victim engaged in past or current activities promoting his or her race, religion, ethnic/national origin, or sexual orientation?
- Although the victim may not be of the targeted races, religions, ethnic/national origins, or sexual orientation, was s/he a member of an advocacy group supporting the precepts of the victim's group?
- Did the incident coincide with a holiday relating to, or a day of particular significance to, a race, religion, ethnic/national origin, or sexual orientation?
- Have there been other incidents occurring in the same locality, at or about the same time, and have the victims all been of the same race, religion, ethnic/national origin, or sexual orientation?

- Has the victim or victim's community been subjected to repeated attacks of a similar nature?
- Does a substantial portion of the community where the incident occurred perceive the incident was motivated by bias?
- What was the manner and means of attack? For example, does the color of paint, the use of particular words or the spelling of words, or the use of symbols or signs suggest a possible hate motive?
- Does the incident indicate possible involvement by an organized group? For example:
 - ⇒ Has a specific hate group claimed responsibility for the crime?
 - ⇒ Is there printed literature involved?
 - ⇒ Does the name of the group in the literature suggest hate motivation?
 - ⇒ Does the name of the group suggest a "copy-cat" syndrome?
 - ⇒ Is there documented or suspected organized group activity in the area?
 - ⇒ Was this group actually involved, or was this a fear or scare tactic?
 - ⇒ Are there historical animosities existing between groups comprising the victim's and the offender's race, religion, ethnic/national origin, or sexual orientation?
- Is there an ongoing neighborhood problem that may have initiated or contributed to the incident? Could the incident be retribution for some conflict with a group in the community, or a segment of the population?
- Has there been prior or recent news coverage of incidents of a similar nature?⁵⁴



By the Numbers

- **24%** of students reported witnessing race-related bullying now and then or often.⁵⁵
- **13%** of students aged 12–18 have been called a derogatory word related to race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sex, or sexual orientation within a period of 6 months.⁵⁶
- **36%** of students aged 12–18 have seen hate-related graffiti at school.⁵⁷
- The **majority** of students ages 7–13 rejected the view that it was okay to exclude peers from an activity because of their biological sex or race.⁵⁸



Delve Deeper

For more information about hate crimes, see www.adl.org/combating_hate.

The Time is Ripe: Adolescence and Bullying

While all middle school and high school teachers have expertise about adolescents, it's useful to think about some of the characteristics of both males and females in this age group before you begin to tailor your prevention program. The following is an excellent activity for a staff meeting.

Adolescents Are...

	Male	Female
What are they like?		
What is important to them?		
What do they want?		
What do they need?		
What is happening with them developmentally?		

Risks and Opportunities Related to Adolescence

Adolescents are constantly and quickly changing, and normal developmental shifts can leave young people at particular risk for bullying. Parents, adults involved in schools and sports programs, and other caring adults may unknowingly exacerbate the problem by assuming adolescents need less support and guidance than they actually do. Adolescents often become reluctant to ask for help, but it doesn't mean they no longer need it.

Parents and other caring adults may misinterpret a young person's withdrawal from them and feel they are giving a young person the space s/he needs. And while a certain amount of withdrawal from the world of adults and into the world of their peers is an important part of adolescence, depending on the severity of the withdrawal, it can actually be a sign that everything is not okay. Adolescence can be confusing time for everyone.

Fortunately, in addition to risks, adolescence also presents educators and parents with opportunities for nurturing pro-social behaviors. The degree to which teaching efforts are developmentally-tailored will greatly determine whether or not particular characteristics of adolescence can be leveraged as opportunities, rather than risks. The guidance of caring adults in an adolescent’s life can make an enormous difference.

Remember, most adolescents are:

- Preoccupied with group conformity and peer acceptance
- Acutely aware of differences
- Struggling with issues of dependence and independence
- Socially curious
- Focused on sorting out right from wrong (mostly through testing their and others’ values)
- Self-conscious about the physical changes in their body (which to varying degrees can greatly affect their self-esteem)
- Potentially great leaders and problem solvers

Characteristic	Opportunity	Risk
Moving from concrete to abstract thinking	Can think more clearly about abstractions such as civil liberties, democracy, social justice, fairness, honesty; are able to take the perspective of others	Development and learning differ from child to child, and misunderstandings are common
Moving from authoritarian values to democratic tolerances	Ripe for political thought; able to construct group agreements that represent rights and responsibilities of community living	Some children will make bad choices if left to their own devices.
Focused on sorting out right from wrong	Open to examining their values; focused on justice and fairness	May be susceptible to unhealthy influences
Moving from individual focus to community focus; struggling with issues of dependence and independence	Beginning to put aside own needs for the good of the group; are responsive to adults’ respect for their growing autonomy and abilities	Can be very influenced by their peers to join in behaviors they might not really condone; will resist authoritarian means of controlling their behavior
Becoming more independent and able to problem solve	Able to contribute meaningfully to a community, serve as leaders, and be co-creators of a caring community	Adults may underestimate young people’s need for guidance and support

Maturing physically at different rates (may be awkward, different size from their peers, or more sexually developed)	May be used as an opportunity to nurture appreciation for differences	Sexual harassment; self-conscious about their bodies; greater potential for stronger adolescents to abuse those who are weaker
Preoccupied with fitting in	Can be used as an opportunity to explore issues of sameness and difference	Can be non-tolerant of differences; hate crimes; prejudices and discriminatory behaviors
Defining self in relationship to peers, rather than adults; needy for peer approval	Can think for themselves; can begin to act from their own values and beliefs	Easily influenced by peers; can be threatening to be seen as different in any way; any rejection by peers can lower self-esteem

Gender Oppression and Adolescent Girls

Researchers describe a phase around age of 11 or 12 when formerly self-confident and forthright girls start censoring their thoughts, insights, and feelings. Sexism and gender oppression in society affect girls and women, but they can be particularly challenging during early adolescence.

It is important to support girls as they deal with sexism, heterosexism, and other sources of stress by encouraging them to voice their opinions, take leadership roles, and express their feelings. It is equally important to interrupt any power imbalances in the classroom that might spill over from power imbalances inherent in society. If unchecked, power imbalances can be exploited and give rise to verbal and physical bullying. Sexual harassment, for example, is a form of bullying based on gender oppression. Staff training is crucial in creating and maintaining a classroom that is welcoming and conducive to learning for all students.



Things to Think About

- Provide opportunities for school personnel to explore gender assumptions and stereotypes and how they affect interactions with youth.
- Encourage students to understand gender stereotyping and offer alternative visions.
- Help students decode the “mask of masculinity” and the “mask of femininity.” William Pollock states in his book *Real Boys* that the mask of masculinity is when a boy/man hides his genuine self to conform to society's expectations of males, such as being unemotional or acting tough. The mask of femininity refers to a girl/woman hiding her true self to conform to society's expectations of females.
- Include diverse role models in history, science, mathematics, and the arts so students recognize the contributions of women, people of color, people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, and people with disabilities.
- Provide opportunities for youth of different backgrounds to work together on group projects and rotate leadership roles.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Youth Issues

As early as elementary school most children start hearing the phrase “that’s so gay” used as a disparaging remark, though these young students may not even know what the term gay means. Students in middle school reported remarks about someone’s presumed homosexuality or gender identity as one of the most common forms of verbal harassment. An aggressor’s perception that a target is violating stereotypical gender roles is a “bias indicator” suggestive of a gender identity bias motive for harassment or violence.

Many schools have Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs)—supportive clubs that create a safer climate for all students. Research has shown less harassment occurs in schools that have GSAs. Schools have a legal obligation to ensure the environment is safe and supportive for all young people. Staff and student training can reduce homophobia and heterosexism in the school environment and make it easier for young LGBT students to develop a positive identity.



By the Numbers

- Youth who are LGBT are **five times more likely** to skip school because they are feeling unsafe on route to, or at, school.⁵⁹
- **6%** of all high school students describe themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual and/or report same-sex contact.⁶⁰
- **18%** of LGBT students skip school at least once a month.⁶¹
- **97%** of all high school students hear anti-gay slurs daily. (The average student hears 25 such slurs a day.) Verbal harassment affects the health and safety of LGBT students.
- When compared to heterosexual peers, LGBT youth are **more than five times more likely** to have attempted suicide.
- **28%** of LGBT students have been threatened or injured with a weapon over the last year (four times the average for non-LGBT youth).
- **40%** of LGBT students have never seen anyone intervening in an instance of anti-gay harassment at school.

Verbal and physical violence aimed at LGBT youth creates an unsafe environment for all students and exacerbates power imbalances in society. All such bullying needs to be addressed promptly and consistently. In Massachusetts, anti-gay and gender-related harassment are violations of students’ civil rights.⁶² School discipline and behavior codes must include “sexual orientation” and “gender” as protected categories. (See “Legal Issues Related to Bullying” on page 62 in Chapter 2.)

Teachers and other staff need training: to learn about the LGBT community; to understand the legal rights of LGBT students and their peers; and to develop understanding for the unique difficulties sexual minority students face.



Things to Think About

Together with parents, students, and your school faculty and personnel, you can develop new approaches that create a safer environment for all youth. Your school can provide training for staff on interventions that eliminate harassment and improve awareness of students' legal rights. Some approaches to preventing anti-gay harassment include:

- Challenge anti-gay harassment consistently—don't let name-calling go uncorrected.
- Include examples of LGBT people in discussions of contemporary life.
- Support LGBT cultural activities and celebrations; post events on school bulletin boards.
- Include LGBT and heterosexual examples when discussing emotional, social, and economic issues in relationships or family life.
- Focus intervention on creating safety and equality in the school. The actual sexual orientation and/or gender identity of the bully and the person being bullied are irrelevant.
- Recognize that LGBT youth, like other minorities, may feel isolated in the school and have no one to turn to who understands their experience.
- Support the establishment of gay-straight alliances (GSAs).
- Invite members of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) to your school to speak to students.
- Support gay and lesbian teachers who are open about their identity.
- Make events such as high school dances more inclusive by allowing students to invite a guest regardless of their sexual or gender orientation or expression.

Resources for LGBT Youth and Educators

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Support Project (GLYS Project)

Internet: www.hcsm.org/glys.htm

Phone: 1-800-530-2770

The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

Internet: www.glsenboston.org

Phone: (617) 536-9669

Greater Boston Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

Internet: www.gbpflag.org

Phone: 781-891-5966

GLAD (Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders)

Internet: www.glad.org/rights/school.shtml – offers expert legal information about the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students

Legal hotline: 1-800-455-GLAD

Email: gladlaw@glad.org.

Flirting or Hurting: Sexual Harassment at School⁶³

“I’ve always said, not every bully is a sexual harasser, but every sexual harasser is a bully.”— **Sylvia Cedilla**, expert on sexual harassment⁶⁴

Many teachers report that the most common type of verbal abuse they hear, even from younger children, consists of sexually graphic or derogatory language. This behavior can escalate in middle school, where physical changes and emerging issues of gender and sexual identity can make students particularly vulnerable to such comments. Physical sexual harassment is also rampant in our nation’s schools, and can lead to serious physical and emotional harm.

The American Association of University Women has defined sexual harassment as “unwanted and unwelcome sexual behavior that interferes with your life. Sexual harassment is not behaviors that you like or want (for example wanted kissing, touching, or flirting).”⁶⁵ Sexual harassment is illegal under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which provides that no person, on the basis of sex, can be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

For a comprehensive guide about your responsibilities as a school official, see *Sexual Harassment Guidance: Harassment of Students by School Employees, Other Students, or Third Parties* published by the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, available for download at www.ed.gov/offices/OCR/archives/shguide/index.html.

By the Numbers



- 40% of 5th–8th graders say they have experienced sexual harassment by their peers.⁶⁶
- 81% of teens say they had been harassed during school time.
- 38% said teachers and other school employees have sexually harassed them.⁶⁷

Things to Think About



- Develop and publicize a sexual harassment policy that clearly states sexual harassment will not be tolerated and that explains what types of conduct will be considered sexual harassment—mention same-sex sexual harassment.

- Develop and publicize a specific grievance procedure for resolving complaints of sexual harassment.
- Develop methods to inform new administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, staff, and students of the school’s sexual harassment policy and grievance procedure.
- Conduct periodic sexual harassment awareness training for all school staff, including administrators, teachers, and guidance counselors.
- Establish discussion groups where students can talk about what sexual harassment is and how to respond to it in a school setting.
- Survey students to find out whether sexual harassment is occurring at the school.
- Conduct periodic sexual harassment awareness training for parents and teachers.
- Work together with parents and students to develop and implement age-appropriate, effective measures for addressing sexual harassment.⁶⁸
- Address all reports of sexual harassment immediately and involve law enforcement, when appropriate.

Cyberbullying

As a school professional or parent, you already know Internet and cell phone use is pervasive among youth. New technologies have revolutionized communication and information sharing, and at the same time have created new opportunities for bullying and harassment. Cyberbullying may seem like the same old behavior using a different means, but there are several unique differences in how the terms **bully**, **bystander**, and **target** are defined. First, the “bully” can be the originator of an offensive text message—someone invisible and not limited to a geographical context. Recipients of a message could be considered “bystanders” if they do not send the message to others or “bullies” if they forward the message onward. The “target” of the message may or may not receive the message directly.

Cyberbullying has been defined by the Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use to mean “being cruel to others by sending or posting harmful material using the Internet or a cell phone.”⁶⁹ It can take various forms:

- **Flaming**—online verbal attacks or fights via electronic messages, (e.g., in chat rooms) and using hostile and vulgar language
- **Harassment**—repeated messages of an offensive or derogatory nature directed to a target
- **Cyberstalking**—repeated messages of an intimidating character that make a person feel afraid for his or her physical safety
- **Denigration**—online “put-downs,” including sending or posting hurtful gossip or rumors to cause the target embarrassment
- **Impersonation**—using someone’s e-mail account to send out messages, supposedly from the accountholder, that reflect badly on that person and may cause trouble, shame, or embarrassment

- **Outing and Trickery**—disclosure of someone’s private information online, sending or posting embarrassing images, or deceptions leading another person to reveal personal details about him or herself
- **Exclusion**—deliberately keeping someone out of an online group such as a buddy list or game⁷⁰

Cyberthreats are online communications that pose a risk of physical danger to someone. They can be simple threats made against a target electronically, or distressing material posted by someone online that suggests s/he may be at risk for perpetrating violence against him or herself or others. Cyberbullying and cyberthreats can appear in various contexts—a personal web page, a blog, an email or instant message, a text or image message via cellphone, and chat room discussions. The cyberbully can be someone the target knows or a complete stranger. Cyberbullying can be anonymous, can draw in unknown others, and can go on around the clock—all day, every day. Additionally, cyberbullying appears to be on the rise. In 2000, 6% of internet users ages 10-17 said they had been subjected to online harassment; by 2005, the percentage had risen to 9%--an increase of 50%.⁷¹

Most perpetrators of cyberbullying are high school teens and middle school students. Because much of the content of cyberbullying is sexually graphic, this activity can also be sexual harassment. Failed relationships or fights within a relationship can be fertile ground for cyberbullying. For example, retaliatory disclosure of embarrassing personal information or images can follow the demise of a relationship. A cyberbully can also send seemingly random, abusive language and images or gather more personal information and images about the “target.”

The anonymous nature of the Internet, combined with the ability to reach mass audiences, is a potent tool for the bully. Language can be especially vicious and inflammatory because the perpetrator feels less personally responsible for what is written online. Bystanders, who are also anonymous, might feel less social pressure to intervene, particularly if they encounter cyberbullying in a chat room or in a similar context. Moreover, hateful comments online can be broadcast around the world. Instead of a few people overhearing the abuse, now hundreds or thousands might. In addition, because 90 percent of youth receive their email at home, a cyberbully has in effect reached his or her tentacles into a target’s home. Now there is nowhere the target can go and not feel at risk for bullying.

Like many types of harassment, cyberbullying is usually not reported. Some teens may not connect cyberbullying with school, or they may fear their Internet and cellphone use will be restricted. Most schools have anti-harassment policies and provisions for addressing this form of student abuse. Here are a few suggestions for addressing cyberbullies.



Things to Think About

- Include cyberbullying in your general discussions with students, staff, and parents about bullying prevention
- Include protocols for reporting and addressing cyberbullying and create anti-harassment policies.
- Recommend that all emails and electronic communications of harassment be saved.

- Educate bystanders about cyberbullying in chat room conversations and how best to intervene.
- Educate parents about how to block certain email addresses from instant messaging and chat and how to report complaints to the ISP of the bully.
- If the harassment continues, the target may need to change his or her email address.
- If threats are violent or sexual in nature, parents should contact the local police, and report it to CyberTipline: www.missingkids.com/cybertip or 1-800-843-5678.
- Go to www.netsmartz.org for extensive information and resources for adults concerned about the health and safety of young Internet users.

Hazing: The “Wrongs” of Passage

Forms of initiation that rely on humiliation and other types of abuse—referred to as hazing—are a form of bullying. While hazing is more prevalent in high schools, middle schools also report hazing. In Massachusetts, hazing is a crime.⁷² Student groups at secondary institutions must be given a copy of sections 17 to 19 of Chapter 269 of the General Laws, and those groups must give a copy of the law to members of, or applicants to, their group.

The general bullying prevention strategies discussed in this guide will help with hazing prevention. Experts like Professor Richard Signal of the County College of Morris, NJ also recommend a few other ways to specifically address hazing. See

<http://www.guidancechannel.com/default.aspx?index=1366&cat=1>



School Spotlight: North Brookfield

North Brookfield Middle–High School has as part of its hazing policy the complete text of G.L. c. 269, §§ 17-19.

(See www.nbschools.org/hs/handbook/stu_handbook8.html#code.)



Delve Deeper

Researchers have looked at hazing and how to stop it. For more information, visit www.alfred.edu/hs_hazing/docs/hazing_study.pdf



By the Numbers

- 48% of high school students report having been subjected to hazing, according to the Alfred University study available at www.alfred.edu/hs_hazing/docs/hazing_study.pdf.



Things to Think About

- Help meet students' need for initiation rites in healthy ways. Offer ceremonies, mentoring programs, and other ways to welcome young people into a new school, onto a team, or into a group or activity.
- Be sure to have adult supervision at all group activities.
- Help educate young people about what hazing is and why it is wrong: Just because it's a tradition doesn't mean it's right.
- Include hazing in your discussions of bullying and in any written student agreements.
- Ask faculty supervisors of all activities to discuss hazing with their groups and to be on the lookout for hazing behaviors.



Reflection

- What traditions do we have at our school to mark rites of passage?
- What positive traditions could we start?

Chapter 2: Bullying Prevention Practice

“Research indicates that creating a supportive school climate is the most important step in preventing harassment. A school can have policies and procedures, but these alone will not prevent harassment.”

—a statement endorsed by the **National School Boards Association**⁷³

Keys to Bullying Prevention

Research shows the best bullying prevention efforts are comprehensive in nature and address changing the culture of a school. Schools where bullying is less likely to happen and, when it does, more likely to be reported and corrected, are schools that promote caring, compassion, and a sense of responsibility among students and adults.

Changing a school’s culture is systemic in nature. Rather than trying to “fix” individual students, best practices in bullying prevention span the school community, involve all adults and students in the building, and reach beyond the school setting into the wider community. While individual interventions with targets, bystanders, and bullies are still necessary, this chapter focuses on prevention. (See Chapter 4 for more information about intervening in bullying.)

This chapter’s aim is to give administrators the tools and habits they need to change the culture of their school through:

- **Ingredients for Success:** including frameworks for what works both school-wide and at the individual level.
- **Tools at the Ready:** including tools and strategies to infuse into your practice.

Through reflection on your community and your needs, you can customize prevention efforts and then refine your practice as you learn from your efforts. By using a process that relies on reflection and dialogue, you will facilitate the individual commitments necessary to create and sustain progress on the difficult path to change.

Just as we might use a whisk to combine eggs, butter, and flour to make a cake, the tools presented here are to be used with the ingredients for success to create the school and classroom you and your staff envision.

Some schools may prefer to use an established bullying prevention program; there are many from which to choose. Whether or not you intend to employ an established bullying prevention program, these ingredients and tools will help you successfully implement any program and make it your own. Included in this chapter are examples of successful bullying prevention programs and suggestions for choosing a program. No single recipe for success exists, but the suggestions here will help you create a dynamic and ever-evolving community.

This chapter further looks at how bullying prevention efforts relate to character education and offers advice to tie together all your prevention efforts to optimize resources and effectiveness.

Tip: Start Early!

Coordinate your bullying prevention efforts across all schools in your district, beginning with the youngest students. As mentioned earlier, research shows that when a child reaches age 8, aggressive tendencies may already be firmly in place. The earlier you begin bullying prevention efforts the better.

Ingredients for School-wide Success

Essentials for Principals: Creating Emotional and Physical Security in Schools, a study from the National Association of Elementary School Principals (2002), co-authored by the Educational Research Service, outlines some of the ingredients common to successful anti-bullying and violence prevention programs. While many of the “ingredients” apply to all prevention efforts and good teaching, it is the combination of ingredients that helps lead to successful programming.

Ingredients for Success**Examples**

<p>Activities fostering school norms against violence, aggression, and bullying</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing clear policies and procedures addressing bullying and harassment ▪ Using consistent, fair, and non-punitive consequences for violations of policies ▪ Reaching agreement on group policies with students (both classroom and school-wide) ▪ Posting school-wide rules in prominent places and places where bullying is identified as most common. ▪ Using a suggestion box or other anonymous instrument for reporting incidents ▪ Positively reinforcing pro-social behavior (prominently posting photos or testimonials of positive stories)
<p>Comprehensive Approach (family, peer, media, and community)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing student public service announcements (PSAs) for local cable access that discourage bullying ▪ Encouraging participation of local politicians in school events ▪ Discussing how widely to spread bullying prevention efforts (e.g., at sporting events) ▪ Placing articles in news media promoting prevention efforts ▪ Developing community/school partnerships such as in-school DARE officers or community policing models

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partnering with parents to identify solutions; providing training and information to families about how to help targets and how to help bullies ▪ Including parents, family members, and community members on task forces ▪ Holding a whole community kick-off and follow-up events ▪ Sharing information about the problem and solutions that are working with key personnel in your community ▪ Giving concrete examples to community members about how they can help develop protective factors in children ▪ Aligning other prevention efforts with your bullying prevention plans (See “Integrating Prevention Efforts” on page 35 for more information)
<p>Physical and Administrative Changes to promote positive school climate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having school personnel meet buses every day ▪ Changing the layout of your schoolyard to increase supervision by adults ▪ Increasing lunch room supervision ▪ Improving how halls are monitored or staggering class times to reduce congestion ▪ Improving lighting in dark areas of the school ▪ Hiring or designating an administrator to head up the bullying prevention efforts ▪ Clarifying discipline code related to bullying/harassment ▪ Creating positive school-wide rituals and rites of passage ▪ Focusing on community building across students and staff
<p>A minimum of 10–20 classroom sessions during first year; and 5–10 booster sessions in 2 succeeding years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Using an established research-based bullying prevention curriculum ▪ Aligning bullying prevention curricula to school standards ▪ Infusing skill lesson topics into standard subject areas such as literature, government, and history ▪ Sustaining efforts beginning in early grades and throughout adolescence

<p>Skills Training based on sound theoretical underpinnings such as Social Learning Theory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training of teachers, families, and all school personnel ▪ Sustaining technical support of faculty, staff, and families through coaching, peer mentoring, and other intensive and ongoing relationships ▪ Training students in anger management, conflict resolution, perspective taking, active listening, “T”-messages, hate crimes, prejudice, racism, sexual harassment, and the role of bystanders
<p>Interactive Pro-social Teaching</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employing group work, cooperative learning, discussions, and role plays for modeling of pro-social skills
<p>Developmentally Tailored</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being sensitive to risks and opportunities of adolescence
<p>Culturally Sensitive Material</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having sensitivity to different cultures and needs of families when planning events and home/school partnerships ▪ Using curricula that look at issues of institutionalized oppression and “isms,” and that encourages appreciation of differences ▪ Employing inclusive classroom practice (e.g., giving a voice to all students; using pedagogy that appeals to different cultures, learning styles, and intelligences) ▪ Training teachers to adapt curricula to their population

What is Social Learning Theory?

According to social learning theory, understanding behavior requires consideration of both the individual (his or her life history of learning and experiences) and their environment (the stimuli the person is responding to). Social learning theory and associated research hold that if one changes the way a person thinks, or changes the environment s/he is responding to, behavior will change.⁷⁴



Reflection

Communities may arise whether intended or not. The challenge is to intentionally create the kind of community that promotes safe and healthy values. Reflect with your staff about the core values that inform their vision of education:

- What do they feel are the most important things for students to learn during their time at school?

- What skills, understanding, and behaviors would they like the young people in your school to have?
- How these values might be reflected in your “common-unity”?

For example, if one school community’s value is “respect for others,” what rules or expectations might all participants agree to uphold? Would teasing be tolerated? How would you define teasing? How might you incorporate these expectations into your school’s daily routine?

Tip

Have students identify the core values of your school using their own words. Their thoughts can later become the basis for fashioning group agreements about what constitutes “acceptable behavior.”

More Ingredients for Success: Developing Student Assets

“Destructive behaviors develop in part from a complex web of familial, economic, and cultural circumstances. These factors are part of the fabric of life and difficult to attack. Yet strategies that help children develop the resilience to cope adaptively with modern-day stresses can be effective, and it is there schools need to focus their efforts.”

— **Collaborative for the Advancement of Social and Emotional Learning**⁷⁵

What are the building blocks for developing caring and responsible young people? Research shows that even populations at-risk for violence and other behavior or health problems can be greatly helped by enhancing protective factors. The Search Institute, at www.search-institute.org, has outlined 40 research-based assets as playing a potential role in healthy youth development. Both internal and external assets have been identified and indicate that all levels of relationships - with peers, family, school, and the wider community - are significant in the positive development of young people.

EXTERNAL ASSETS: Support

- **Family support:** A young person’s family life provides high levels of love and support.
- **Positive family communication:** A young person and his or her parent(s) communicate positively, and the young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).
- **Other adult relationships:** A young person receives support from three or more non-parent adults.
- **Caring neighborhood:** A young person experiences caring neighbors.
- **Caring school climate:** School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
- **Parental involvement in schooling:** Parent(s) are actively involved in helping a young person succeed in school.

EXTERNAL ASSETS: Empowerment

- **Community values youth:** A young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
- **Youth as resources:** A young person is given useful roles in the community.
- **Service to others:** A young person serves in the community 1 hour or more per week.
- **Safety:** A young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.

EXTERNAL ASSETS: Boundaries and Expectations

- **Family boundaries:** Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors a young person's whereabouts.
- **School boundaries:** School provides clear rules and consequences and monitors students' whereabouts.
- **Neighborhood boundaries:** Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
- **Adult role models:** Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
- **Positive peer influence:** A young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
- **High expectations:** Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do their best.

EXTERNAL ASSETS: Constructive Use of Time

- **Creative activities:** A young person spends 3 or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
- **Youth programs:** A young person spends 3 or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.
- **Religious community:** A young person spends 1 hour or more per week in activities in a religious institution.
- **Time at home:** A young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

INTERNAL ASSETS: Commitment to Learning

- **Achievement motivation:** A young person is motivated to do well in school.
- **School engagement:** A young person is actively engaged in learning.
- **Homework:** A young person reports doing at least 1 hour of homework every school day.
- **Bonding to school:** A young person cares about her or his school.
- **Reading for pleasure:** A young person reads for pleasure 3 or more hours per week.

INTERNAL ASSETS: Positive Values

- **Caring:** A young person places high value on helping other people.
- **Equality and social justice:** A young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
- **Integrity:** A young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
- **Honesty:** A young person tells the truth, even when it is not easy.
- **Responsibility:** A young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
- **Restraint:** A young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

INTERNAL ASSETS: Social Competencies

- **Planning and decision making:** A young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
- **Interpersonal competence:** A young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
- **Cultural competence:** A young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups.
- **Resistance skills:** A young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
- **Peaceful conflict resolution:** A young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

INTERNAL ASSETS: Positive Identity

- **Personal power:** A young person feels s/he has control over "things that happen to me."
- **Self-esteem:** A young person reports having a high self-esteem.
- **Sense of purpose:** A young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
- **Positive view of personal future:** **A young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.**

Supporting Assets through School Practice

With your faculty and staff, brainstorm some of the ways you might improve your school's policies or practices to support the development of the listed external and internal assets. Consider each asset individually or assign types of assets to a task force to create recommendations.

Developing Youth Assets at School

Asset Category	Asset Name	School Policy/Practice to Support Asset

It Takes a Village: Widening the Circle

Central to the developmental assets is the notion that the whole community has a stake in a child’s upbringing. The influence of adults in all aspects of a young person’s life is critical. It’s important to think about ways to involve all key members of your community who have the power to influence young people. This outreach might include everyone from members of faith-based communities, to public officials creating youth services programming, to neighbors or community members a young person regularly sees—such as a local store owner, a librarian, a police officer, or a crossing guard.



Reflection

Brainstorm with your staff and students to identify key people in your community who have influence in your students’ lives. Then strategize ways to reach those individuals with concrete suggestions about how they can make a contribution to excellence in the education and healthy development of your community’s youth.

Developing Student Assets in the Community

Key Community Members	How to Reach Them

Key Messages to Share	Action Plan

Tools at the Ready: Creating a Caring School Community

Community is the glue that holds your school together. By being part of a community, young people learn how to treat one another and about their rights and responsibilities.

Eric Schaps' article "Creating a School Community" reported that students in schools with a strong sense of community derive multiple benefits, including learning to be:

- More academically motivated
- More likely to act ethically
- Better in emotional and social competencies
- Less likely to engage in problem behaviors, including violence
- More pro-social⁷⁶

The article further states that schools that foster a sense of connection and belonging assure emotional and physical safety, nurture students' sense of autonomy and competence, and fulfill important psychological needs in young people—needs that underlie young people's motivations. When these important needs are met, young people become increasingly committed to the school's norms, values, and goals.⁷⁷



Things to Think About

- What is the "common-unity" of your school?
- How do you want young people to treat one another?
- What will they value?
- How will those values get expressed through their actions?
- How do you create the type of community you want in your school?



Reflection

The following assessment is from the Developmental Studies Center (www.devstu.org), an organization that stresses the development of community in schools.

Ask students to agree or disagree with such statements as:

- My class is like a family.
- Students in my class help one another learn.
- I believe I can talk to the teachers in this school about things that are bothering me.
- Students in my class can get a rule changed if they think that it is unfair.

Further Reflection

The above exercise can be adapted for use with faculty and other school personnel to get a gauge on how well you are doing with building a sense of community among staff. **Do they agree or disagree with such statements as:**

- The staff and faculty at my school are like a family.
- My colleagues help one another learn
- My colleagues are supportive of one another.
- I believe I can talk to the staff in this school about things that are bothering me.
- I believe I can talk to the administration in this school about things that are bothering me.
- I have meaningful input into the rules and policies of this school.

Group Agreements for Behavior

One way to promote a positive school community is to establish patterns of behavior that students can engage in and rely on.

A useful framework centers on “agreements” your staff and students together develop to set expectations for behavior. Many bullying prevention programs include a pledge against bullying behaviors or a pledge to commit to inclusive and caring behaviors. The pledge or code would then be given to students and parents. It can be very effective to create your own pledge or code with students. This process can communicate to young people that school is their community, and that to function effectively within it, they must take responsibility for creating the type of community they want.

By involving students in crafting group agreements for behavior, students will be more invested in them. They are motivated not just by a set of external rules, but by their own commitment to a vision of how they want their community to be. Students agree to participate in their community because they understand that it benefits them and that certain rights and benefits come with responsibilities.

Of course students should not be left to define communal norms of conduct by themselves, and group agreements for behavior cannot replace student codes of conduct. The leadership of teachers and administrators is essential. There are excellent activities to structure development of such agreements in many curricula. (See, *e.g.*, the “Caring Being” activity which is included in Operation Respect’s *Don’t Laugh at Me* program referenced on page 66 for an example.) Generally, the process entails the following components:

- Dialogue with students about what rights every student has (e.g., to feel safe, to learn, to participate in school life).
- Dialogue with students about what behaviors threaten those rights or that students simply do not want in their community.
- Dialogue with students about what behaviors support those rights (e.g., what helps one to feel safe) or that students desire for their community.
- Dialogue and a group process to construct agreements from this brainstormed list of behaviors.
- Action where students signify their commitment to the agreements (by signing agreements or some other active way of saying “I agree to live by this”).
- Dialogue about consequences for not adhering to the agreement (what should happen when someone makes a mistake and acts outside of the agreement).

- Ongoing dialogue and process for updating and amending the agreements (regular consideration of how things are going and new ideas, through group meetings).
- Creative ways to post or remind students of the agreements (e.g., catchy slogans posted around the school; identify with students places where the rules most need to be visible.)

The process is not democratic, but should be consensual; that is, the majority does not rule, but all should agree to the outcome. The art of the facilitative process is moving the group toward consensus. To help achieve this goal, you might ask, “Can everyone agree with this?” rather than, “Does everyone agree with this?” It also helps to manage the process so everyone has input.

It’s also important to help students be specific and concrete about what they mean. A group might say that a behavior they want from others is respect, but what does respect involve? What behaviors communicate respect (or a lack of respect)?

This process can be done at the classroom level or school-wide. If you go school-wide, you might start by having students work in small groups, posting their ideas on poster paper around the room so everyone can see all the ideas being generated. In going over suggestions, look for common themes; use those themes to derive the specific agreements in your school-wide pledge. Post your school’s student agreements in places where bullying has been identified as most rampant, such as on buses, in bathrooms, and in hallways. If you cannot post on buses, think about other ways you can communicate to young people that you will not tolerate bullying on school buses.

Your Role as Facilitator

- Help move students toward consensus
- Help students define terms and be concrete and specific
- Include your own needs (with explanation)
- Be sure that everyone has a voice
- Communicate your respect for student’s ideas
- Compliment young people’s thinking



School Spotlight: Gloucester

One school in Gloucester, MA, has an adult greet every bus each morning to find out if there were any incidents needing follow-up. This approach has proven extremely effective in helping to reduce bullying on the bus.

Beyond the reach of formal policies directly regulating bullying and harassment, behavior management practices can help create social norms and communicate important values to young people. With effective anti-bullying strategies students are influenced away from hurtful conduct the first time it occurs. The following questions can guide your work with young people and staff to develop policies:



Things to Think About

- What behaviors do you want to encourage?
- What behaviors do you want to discourage?
- Is there frequent disruptive behavior at your school? What types of behaviors are most frequent?
- When do problems most often occur? Are there any patterns?
- In what ways might you reinforce young people's/peers positive behaviors?
- What types of limits need to be set to create an environment where your school's values are able to flourish?
- In what ways could behavior be remedied by a revision of your school's structure, extracurricular offerings, or schedule? *Note:* Behavior problems often disappear when young people are kept involved and active.
- What types of discipline methods does your school support? What types of discipline need to be avoided? Why?
- In what ways can adults encourage young people to solve problems for themselves (i.e., peer leadership, bystander responsibility)?
- What are the best ways to empower young people to take initiative to improve the school climate?
- How can you create an environment that helps facilitate young people solving problems for themselves?
- How are agreed rules of conduct created? How can students participate? Staff?
- How will you train staff to skillfully deal with the guidance, discipline, and behavior management needs of young people?

(See “Constructive Disciplining” on page 76 in Chapter 3 for more information.)

Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policies

In addition to group agreements about behavior, create and communicate policies that specifically prevent bullying and harassment and address civil rights concerns; then share the policies with key stakeholders. Such policies are typically created at the district level. They are the more formal version of the group agreements you make with students and they must address any relevant legal factors, including definitions and formal complaint procedures.

Maintain Policies That Are Effective

At a minimum, a school's governing authority should adopt and disseminate written policies that:

- Set forth the school's commitment to protect students from harassment, bullying, and violence and to maintain a non-hostile environment
- Identify the types of harassment prohibited by the policy and give examples
- Require staff to report harassment they see or learn about

- Explain how to report harassment and to whom to report it
- Describe the various steps the school will take to respond to reported incidents
- Include formal complaint procedures
- Protect those who report harassment, or who participate in related proceedings, from retaliation
- Ensure that all members of the school community are aware of their rights and responsibilities

Student codes of conduct and personnel policies should also be examined to ensure they contain rules of behavior, offense categories, and disciplinary procedures to address violations of the district's anti-harassment policies appropriately and in line with Massachusetts state law. (See pages 63-64 for legal requirements for school policies.)

Respond Appropriately

All staff and administrators should be taught how (accurately and sensitively) to tell students and parents reporting harassment about the relevant school policies and the options for stopping the harassment. In all instances, students and parents reporting harassment should be told how to file a formal complaint. Reporting procedures should be easy to use and well publicized. At least one employee should be formally designated and trained to receive complaints. The names and positions of the people designated should be made known to all members of the school community.

Require all staff to report to a designated school official who has authority to take corrective action with any harassment students or employees report. School personnel should not overlook incidents that, viewed alone, may not rise to the level of unlawful harassment. Consistent enforcement of disciplinary rules and meaningful interventions by staff to teach appropriate behavior tend to discourage more severe misconduct and help achieve an atmosphere of respect and courtesy. Consider all available resources to address instances of inappropriate behavior, including increased parental involvement.

Consider the nature of the conduct, and the age and identity of the perpetrator and the target of harassment, when responding to incidents of varying levels of severity, persistence, and pervasiveness. Top school officials or a designated coordinator may wish to screen all allegations of harassment to make sure an appropriate course of action is taken.

In responding to incidents of harassment, schools should pay close attention to the possibility that harassers, and their friends and associates, may try to retaliate against the people who reported the harassment. Retaliation or reprisals can include threats, bribes, unfair treatment or grades, and further harassment such as ridicule, taunting, bullying, and organized ostracism.

Take Complaints Seriously

A formal complaint process is necessary in addition to the various other mechanisms districts should use to address all incidents of harassment. The district should provide formal complaint procedures that ensure students and their parents have a means of obtaining corrective action if they prefer to file an official complaint or are dissatisfied with the district's response to alleged harassment.

Federal laws prohibiting sex and disability discrimination require prompt and equitable complaint procedures that incorporate due process standards. Such procedures are also recommended to address complaints of race-, national origin-, and sexual orientation-related discrimination, and other types of discrimination addressed by a district's policy. The term "grievance procedures" is also used to refer to formal complaint procedures; this Guide uses the two terms interchangeably.

Formal complaint procedures should include:

- Notice given to students, parents, and employees about the process, including how and where complaints can be filed
- An opportunity for a prompt, thorough, and impartial investigation, including the opportunity to present witnesses and other evidence
- Confidentiality for the complainant, the alleged harasser, and any witnesses, to the extent possible
- Notification to the complainant of the outcome of the complaint consistent with any legally required privacy restrictions
- Effective remedies when civil rights violations are found

Promote Tolerance and Mutual Respect for Differences

Consensus is rising among educators that the best way to protect students from harassment is to establish a secure environment that expects appropriate behavior and promotes tolerance, sensitivity to others' views, and cooperative interactions among students. Effective anti-harassment programs offer students curricula, teaching methods, and school activities that discourage stereotypes and respond to the concerns of students of different races and cultural backgrounds.

The district should regularly communicate its policies against harassment to all members of the school community—including students, staff, parents, and school visitors—and make it clear the policies will be enforced. The district should also take steps to ensure students are able to identify harassment, understand its causes and effects, and feel safe when reporting instances of harassment.

The school environment and activities should be regularly monitored to ensure harassment is not occurring. All instances of alleged or suspected harassment, whether or not substantiated, should be documented. Documentation should include all disciplinary incidents in which race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, or other subjects of district concern are a factor.

Successful anti-harassment efforts generally provide opportunities for students to overcome ignorance, mistrust, and biases. Age-appropriate prejudice reduction and sexual-respect concepts and examples can be included in social studies, literature, and other classes.

Examples of teaching strategies that can help to reduce prejudices include modeling unbiased behavior, improving students' critical thinking skills, helping students to develop empathy, and encouraging cooperative learning.

Student activities, such as civil rights teams that encourage students of different backgrounds and both sexes to work together on shared projects, can contribute to intergroup understanding. Many schools use trained student mediators to resolve personal conflicts that

could lead to harassment. In some schools, student volunteers are trained to discuss diversity issues with their peers or younger students in the classroom.

Policies should be developed to cover the following:

- Bullying
- Unlawful harassment (harassment based on race, color, national origin, ethnicity, sex, disability, sexual orientation, and religion) (See “Legal Issues Related to Bullying” on page 62)
- Cyberbullying
- Hazing

Think about how you’d like to structure these policies. Many schools create separate policies for each, while others include everything under the umbrella of “harassment.” Whatever approach you take, it’s helpful to avoid confusion by using the same grievance procedure for all policies.



Things to Think About

- What behaviors are you committing to eliminate?
- What are the legal requirements for the policy?
- What definitions and examples of behaviors can you offer?
- What will be your standards for determining whether or not the behavior is bullying or harassment?
- What are your specific procedures for reporting and addressing complaints?
- What are the protocols for staff to follow if they witness an incident?
- What are the actions school officials will take when they learn of an incident?
- What are the options for responding to incidents of varying severity, persistence, and pervasiveness for both perpetrators and targets?
- What effect will the age of the parties have? What effect will the context of the behavior have?
- How can you ensure the safety of people making reports?
- How can you ensure all members of your school community are aware of their rights and responsibilities?
- When does conduct need to be reported to law enforcement?
- Who on staff will be responsible for compliance?
- How can you support these policies with staff training?
- How will you encourage the involvement of parents?
- What ways can you team with outside agencies to implement your policy?
- What resources are available to support your policy?
- What are the free speech (i.e., First Amendment) implications of your policy?

- What other policies are affected by anti-bullying rules? (e.g., transportation policies, discipline codes, acceptable use of the Internet)?
- How will you handle staff violations of the policy?

Just as important as creating policies is communicating the expectations set for everyone in the school community. Many schools have found staff sometimes associate policies with only the most extreme cases. Staff training is essential, especially in how to identify incidents of harassment and when to report them.



Delve Deeper

For a complete discussion of how to create an anti-harassment program and address hate crimes see the web site of Massachusetts Attorney General Martha Coakley <http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=cagosubtopic&L=4&L0=Home&L1=Community+Safety&L2=Schools+%26+Youth&L3=Safe+Schools+Initiative&sid=Cago>.



Home Connections

Make parents aware of your policy. Encourage parents to let you know when their son or daughter has been targeted. Many parents feel reporting an incident will adversely affect their children. They need reassurance that all incidents will be handled effectively. Work with your staff to ensure coordinated responses to bullying, and let parents know the entire school is working toward a community where their children can be safe and thrive.

A Clear System of Consequences

Mistakes are part of growing and learning, but young people need to receive the guidance necessary to improve their skills and understanding so they can learn from experience. Your policies, behavior codes, and system of consequences can be constructed in a way that supports what you are trying to teach young people. Try to create consequences that teach something positive; a prescribed consequence of a young person engaging in name-calling, for example, might be that she must reflect on her actions through a worksheet, plan for a way to make amends to the person s/he hurt, and then recommit to the agreements s/he violated. Another way is to require a young person who puts damaging graffiti on a wall to remove it and publicly apologize for his impact on the community and target.

As discussed in “Group Agreements” it can be helpful to involve students in constructing consequences for breaches of group agreements that do not involve a threat to a student’s physical safety.

Research from the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program notes that a clear system of consequences that communicates firm limits about unacceptable behaviors is fundamental to your bullying prevention efforts.⁷⁸ What will be your system of consequences for violation of behavior codes and agreements? You can develop a customized system through discussions with staff, students, and families. Consequences should reflect the following considerations:



Things to Think About When Setting Consequences

- The number of infractions
- The degree or severity of the infraction (e.g., name-calling vs. physical threats)
- Whether or not the target’s physical safety was compromised
- Whether or not the civil rights of the target have been violated (see “Is it a Hate Crime” on page 20 in Chapter 1 for more information)
- Whether or not the action is harassment (based on race, color, national origin, ethnicity, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or religion)
- The values your consequences communicate
- What your consequences teach
- How simple your consequences are to understand and to implement
- How consistent your consequences are with other school policies
- When to involve parents
- What documentation is necessary (both as required by law and as helpful to your bullying prevention practice)



Delve Deeper

In looking at high-profile school shootings the U.S. Secret Service found that 70 percent of the attackers felt “bullied, persecuted, or injured by others prior to that attack.” Because many of these attackers did not exhibit threatening behaviors prior to the attack, prevention is key. For more information about preventing the most extreme forms of school violence, see *The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States* (2002) online at www.secretservice.gov/ntac/ssi_final_report.pdf and *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates* (2002) www.secretservice.gov/ntac/ssi_guide.pdf.

Communicate Your Policies to Stakeholders

Many schools ask students, and their parents or guardians, to agree to the system of consequences by signing off on them. This is a good way to get buy-in and support from families and communicate that your school is taking the issue very seriously.



School Spotlight: Lowell

“I had to tell teachers that there are different styles of discipline in this world. And there’s a clear cut difference between discipline and punishment. And if they were focusing all their energies on external discipline, perhaps they were working very hard, but at the wrong thing.” —**Paul Hutton, Principal, James P. Sullivan School, Lowell, MA**⁷⁹

The Role of Rituals

The value of rituals can be underestimated. While young children's lives are often structured by rituals, many of the rituals that originally marked their days (e.g., naps, circle time, snacks) have been abandoned by the time they reach adolescence. Yet adolescents and the adults who work with them also need rituals.

Rituals help young people anticipate and prepare for what is coming next. Rituals create moments where everyone is united in a shared experience. They communicate a group's values and preserve a school's history. No one should be excluded from a ritual. In fact, knowing a community's rituals is one way young people can feel included. The best rituals reinforce the values the school holds.

Rituals can be very useful in creating a smooth transition between events, such as classes, arrival at school on bus and coming into the building, and the end of lunch and return to class. These are often times when students are most at risk for bullying. Providing structure during such times helps to link everyone together and establish common understandings of behavior.

A ritual doesn't need to be formal. Any activity that is carried out in a prescribed or scripted way can be a ritual. It can be as simple as a "check-in" at the beginning of every class where students offer one word that reflects how they are feeling that day. Daily rituals can help build a sense of community and focus the group.

Rituals are particularly important for marking major events, such as the end of a school year, an important anniversary, or a celebration of accomplishments. One school uses the ritual of floating a toy boat down a river with messages of students' hopes and aspirations for the coming year as a way to mark the end of the school year. Another school marks the close of a year with an appreciation ritual, where every student is given a small token that signifies something positive about his or her growth that year. Include students and staff in designing your school's rituals. Develop a few rituals that communicate your school's values and mission particularly well.



School Spotlight: Lowell

The James F. Sullivan Middle School in Lowell, MA, recites its school pledge every morning after the Pledge of Allegiance. The pledge was introduced shortly after a teacher died due to injuries sustained while breaking up a student fight on school grounds.

James F. Sullivan Middle School Pledge

I shall use my hands for peace,
not pain.

I shall use my heart for love,
not hate.

I shall use my voice for song,
not slurs.

I shall strive each day to grow and learn.

I shall live my life so all will gain.



Delve Deeper

For more information about the use of rituals in promoting a caring culture in schools, see Rachel Kessler’s *The Soul of Education* (ASCD, 2000), and the *Shaping School Culture Fieldbook* by Terrence Deal and Kent Peterson (Jossey-Bass, 2002). Or read about Kent Petterson’s work on positive school culture at www.nsd.org/library/publications/jsd/peterson233.cfm .

Ritual Planning Sheet

Value to Communicate	Transition or Event	Ritual

Positive Reinforcement and Role Modeling

Research from the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program shows the important role caring adults have in bullying prevention. Young people need adults who can act as authorities and positive role models, and who can reinforce positive behaviors.⁸⁰ Young people pick up cues about how to behave from those around them; yet adults’ efforts to control young people’s behaviors may model the very types of behaviors they are trying to eliminate, such as shaming, ridicule, put-downs—all of us who work in schools have had days when our knee jerk response to a problem falls short of the expectations we have for young people. But such shaming and similar measures are not only ineffective, they also tend to escalate undesirable behaviors.

Instead, adults should use positive, consistent, and firm guidance that both models and teaches the sought-after behaviors. Such an approach can drive your discipline and management policies. But holding up an example is most important in your daily interactions with students. Positive role modeling and reinforcement can trickle down through all aspects of classroom management and infuse the curriculum. Figures in politics, history, or literature are all fodder for rich discussion about the positive and/or negative values or behaviors they reflect.

One way some schools specifically provide positive reinforcement for sought-after behaviors are “halls of fame,” where regular postings acknowledge students’ acts of kindness toward one another. Or rewards can be more informal—a pat on the back and a well-timed

compliment can make a young person's day. It is important to be as descriptive as possible when giving praise—saying “nice job” means less than if you say “I was really impressed by the way you handled that problem with your friend.” Young people need to know what specifically they did right.

While it is helpful to reward individual efforts, it can also be highly effective to reward the group for its collective actions. One school uses popcorn parties to celebrate a good week when a class exhibited notably positive behavior. This sort of practice can help create a system of positive peer pressure toward good behavior.

Peer Feedback on Role Modeling and Reinforcement

Much of what we model and reinforce is automatic, so it can be helpful to have teachers peer evaluate. Give teachers time to reflect on what they want to model in their interactions and what that means to their everyday practice. Faculty peer groups can collectively identify the values and behaviors they want to encourage in their students and set goals. Then, using the Peer Feedback Form, each teacher can be observed by a peer(s) and receive feedback about how well s/he is doing at meeting goals. After the observation, faculty can meet to discuss what the peer observer saw and formulate new goals for the next round. Encourage constructive feedback rather than negative critiques. Point out what they are doing well, along with aspects they could work on.

Peer Feedback Form: Positive Modeling and Reinforcement

Date: _____ **Peer Advisor:** _____

Goals I Have

Times I Met My Goal

Times I Didn't

Date of Peer Meeting:

New Goals:

Next check-in (date):

Encourage Supportive and Sincere Relationships

The heart of being positive role models is building the relationship between students and teachers. Students can sense when teachers or school personnel truly care about them. Educators offer valuable support when they call attention to how a student is doing on a given day, give extra encouragement, or strive to be fair. The teachers who are seen as positive role models by young people are not usually those who are most lenient with students, but those who are always fair and caring. They communicate their respect for young people and for themselves with their high expectations, their belief in young people's goodness, their interest in young people's thoughts and opinions, and their encouragement of youth to give their best efforts. They help create a safe environment for learning, are honest, and are receptive to feedback. While these skills can be reinforced and modeled through training, teachers should also be given time for self-reflection.

Such qualities can be reinforced at your school by making caring and support of young people a criterion in teacher evaluations. And you can create safe systems for students to give feedback to teachers about how they are doing. Administrators can also model caring and concern in interactions with staff, as the school atmosphere is often set by them.

Give Students a Voice in the School

In addition to having students contribute to developing school or classroom agreements, it is important to involve students in different yet meaningful ways of improving school life.

Adolescents are often ready to assume ownership and leadership and can have insightful ideas and problem-solving abilities. In order to receive respect, you must give it. You communicate your respect for young people by including them in important decisions that affect them. And such involvement helps them to develop their core competencies and leads to a growing sense of autonomy, efficacy, and investment in the outcome. You will also be teaching young people important skills that can be applied in academics and later in life. One might say the young people in any school are the true experts on bullying and should be consulted as such.



School Spotlight: Springfield

When asked what the number one thing they would do to reduce bullying and teasing in their public school in Springfield, MA, a group of middle school students said that they would institute a policy of wearing school uniforms.

Class Meetings

One way to harness youth as a resource in your school is by holding class meetings. Class meetings are democracy in action, teaching important tools for civic engagement such as brainstorming, problem solving, listening to others, stating your case, and respecting different perspectives.

Class meetings can be held at short notice to deal with specific problems, but they should also be held at regular intervals to check in on how things are going; establish norms, and values, and group agreements; set goals; and plan activities.



Delve Deeper

Classroom teachers benefit from training on how to facilitate class meetings. The Developmental Studies Center www.devstu.org has some excellent resources about holding class meetings.

Cultivate Peer Leaders

Another way to involve youth meaningfully is to have student representation on task forces with an ongoing charge to address the issue of bullying. These task forces can be mixed groups of key stakeholders who are responsible for:

- Understanding the scope of the bullying problem at your school
- Planning prevention efforts
- Networking with families and the wider community
- Getting the word out about your efforts

Other worthwhile practices include using youth as peer mentors; options include pairing a less popular kid with a more popular one, pairing a special needs student with a mainstream peer, and pairing students across grades to provide important guidance and support.

Peer mediation programs can also be highly effective in improving school climate.⁸¹ However, peer mediation is **not** an appropriate way to deal with bullying incidents where there is a clear pattern of abuse and power imbalance. Intervention from adults is necessary in such instances. It is usually best to avoid direct confrontation between the bully and target. Still, peer mediation can be an effective prevention strategy.



School Spotlight: Holyoke

“We recommend you engage students actively in creating and sponsoring violence prevention school-wide activities, doing community service, and nurturing peer leaders.”— **Peck Middle School**, Holyoke, MA



By the Numbers

Research from the National Resource Center for Safe Schools showed the incidence of aggression and bullying is reduced in mixed-aged groupings.⁸²

Break the Code of Silence

Maintaining open lines of communication with students about bullying is critical in prevention efforts. Students can also be given a way to communicate anonymously with adults about bullying. Some programs include the use of a locked suggestion box for students to report incidents of bullying or give ideas for improving school safety. Once students feel confident that adults will intervene effectively on their behalf, they will be more eager to share what is really happening.

Make it a Habit

Don't work from a rote list of ways to involve students; instead cultivate a practice of involving them. Once seeking student input becomes a habit of mind, the possibilities for engaging young people in meaningful ways are endless.

Teach Pro-social Skills

A successful bullying prevention effort should include a curricular component that teaches pro-social skills and awareness.

Some of the skills that students need to learn and have modeled include:

- Communication skills (I-messages, active listening, self-assertion)
- Diversity education (appreciation for differences, sensitization to prejudice and discrimination)
- Emotional intelligence (anger management, empathy, perspective taking, self-talk)
- Problem-solving skills (win-win conflict resolution, conflict de-escalation)
- Active participation (social responsibility, civic engagement, decision making, cooperation)

Young people also need specific knowledge, skills, and awareness related to bullying:

- What bullying is and how it affects people
- What myths are associated with bullying
- How to be an ally to a target
- How to respond when you are targeted
- How forms of institutionalized discrimination are a factor

Along with direct skill instruction, many of these ideas lend themselves well to infusion into standard curriculum. Social studies and literature are two subjects with potential relevance to bullying, cultural issues that encourage bullying, and institutionalized discrimination. (See Chapter 4 for more information about skill instruction and infusion.)

A Word about Self-Esteem...

Experience shows that the best way to build young people's self-esteem is through helping them boost their achievements. Empty praise or transparent attempts to build self-esteem often have minimal effect. Instead, concentrate on teaching students skills that empower them to succeed in difficult situations. Students need ample opportunities to practice these skills in settings where it is safe to make mistakes and to learn from those mistakes.

Use Cooperative Learning Techniques

“Cooperative learning” is a common term in current educational jargon. It is a teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to enhance their understanding of a subject. Each team is responsible for learning what is taught and for helping teammates learn. Students work together on an assignment until all team members understand and complete it.⁸³

Besides its effectiveness in developing a student’s academic potential, cooperative learning builds community and character. Cooperative learning requires students to work collaboratively with others they might not normally be friends with; it can serve as a way to distribute power more evenly in a group; it can help young people to appreciate differences; and it can develop skills such as listening, cooperation, and group problem solving.

While you may already utilize cooperative learning strategies, it’s worthwhile to spend some time reflecting on the techniques that best contribute to bullying prevention. Some common cooperative learning strategies include learning teams, support groups, jigsaw learning, whole and small group projects, and team testing.

Cooperative learning is most successful when:

- Students are taught the skills necessary to perform cooperatively (e.g., active listening, problem solving, conflict resolution, appreciation for differences, perspective taking, I-messages)
- Regular self-evaluation is built into activities (Ask: How did we do? What went well? What went wrong? What can we do differently next time?)
- Student assessment addresses how well they cooperate and contribute to the group
- Group roles require interdependence
- Group members are given equal power and opportunity to contribute.

Cooperative Learning Strategy	Skill/Value/Awareness Taught

Apply Action Research

An intentional process of self-reflection called action research can be used to guide your prevention efforts. By using action research you:

- Ensure that you will learn from what has worked and what has not
- Continually refine and improve your efforts

Every member of your community can become a partner in this sort of research—from students, to teachers, to administrators, to parents. Action research helps you get buy-in from key constituents who are involved, and it helps sustain your efforts over the long term.

Specific Bullying Buster Practices

In addition to your community-building efforts, which will have many additional positive benefits, here are a few practices that are common among successful bullying prevention efforts.⁸⁴ Because bullying is about power, it is important to address the power imbalance between a bully and his or her target. One way to shift the power away from the bully is to empower bystanders, who are usually the silent majority, to help support a target.



School Spotlight: Northfield

“It’s critical that students have an awareness that they’re not alone and where specifically to get help.” — **Pioneer Valley Regional School**, Northfield, MA

Empower bystanders to:

- Include students who are excluded
- Not join in when a student is being targeted
- Join together with several students to stand up for the target or report incidents to adults

Include in your prevention plan the following:

- Training for bystanders on how to be an ally to a target
- Support for targets (e.g., self-empowerment, assertiveness skills, and social skills)
- One-on-one counseling for bullies and targets, as needed
- Re-channeling bullies’ need for power into more positive directions (e.g., leadership skills training, cross-age peer mentoring)
- Effective involvement and training of parents
- Breaking the code of silence to encourage reporting to both school staff and parents
- Structural changes that reduce the risk of bullying (e.g., increased supervision in places where students are vulnerable, policies such as buddy pairing for bathroom trips)
- Ways to publicize your efforts
- Ways to involve your community



Home Connections

The possibilities for including parents do not have to be limited to your bullying prevention program. Consider creating a parent resource center, developing policies that include parents at every step, using parents as aides, and sustaining their involvement. When parents feel they are part of the school, they are more likely to support your day-to-day efforts.

The Importance of Training

Just as students need new skills and awareness to deal with bullying, so do staff and students' families. Successful bullying prevention programs stress the importance of including all key school staff in training (e.g., teachers, counselors, safety officers, cafeteria workers, custodians, and bus drivers). Families of your students can be reached through a separate training or can be integrated into a portion of your staff training.

Tip: Create Cross-Age Peer Partnerships

Bullying appears to occur less frequently in mixed-aged settings, as opposed to same-age groupings. Cross-age peer mentoring is one way to help prevent bullying. Once you've identified a target population that is vulnerable to bullying in your school, you can design an effective strategy to support that group. If 6th graders are afraid of 8th graders (or avoid the 8th graders' bathroom or floor), you may find that creating 8th grade mentors for 6th graders is an effective bullying preventative strategy.

Some key topics to address in training are:

- Recognizing bullying when you see it (how to differentiate between ordinary conflict and bullying)
- Myths about bullying
- Knowing the facts about how bullying (left uncorrected) affects targets, bystanders, and bullies
- How to support targets
- How to help bystanders become allies
- How to re-channel bullies' need for power into more positive directions
- How to develop pro-social skills
- Community-building techniques
- Discipline and guidance techniques
- Policies and reporting procedures



Delve Deeper

The National Education Association (NEA) encourages bringing outside bullying prevention consultants into the school system to build up internal knowledge and capacity. The NEA can train your school staff and assist the district in developing a “Whole School Bullying Prevention/Intervention Program” at no cost. Many excellent sources for training assistance listed in this Guide’s resource section on page 66.



School Spotlight: Gloucester

A school in Gloucester, MA, stressed the importance of including bus drivers and cafeteria workers in prevention efforts. They found it was the bus drivers and cafeteria workers who really knew about patterns of abuse between students.

What Does Character Have to Do with It?

“Emotions are often the horse; (while) values and virtues (are) the rider trying to hang on.”

—Rick Weissbourd⁸⁵

Most bullying prevention efforts stress what we need to teach students, changes we need to make to our systems, and the policies we need in place. Yet some very compelling human needs, values, and feelings simmer beneath the surface of these efforts.

Fulfilling a need such as being accepted by peers can override an adolescent’s values—even an expressed value such as “bullying is wrong.” A young person may choose a behavior that allows her or him to fit in, even if it is dissonant with an internal value. Strong feelings likewise have an effect; when flooded with anger or shame, even a young person with a belief in pacifism can turn to violence to solve a problem. What tends to help young people (and adults) when faced with overwhelming emotions is the opportunity to examine their beliefs and biases in a non-threatening and caring environment.

Noticing the dissonance between one’s beliefs and one’s actions can ignite the flame that sustains a commitment to change. It is simply not enough to tell young people they should be caring or honest or not to bully. Young people need the opportunity to:

- Connect their actions with their values
- Examine the unique gifts that they and others bring to a situation
- Feel safe admitting to mistakes they have made
- Examine their biases
- Be given the opportunity to try a different approach
- Be given positive ways to channel their needs for initiation and a sense of belonging

This observation holds true for targets, bystanders, bullies, and the adults in their lives. What supports bullying prevention—and has the by-product of building character—is the process of reflecting and questioning oneself. For motivations to be “good” they must arise internally, rather than just externally.



School Spotlight: Holbrook

“Bullying prevention is successful when you link it with a character education program and offer peer mediation, which are then integrated.”

— **South School**, Holbrook, MA

The Critical Role of Adults

“We will never greatly improve students’ moral development in schools without taking on the complex task of developing adults’ maturity and ethical capacities.”

— **Rick Weissbourd**⁸⁶

Apart from whatever adults model for young people, children are closely attuned to the adults in their lives and the treatment they receive from them. It is the quality of the relationships that most deeply influence young people’s behaviors. Character development expert Rick Weissbourd explains adults’ capacity “to appreciate students’ perspectives and to disentangle them from their own, their ability to admit and learn from moral error, their moral energy and idealism, their generosity, and their ability to help students develop moral thinking without shying away from their own moral authority.”⁸⁷

While most efforts to develop young people’s character focus solely on them, we often ignore the adults in the building at our peril. The goal should be to support the adults in recognizing a sense of their efficacy, not in becoming “values police.” Supporting teachers in dealing with stress and students’ behavioral problems is critical. Give them the opportunity to reflect on hopes and dreams related to their service and to mitigate the isolation that is often endemic to teaching. This kind of support will fortify your bullying prevention efforts.

Teachers who are disillusioned and stressed can be depressed—leading to behavior that is contrary to creating a community of caring. It is difficult for depressed teachers to maintain positive qualities, but these “are exactly the qualities—empathy, patience, persistence, consistency, idealism—that are crucial for teachers to shepherd students’ moral growth.”⁸⁸

Lessons from Character Education

Research into young people’s character development has implications for any pro-social program you develop, including one whose purpose is to prevent bullying.

- When faced with inequities and other social problems, young people’s moral action is tied to their sense of their own ability to effect a change in relation to that problem. Conversely, young people who believe they have little ability to make a difference in the world become unable to act.

- Young people need help developing the skills necessary to problem solve successfully (e.g., brainstorming, setting and evaluating goals, resolving conflicts in a group, appreciating differences, effectively communicating, and expressing feelings appropriately.)
- Young people's efforts to improve their environment are related to the degree to which they feel connected to one another and to the world as a whole.
- Young people are deeply affected by the actions of important role models such as parents and teachers.
- Finding sense and meaning in their world is an important component of young people's moral development.
- Young people naturally care about issues of fairness and the treatment of others. Character education is not instilling a list of values and behaviors in young people but rather a process of recognizing and encouraging key behaviors and values as they emerge.⁸⁹
- Strong emotions such as anger, shame, and disillusionment can undermine the sense of caring and the development of other important character traits.⁹⁰



Things to Think About

- Give young people an opportunity to successfully address problems in your school culture that are important to them. This means involving young people in both identifying problems and solutions in ways that are meaningful and supporting them to achieve success in meeting those goals.
- Teach young people and adults problem-solving skills.
- Foster a sense of community and connection between young people and the adults in your school.
- Allow young people opportunities and a safe environment to explore their own values and sense of purpose and meaning.
- Provide safe opportunities for teachers and school personnel to explore their own values and sense of purpose and meaning.
- Involve all the adults in your school community in revitalizing their commitment to the profession.
- Find ways to help empower adults in the school community to feel a sense of their own efficacy, manage stress, and stave off isolation. Encourage peer mentoring, sabbaticals, and offer help for teachers who might be suffering from depression.



Reflection

In a staff meeting, have groups of two teachers reflect on:

- What were your hopes and dreams about becoming a teacher?
- What do you think is most important thing to teach young people?

- How can you integrate these learning goals into the curriculum and school day?
- What are some obstacles you've encountered in teaching the above?

To process this activity you can have pairs hang up a poster board listing their learning goals and obstacles. After giving everyone an opportunity to review the lists, hold a group brainstorming session to identify ways to overcome these obstacles. Create an action plan from this session.

Tying It All Together: Integrating Prevention Efforts

Many schools have expressed their frustration with the “program du jour” approach. Prevention efforts are splintered at many sites because of the way politics and funding combine to create programs aimed at issues that one day are hot and the next day are not. Funding is planned for short intervals—2 or 3 years in many cases—a time scale inadequate to address the pressing issues they are designed to mitigate. Schools are then left wondering how to sustain their efforts once the money has run out. And teachers are pressed to meet competing demands for their already precious instructional time. Your bullying prevention efforts need not fit into this category. Your efforts can be sustained and integrated with other prevention efforts to maximize scarce resources.

The Collaborative for the Advancement of Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) advocates for an approach that ties together prevention efforts with a focus on nurturing protective factors in youth. Many problems for youth are caused by similar risk factors. CASEL's approach gets to the psychosocial roots of the problem by placing emphasis on nurturing young people's social and emotional learning.

By focusing your efforts on creating a caring school and developing other protective factors in youth, you will simultaneously help young people deal adaptively with the multiple stresses they may encounter: drugs, alcohol, sexual experimentation, violence, and prejudice. See www.casel.org for advice on how to put together fragmented prevention efforts into a comprehensive whole.



Delve Deeper

Thirty-nine guidelines for providing effective social and emotional learning are presented in the book by CASEL entitled *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators* (ASCD, 1997).

Legal Issues Related to Bullying: Massachusetts Laws

While all schools have a general legal and moral obligation to keep students safe, several specific legal issues deserve particular attention, because bullying frequently implicates civil and criminal law violations of students' civil rights. Harassment and hate crimes require an appropriate response that includes, in certain instances, contacting law enforcement. Bullying can also give its victims recourse to private civil litigation.

In general, civil rights violations occur in school when a student's or adult's behavior, or inappropriate language, creates a hostile school environment. Repeated bias-related harassment that creates a hostile environment unlawfully denies a student the "advantages and privileges" of attending school. G.L. c.76, § 5.

 **A hostile environment** exists whenever one individual experiences repeated harassment, threats, or intimidation that make a young person fear for his or her safety. A single incident, depending on its severity, may constitute illegal harassment.

Under Federal law Title IX, students are protected from harassment, including disparaging remarks, gestures, and threats that are related to the target's sex, race/ethnicity, religion, or disability status. Repeated language of a sexually graphic nature usually gives rise to unlawful sexual harassment and the remedies against it provided under federal law. Such harassment additionally may rise to the level of a hate crime.

A hate crime is a criminal offense committed against a person, property, or society that is motivated, in whole or in part, by an offender's bias against an individual's or a group's race, religion, ethnic/national origin, sex, age, disability or sexual orientation. Massachusetts has a Hate Crime Penalties Act and a battery of criminal and civil law protections for civil rights. Hate crimes resulting in victim injury can amount to double or triple felony violations. They also give rise to various civil law remedies. Note that hate crime definitions encompass not only violence against individuals or groups, but also crimes against property such as arson or vandalism. The Massachusetts Hate Crimes Reporting Act of 1990 calls for the reporting of all potential hate crimes to law enforcement, who in turn report incidence data to the Crime Reporting Unit of the State Police. G.L. c.22C, §32 *et seq.*

Applicable Laws

Following is a summary of key, potentially applicable laws.

Criminal Harassment: G.L. Chapter 265, Sec. 43(A)

Harassment is considered a crime if:

- Over a period of time the defendant knowingly engaged in a pattern of conduct or series of acts involving at least three incidents directed at the alleged victim.
- Those acts were a kind that would cause a reasonable person to suffer substantial emotional distress.
- Those acts did cause the alleged victim to become seriously alarmed (not just annoyed).
- The defendant did the harassing actions in a willful and malicious manner (an act is willful if it is done intentionally, not by mistake. An act is done maliciously if it is done out of cruelty, hostility, revenge, or other wrongful motive.)

Guarantee of Non-Discrimination: G.L. Chapter 76, § 5

Statutory guarantee of non-discrimination in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study in a public school **on account of** race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation

Civil Rights Criminal Statute: G.L. Chapter 265, § 37

Whoever, by force or threat of force **willfully** injures, intimidates, interferes with, oppresses, **or attempts** to injure, intimidate, or interfere with a person in the exercise of a right secured by constitution or statute stands subject to 10 years in state prison and a \$10,000 fine with bodily injury, or 1 year in a house of correction and a \$1,000 fine without injury.

Action by Attorney General for Civil Injunction: G.L. C.12, SEC. 11H

Whenever any person(s) interfere(s) with or attempt(s) to interfere with, **by threats, or intimidation, or coercion**, any other person(s) in the exercise of a right secured by constitution or statute, the Attorney General may apply to Superior Court for injunction to protect peaceable exercise or enjoyment of rights.

The Hate Crimes Penalties Act: G.L. C.265, SEC. 39

As applicable to violence against persons: Whoever commits an assault and/or battery with the intent to **intimidate a person because of race or ethnicity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability** stands subject to 5 years in a state prison and a \$10,000 fine with bodily injury **or** 2.5 years in a house of correction and a \$5,000 fine without injury.

Private Action for Injunction and Monetary Damages: G.L. C.12, SEC. 11I

Any person whose exercise or enjoyment of rights secured by constitution or statute has been interfered with, or attempted to be interfered with, by **threats, intimidation, or coercion** may apply to Superior Court for injunctive or other equitable relief, compensatory money damages, and award of attorneys' fees and costs.

Required School Policies: MGL Chapter 71: Section 37H

Policies relative to conduct of teachers or students; student handbooks:

Each school district's policies pertaining to the conduct of students shall include the following: disciplinary proceedings, including procedures assuring due process; standards and procedures for suspension and expulsion of students; procedures pertaining to discipline of students with special needs; standards and procedures to assure school building security and safety of students and school personnel; and the disciplinary measures to be taken in cases involving the possession or use of illegal substances or weapons, the use of force, vandalism, or violation of other student's civil rights. Codes of discipline, as well as procedures used to develop such codes shall be filed with the department of education for informational purposes only.

Cooperate with Law Enforcement

[This section is adapted from *Protecting Students Against Harassment and Hate Crimes: A Guide for Schools*, U.S. Departments of Justice and Education (1999).]

No school district or community is immune from the harm that can be done by bullying that amounts to criminal harassment or bias crime. Such crimes can happen even in schools with excellent reputations and can create or exacerbate tensions that contribute to community-wide conflicts and civil disturbances. At the same time, bias offenses committed outside of school may quickly affect the school climate and relationships among students. Schools also need to be aware of incidents in the community and become involved in preventing and addressing them.

School officials should contact law enforcement officials when civil rights crimes are committed or suspected on school property or in connection with off-site school activities. School officials should also contact law enforcement officials when they become aware of any criminal behavior that endangers the life or safety of students or other persons, whether or not the behavior occurs on school property or in school activities.

School officials should consider developing guidelines for referral of less serious incidents to appropriate authorities. Circumstances that may be considered in determining whether a referral is appropriate or necessary include the nature and seriousness of the conduct, whether a pattern of biased conduct is evident, and the risk that the conduct poses to the health, safety, or well-being of students, employees, and the public. For example, school officials should tell law enforcement officials about apparently less serious instances of harassment if these could lead to violent retaliation or serious confrontations outside of school.

Schools are encouraged to establish ongoing lines of communication with law enforcement agencies. In addition, schools with onsite security personnel should involve them in efforts to address and prevent criminal harassment and hate crimes.

Choosing a Program in Social and Emotional Learning

CASEL looked recently at programs that exhibited solid, quantifiable success in promoting social and emotional learning. Using CASEL's criteria, a program succeeds to the extent it:

- Is grounded in theory and research
- Teaches students to apply social and emotional learning skills and ethical values in daily life
- Builds connections between students and their schools
- Provides developmentally and culturally appropriate instruction
- Helps schools coordinate and unify programs
- Enhances school performance by addressing the affective and social dimensions of academic learning
- Involves families and communities as partners
- Establishes successful organizational supports and policies
- Provides high-quality staff development and support
- Incorporates continuous evaluation and improvement⁹¹



Delve Deeper

See *Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs* from CASEL at www.casel.org for a review of 80 multi-year comprehensive programs in social and emotional learning. Included is advice about how to put together fragmented prevention efforts into a comprehensive whole and checklists of questions relevant to any program you are considering.

Recommended Bullying Prevention Programs and Resources

- ✚ **Complete No-Bullying Program Curriculum**, a comprehensive school-wide anti-bullying prevention program based on the research of Daniel Olweus. Available at Hazelden Center City, Center City, MN 55012-0176, 1-800-328-9000 or through www.hazelden.org/OA_HTML/ibeCCtpItmDspRte.jsp?item=3824
- ✚ **Let's Get Real**, a powerful documentary and curriculum where kids speak up about bullying, available from Women's Educational Media at http://www.respectforall.org/lgr_teachingguide.htm
- ✚ **The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program**, a multilevel, multicomponent program designed to reduce and prevent bully/victim problems among students at school. School staff is largely responsible for introducing and implementing the program, and their efforts are directed toward improving peer relations and making the school a safe and pleasant environment. The program, developed by Dan Olweus, was identified by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (University of Colorado, Boulder) as "1 of 10 Blueprint Programs for Violence Prevention." Dr. Olweus is widely recognized as an international expert on bullying issues and the "father" of research on bullying. Available through www.clemson.edu/olweus
- ✚ **Open Circle Curriculum**, a classroom primary prevention program for elementary students. See <http://guide.helpingamericasyouth.gov/programdetail.cfm?id=370> for more information.
- ✚ **Operation Respect: Don't Laugh at Me**, founded by Peter Yarrow of the folk group Peter, Paul & Mary, the organization disseminates educational resources including the *Don't Laugh at Me* (DLAM) programs: one for grades 2 through 5, another for grades 6 through 8, and a third for summer camps and after-school programs. All the programs utilize inspiring music and video along with curriculum guides based on the well-tested, highly regarded conflict resolution curricula developed by the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR). Available through <http://www.dontlaugh.org/>

Online Resources

- # **The Anti-Bullying Network**, from the Moray House Institute of Education, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, at www.antibullying.net/index.html
- # **Bully Online**, from the UK National Workplace Bullying Advice Line at www.successunlimited.co.uk
- # **Bullying.com**, at www.bullying.com
- # **Bullying at School**, from the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE), the University of Glasgow, Glasgow, Scotland, at www.scre.ac.uk/bully
- # **Bullying in Schools and What to Do About It**, Ken Rigby, Adjunct Associate Professor of Social Psychology and an educational consultant based at the University of South Australia, at www.education.unisa.edu.au/bullying
- # **Bullying Prevention Resources**, from the International Bullying Prevention Association at www.stopbullyingworld.com/resources.htm
- # **Hardy Girls, Healthy Women/Girlfighting and Bully-Prevention Resources**, from a nonprofit aimed at empowering women and girls, at www.hardygirlshealthywomen.org/docs/GirlfightingResources.pdf
- # **Kidpower**, offering skills-building workshops to help young people cope with bullies, at www.kidpower.org/School-age.html
- # **Kids Against Bullying**, from the PACER Center, an agency based in Minneapolis, which serves the families of children and young adults living with disabilities, at www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org
- # **Kidscape**, a national charity in the United Kingdom., at www.kidscape.org.uk/info/aboutus.shtml
- # **KidsVisionHeart**, a nonprofit corporation based in Tucson, AZ, at www.kidsvisionheart.org/ENTER.htm
- # **National Mental Health Information Center/About Bullying**, from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, at www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/15plus/aboutbullying.asp
- # **National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, Bullying Resources**, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, at www.safeyouth.org/scripts/topics/bullying.asp
- # **Stop Bullying Now!** from the Stop Bullying Project, at www.stopbullyingnow.com

Community-Building Programs

- # **James Comer's School Development Program** at <http://info.med.yale.edu/comer/index.html>
- # **Eunice Shriver's Community of Caring Program** at www.communityofcaring.org

- ✚ The Northeast Foundation for Children’s Responsive Classroom at www.responsiveclassroom.org
- ✚ David Hawkins’s Seattle Social Development Project at <http://depts.washington.edu/ssdp>
- ✚ Developmental Studies Center’s Child Development Project at www.devstu.org

Tip: Plan for the Long Haul

Research shows that long-term programs have the greatest effect in changing students’ behaviors.⁹²

Chapter 3: Classroom Prevention Tools for Teachers

"To have democracy, we must live it day to day." —**Mary Parker Follett**

No Classroom is an Island

In many ways, a classroom can feel like an island—detached from the rest of the school. Once you close the door to your room, it's just you and the young people. What happens or doesn't happen there is up to you—well, to some extent.

As the famous saying goes no person—or classroom—is an island. Your classroom is a microcosm of your school, which in turn is a microcosm of society. Biases and discriminatory practices from society will be mirrored in young people's treatment of one another. Cultural problems related to disrespect, harassment, and bullying will affect your classroom's functioning—whether or not you notice.

A young person who has been targeted on his or her way to your classroom may spend the first half hour of your class worrying about the trip to the next class, or s/he may simply “check out” in response to overwhelming bad feelings. Power dynamics playing out among young people can seep into and thwart your well-designed group project. Even bystanders merely witnessing harassment of one of their classmates may avoid raising their hands or contributing at all in fear of doing something that would make them look stupid or open them up to the same abuse.

However, your classroom can also be a safe haven for young people—a place where your school's efforts to shift its culture to one of caring finds footing and expression. In the small group setting of most classrooms, young people can safely learn and practice the skills and awareness they need to be critical partners in and co-creators of a bullying-free school.

Your Role as a Leader

It is enormously helpful for your school to engage in a community-wide process to reflect on bullying and co-create agreements, policies, and other expressions of commitment to foster a caring culture. If the process is well designed, you and your students will feel the three “T”s: Involved, Invested, and Inspired.

If so, your role from here is to perpetuate the tone set by being a strong leader for young people as you together implement the action plans created to bring about a bullying-free classroom.

The Three “I”s

- **Involved:** “I am part of the process. My opinion counts. My ideas are included.”
- **Invested:** “I care what happens. I can commit to change. I have a stake in the outcome.”
- **Inspired:** “I have a unique vision to contribute. I have the energy for the long-haul. I will bring my heart, soul, and mind to the solution. I can make a difference.”

Not every intervention to prevent bullying begins at the top. Grassroots efforts that begin with a small group of faculty members and concerned staff can be just as successful in planting the necessary seeds to create a whole-school movement to bully-proof your school. While it is critical that leaders in positions of authority commit to school-wide implementation, you’ll find that positive energy and determination can be energizing and contagious.



Reflection

With a colleague or in a staff meeting consider the following:

- How can you involve young people in co-creating a bullying-free classroom?
- How will you help young people feel invested in what happens in the classroom?
- What types of inspiration can you provide to keep young people motivated throughout the process?

Offering Leadership

Classroom teachers do not always think of themselves as leaders, nor do they necessarily get treated as leaders, but they can be. A teacher may also think of his or her role as being an authority figure for young people, or a facilitator and coach. All these roles have their place in teaching. When you support children in learning a skill, you are often in the role of facilitator or coach. When you make a hard decision—such as to report something a young person told you confidentially—out of concern for a student, you are being an authority figure. When you help young people change as individuals, when you challenge their assumptions or expose conflicts in the group, when you support young people in taking responsibility for their problems and learning, when you confidently strive for growth—even when it is uncomfortable—you are being a leader.



Reflection

- When you hear the word “teacher,” who and what traits do you think of?
- When you hear the word “leader,” who and what traits do you think of?
- How do you feel empowered by your teaching role?

- How do you feel disempowered?
- What have you internalized about your profession that holds you back?
- Does thinking of yourself as a leader have implications for how you approach your classroom?
- In what ways might you want to change?
- What sort of support, and from what sources, would you need to make those changes?

Tip: Be a Detective

Examine the problems in your classroom. What are the underlying norms or biases inherent in each problem? What are the unmet needs being expressed? Cultivate this habit of reflection in young people and together problem solve ways to shift norms, challenge biases, and meet needs within the context of a caring school community.

Steps to Leadership: Get Out of the Trenches

A leader does not always have the answers to a problem, but rather poses the questions. Leaders expose us to uncomfortable truths about ourselves and support us in our growth. They help facilitate change by engaging the entire community in seeking solutions and cultivating leadership in others. They make it safe for us to make mistakes and help us learn from them. A leader treats the classroom as a laboratory for learning rather than a stage for performing. But what does that mean to your daily teaching practice?

Get on the Balcony

It's not enough to be in the trenches. Look at your classroom from above. Look for patterns in the problems between young people. Look at the norms, values, and biases that are expressed in your teaching practice:

- What are some of the underlying needs being met by the bullying and harassment?
- What social or institutionalized prejudices might young people be reflecting?
- Is there any history related to your classroom practices and procedures that might be relevant to supporting unhealthy norms and values?
- How might pressures on young people (e.g., testing, academics, drugs, or violence at home) contribute?

Identify the Challenge

By answering questions such as those posed above, you can begin to diagnose the dynamics in your classroom that perpetuate the behaviors you seek to eliminate.

- How would you characterize the current culture of your classroom?

- How would you like it to be?
- What do you seek to change about your classroom practice?
- Why is that a challenge?
- What obstacles do you anticipate running into as you seek to make your classroom culture more caring and inclusive?

Regulate Distress

Changing habits and behaviors can be extremely uncomfortable. One way we help young people grow is through challenging ideas and assumptions to deepen their thinking.

Critical to the success of such reflection is creating a safety zone for young people—a place where they know they will be treated with care and respect. Make it safe for everyone to make mistakes and to learn from them. Explore with students what practices make them feel cared about and respected, and which do not. You might be surprised by some of their answers.

Be Open to Multiple Viewpoints

As you explore the dynamics of your school's culture with young people, you are likely to hear multiple perspectives on the problem. Creative solutions to problems come from meaningful dialogue that welcomes multiple viewpoints.

Elicit Student Insights

Help young people develop problem-solving skills:

- How would they solve the problem of bullying at your school?
- What do they think is at the root of the problem?
- What should they learn to address the problem?

Help young people acquire the needed skills and then give them plenty of opportunity to practice problem solving for themselves (when appropriate) so you can move them along the continuum toward increased independence.

(**Note:** Serious problems touching on a young person's safety require adult intervention.)

Nurture Student Leaders

Build leadership skills in young people. Rotate leadership roles in group projects; help young people identify and then acquire the skills they need to provide leadership to others. Show young people they can feel powerful in a healthy way by making a difference in their school and community.

Leadership Steps in Summary

- Get on the balcony
- Identify the challenge

- Regulate distress
- Are open to multiple viewpoints
- Get student input
- Nurture student leaders.

Tools at the Ready: Classroom Applications

In Chapter 2 school-wide “Tools at the Ready” for building community and preventing bullying were outlined. Refer back to that discussion for more information. The same tools can be put to use in your classroom. Here are ways to think about how to customize the tools to your and your students’ unique needs.

Tools for Community-Building and Bully-Proofing Schools

- Group agreements for behavior
- Disciplining for Learning
- Rituals
- Positive reinforcement and role modeling
- Empowering students
- Teaching pro-social skills
- Cooperative learning
- Action research.

Group Agreements for Behavior

Even if you have developed a school-wide pledge or group agreement for behavior, it’s helpful to repeat this process in your classroom (or create a process if school-wide agreements have not been negotiated).

Your classroom agreements might be more specific or address unique circumstances. If you have a science lab, what needs to be agreed about sharing resources? What behaviors does everyone agree to for maintaining safety? What behaviors do students agree to in order to show respect for others’ ideas? What specifically helps young people feel safer when they learn? Sometimes school-wide procedures do not address specific issues that come up daily in a classroom, such as teasing or certain types of exclusion.

These classroom agreements do not replace school-wide agreements; they augment them. You can use a school-wide agreement as a launching off point for the discussion. How do those school-wide agreements apply to your classroom? What does anyone want to add or expand upon those agreements? Many bullying prevention, conflict resolution, and other intergroup relationship curricula include activities for creating group agreements. A good example is the *Don’t Laugh at Me* curriculum from Operation Respect available at no charge at www.operationrespect.org.

Group agreements can be infused into your academic curriculum by tying the process to historical and cultural content such as the influence of the Iroquois Nation on the U.S. Constitution, the role of rights and responsibilities in citizenship, or the Parliamentary meeting process.



Reflection

- What values do you want to communicate in your classroom agreements?
- What skills and understanding do you think are most important for students to take away and apply to life?

Teasing vs. Taunting

“I was only teasing!” and “Can’t you take a joke?” are familiar refrains. Teasing should be given special attention as you develop your classroom agreements and policies. Some students find it helpful to make a distinction between teasing, which is good-natured and not intended to harm, and taunting, which is clearly negative and an attempt by the bully to humiliate. The line between the two can be subtle, and whether conduct is considered teasing or taunting may depend on the target’s perspective and the relationship between the two people. Some students are unperturbed about being teased; others are more sensitive. And some students are closer in relationship and more secure about their standing with the teaser than others.



By the Numbers

Research by John Hoover and Glen Olson revealed teasing is the most common form of bullying young people experience. Verbal bullying can be as devastating to young people as physical abuse by peers.⁹³

Not only are there differences in individual tolerances, but there are also cultural differences that should inform any teasing policy you develop. African American students might engage in playing “the dozens”—a game of escalating teasing where one party bests the other through wit and mental toughness. Likewise, teasing between two members of the same race might have a different tone than an exchange across racial lines. The line between teasing and taunting can be subtle and related to context and power, so a discussion with your students about the issue can enlighten everyone involved.

Whether or not there were witnesses to the teasing can also have an impact. Facilitate a discussion with your class to create guidelines about teasing. Stimulate students’ thinking along the way by giving examples you’ve seen in the schoolyard or in your classroom that they may not think of. (Avoid restating derogatory names.) Some questions you might ask include:

- What is teasing?
- Is teasing ever bullying?

- When, if ever, is teasing not bullying?
- Is there any type of teasing that we feel is acceptable?
- How will we know that type of teasing when we see it?
- Is there any type of teasing that we feel is unacceptable?
- How will we know that type of teasing when we see it?
- What should bystanders do or not do when they witness acceptable teasing?
- What should bystanders do or not do when they witness unacceptable teasing?
- What can we all agree to as a policy on teasing?
- How will we handle it when someone makes a mistake and violates the policy?
- How and when will we check in on how we are doing with this policy?

Take Note

It can be very difficult for an adolescent to admit that someone's supposed good-natured teasing is hurtful. Bring up this concern with students if they suggest some forms of teasing be allowed if the target doesn't seem to mind. You might together decide that all types of teasing should be stopped, or come up with a safe way for targets to share how they feel about the teasing. As trust and a sense of community develop in your classroom, it will become increasingly possible for targets to be direct with their peers about how teasing feels.



Delve Deeper

Reseachers Hoover and Olson have looked extensively at teasing in the context of bullying. See "Sticks and Stones May Break Their Bones: Teasing As Bullying," in *Reclaiming Children and Youth* 9.2, Summer 2000, pp 87–91.

Class Meetings

Class meetings can be effective given the small group context of your classroom. You can use class meetings to get feedback from students about the success of current group agreements and to problem solve issues that come up. If you institute a weekly class meeting, for example, let students help create the meeting agendas. One way to do this is to hang up a large piece of poster paper and ask young people to add topics to be covered at the next meeting. From this process you can together create an agenda for the next meeting. Rotate roles at class meetings so different students can be note taker, timekeeper, and facilitator.



Things to Think About

- What process will we use to create and commit to our group agreements?
- How often will we check in on how we are doing in adhering to our group agreements?
- What will we do when someone does not adhere to an agreement?

- How often and through what process will we update or revise agreements?
- How will you use the process of creating and maintaining group agreements and class meetings to leverage the three “I”s? (See page XX in Chapter 3 for a review of the three “I”s.)
- What training and support do you need to effectively implement practices such as group agreements and class meetings?
- What skills and support will students need?

(See “Group Agreements for Behavior” on page 42 in Chapter 2 for more information.)

Tip

Limit class meetings to no more than 20 minutes and keep the conversation focused. Create a “parking lot” for random issues that come up or issues that are too time consuming to deal with at that moment. You can return to your parking lot items at the next class meeting.

Constructive Discipline

There are countless opportunities in classrooms to instill discipline which is conducive to growth and learning. While a school-wide discipline and behavior code guides your efforts, how you handle those teachable moments can have a major impact in setting classroom expectations.



Reflection

- When you were an adolescent and misbehaved, how did your parents handle the situation? Your teachers?
- How did their reaction make you feel?
- What do you think is the best way to address a behavioral problem with a student?
- A question I still have about behavior management is ...

Punishment vs. Discipline⁹⁴

The following chart from *The School for Quality Learning* outlines the differences between punishment and discipline.

Punishment	Discipline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expresses power of an authority; causes pain to the recipient; based on retribution or revenge; concerned with actions in the past. ▪ Arbitrary: applied inconsistently and unconditionally; does not accept or acknowledge exceptions or mitigating circumstances. ▪ Imposed by an authority with responsibility taken by the one administering the punishment and responsibility avoided by the one receiving the punishment. ▪ Closes options for the punished individual, who must pay for a behavior that has already occurred. ▪ As a teaching strategy, usually reinforces a failure identity. ▪ Essentially negative and short-term, without sustained personal involvement of either teacher or learner. ▪ Characterized by open or concealed anger; easy and expedient; a poor model of expectations. ▪ Focuses on strategies intended to control behavior of learner; rarely results in positive changes in behavior; may increase subversiveness or result in temporary suppression of behavior; at best, produces compliance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Based on logical or natural consequences that embody the reality of a social order (rules that one must learn and accept to function productively in society), concerned with the actions in the present. ▪ Consistent: accepts that the behaving individual is doing the best s/he can do for now. ▪ Comes from within, with responsibility assumed by the disciplined individual who desires that responsibility; presumes that conscience is internal. ▪ Opens options for the individual, who can choose new behavior. ▪ As a teaching strategy, is active and involves close, sustained, personal involvement of both teacher and learner; emphasizes the development of more successful behavior. ▪ Friendly and supportive; provides a model of quality behavior. ▪ Usually results in a change in behavior that is more successful, acceptable, and responsible; develops the capacity for self-evaluation of behavior.

Exploring Behavior Problems: Needs, Weeds, Seeds, and Deeds

“Needs, Weeds, Seeds, and Deeds” is a suggested process to use with young people to reflect more deeply on problem behaviors, to self reflect, or to reflect with peers and administrators on patterns of behavior problems visible in your classroom or school community:

- **Needs:** What happened and what were the underlying needs?
- **Weeds:** What, if any, were the obstacles to better behavior?
- **Seeds:** What can be learned from what happened?
- **Deeds:** What can we commit to change or do differently next time?

Discussing Behavior Problems with Young People

Use “Needs, Weeds, Seeds, and Deeds” as the foundation for a private conversation about a problem behavior between two students or with an individual student. If the problem is a group problem, use the process during a class meeting.

Important Safety Note!

Think carefully about whether or not a situation between two students should be mediated using Needs, Weeds, Seeds, and Deeds.

If harassment or intimidation is ongoing, a face-to-face meeting between a bully and target may only serve to retraumatize the target. Safety must take priority. Mediation, whether adult or peer mediated, is only effective in first-time, minor, or nonchronic situations. (See Chapter 4 for more information about ways to intervene with bullies and targets.)



Things to Think About

- Set and enforce ground rules: no blaming, shaming, name-calling, or interrupting.
- Listen non-judgmentally
- Paraphrase what young people have said
- Encourage the use of “I feel” messages rather than “You” messages that imply blame
- Be comfortable with silence (allow young people ample time to reflect)
- Criticize the behavior, not the person—“You are decent, but what you did was wrong”

Needs

- What happened? (Give each student a chance to say what happened from his or her perspective. Paraphrase each student’s perspective and ask if you are correct in your summary.)
- Why was the behavior a problem? (Address feelings that were brought up by the behavior or any other repercussions. In framing the question, it helps to remind students that their actions, like a stone thrown into a pond, create ripples that affect the whole community.)
- What **need(s)** do you think motivated the behavior? (This question might take some time for reflection. You can give each young person a chance to write out ideas before answering. For example, a young person who spreads rumors about another young person may seem to be acting out of personal dislike. A closer look might reveal that the young person feels they need to increase his own social standing in the school by lowering another student’s social standing. Students will get better at this type of reflection over time.)
- If the problem you see in your classroom is a group dynamic, like a group of students being excluded, bring the issue to a class meeting and use the “Needs, Weeds, Seeds, and Deeds” process to take a closer look at the issue. Engage the entire group in solving the problem and making a commitment to change. Does anything need to change in your classroom agreements?

Weeds

Were there any obstacles to achieving better behavior? Again, this question may be difficult for young people, but it's worth pursuing.

This step is an opportunity to think about factors that might reinforce or contribute to the problem. The emphasis here is on learning, not blaming. In the example of someone who has spread rumors about a student, an obstacle to improving behavior may be the prevalence of gossiping among students. By looking at **weeds** you can better problem solve issues related to the behavior.

Seeds

What opportunities for learning and growth exist? A young person who spreads rumors might not have foreseen how far the rumor would go or how devastating it would be for the target. Likewise, a target might not have thought about the ways the school culture encourages such rumors. This step is akin to finding the silver lining in a cloud.

Deeds

This is the part of the conversation where **deeds** (intentional acts) occur:

- Necessary reparations are made
- A commitment to better behavior is secured.

Ask the student who instigated the problem what s/he can you do to repair the damage done. (In the rumor example, the perpetrator can apologize and retract the rumor.)

Ask the target what s/he wants to happen.

Also try to problem solve ways the class can address any weeds identified. Perhaps the person who spread the rumor could write a piece in the school newspaper about why gossip is bad for everyone; or you could get students' suggestions at your class meeting.

To bring this conversation to a constructive close, it is critical to ask what the person with the problem behavior can commit to doing differently next time. Sometimes simply re-committing to a group agreement against bullying behavior might be enough; but consider getting a specific commitment from the young person beyond your classroom agreements or in addition to the agreements. (See Chapter 4 for more strategies for intervening in bullying events.)

Tip: Curriculum Infusion

“Needs, Weeds, Seeds, and Deeds” can be infused into the academic curricula. The subjects of history, politics, and literature are filled with opportunities to reflect on conflict using this framework. By weaving in bullying prevention ideas you'll help students gain skill reflecting on personal and social dynamics that contribute to problems.



Delve Deeper

See Alfie Kohn's provocative book about classroom management *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community* (ASCD, 1996).

Review of Steps for Constructive Disciplining

1. Use the Needs, Weeds, Seeds, and Deeds framework for discussion
2. Provide choices
3. Teach responsibility
4. Stay neutral, nonjudgmental, and dispassionate
5. Respond immediately
6. Be fair and consistent
7. Implement consequences

The Power of Rituals

Many teachers use rituals in their classrooms—from the way they hand out papers to how they begin and end each class. Rituals can help create a caring community, and the best rituals are those that communicate and reinforce values your group holds and celebrates and those that prepare students for, and celebrate, life transitions.

There are endless options: You could use a relaxation technique to diffuse students' tensions before tests or you might begin a class period with a quote that is related to the topic of the day. Rituals accepted and followed by the group can help prevent conflict in a classroom and build a sense of shared community. Rituals and traditions that are ongoing have the added benefit of reminding everyone they are part of a history with strong roots and an enduring future. We are more likely to behave at our best when we feel part of something larger and more important than ourselves.



Reflection

- What rituals, if any, do I currently use in my classroom?
- In what ways do these rituals support a caring classroom? Are there ways they do not provide positive support?
- What opportunities are there for me to reinforce the values of a caring classroom through rituals?



Things to Think About

- During a normal class period, what are the moments of transition?
- Which periods of transition seem to be most difficult for students?
- What type of ritual might make that transition easier?
- What values could that ritual communicate?
- What type of rituals best communicate the values of your classroom?
- What events could be celebrated in the classroom with rituals?
- What rituals would best celebrate those events, while also communicating important values?
- How might I nurture student leadership through the development and use of rituals?
- What life transitions will my students be experiencing this year? What ritual could honor or celebrate this transition?

Tip

Involve students in creating interesting classroom rituals. Begin with the values you together want to uphold (identified in your classroom agreement process) and design the rituals from there.

Ritual Planning Sheet

Value to Communicate	Transition or Event	Ritual

Positive Reinforcement and Role Modeling

Teaching Opportunities

Look for opportunities during each class period to provide role models for young people and positively reinforce the behaviors you seek. Think about:

- What is it you want to model?
- What behaviors do you seek?
- What it is you hope to impart?
- Who might be a good role model for those qualities?
- Who would not be?
- Do you model the behaviors you seek from young people?

That last question can be difficult to answer, as it is hard to know what you are role modeling for young people without the help of an objective and trusted friend who can observe your teaching and give feedback.

Your body language, reactions under stress, ways of disciplining students, and other subtle ways of running the classroom can communicate a lot to young people about what you value. You can become more aware of what you are teaching by example through peer evaluation or simply asking a peer or friend to observe your class and offer feedback.

We can all fall into the trap of pointing out only negative behaviors, rather than positive, in our discipline approach with students. Research shows that any type of attention—including negative—can reinforce behaviors⁹⁵, so it is ideal to notice students being kind or caring and then tell them specifically what they did well.



Reflection

- Who have been the most important role models in your life?
- What was it about them you most admired?
- What behaviors or qualities do you hope to encourage in young people?
- For you, who (living or dead) best exemplifies those behaviors or qualities?
- What opportunities are there to reinforce the values of a caring classroom through rituals?



Things to Think About

- How can you weave positive role models for young people into your curriculum? Into each day?
- Who might you trust enough to give you objective advice about what you are modeling for young people—positive and negative?

- Are you ready to hear feedback? What might make you feel safer when hearing feedback? Who would you trust to give you constructive, and honest, feedback?
- What good behavior do you wish to single out for recognition?
- What mechanisms will you use to positively reinforce those behaviors?
- How might young people be involved in providing good role models and positive reinforcement for good behavior?

Empowering Students: Nurturing Acts of Conscience

In the article “Words Can Hurt Forever,” authors Garbarino and deLara note that efforts to create a caring community within your classroom and school plant the seeds of social responsibility in young people. To the largest extent, young people’s acts of conscience arise from a sense of being inextricably bound together with others. It is through their relationships with others and their successful navigation of differences among people that they gain clarity about their own needs and values.

Another key part of young people’s character development is having the opportunity to experience a sense of their own power and efficacy. So every time you let a student take a leadership role or ask for input from your class and integrate it in meaningful ways, you are contributing to growth in young people’s character. While this practice will serve your bullying prevention efforts directly, it will also well serve your students and likely make you feel better about your own efficacy in the classroom.⁹⁶



By the Numbers

The article “Words Can Hurt Forever” reports that children who feel most connected to their schools are the ones most likely to believe and act on the conviction that it is not acceptable to treat others badly.⁹⁷

So what does it take to help young people feel a sense of their own power? How do you widen the circle of caring to encompass your neighborhood? Your town? Your state? The world? How do you encourage service to the community? How do you help young people reach their potential and become the best they can be? *Go for the GOLD!*

- G** **Goals and standards:** The importance of setting and evaluating progress toward goals.
- O** **Obstacles to goals:** Finding ways to overcome obstacles to personal and group goals.
- L** **Learning from losing and mistakes:** How to recover from loss and learn from mistakes.
- D** **Doing it together:** The importance of team effort and wider support in bringing out our personal best.

Young people need to develop skills that help them reach their personal bests. The sense of confidence and accomplishment that comes along the way is vital to personal growth.

Help students develop the GOLD skills—particularly their efforts to help bully-proof their schools:

Young people need practice and opportunities to develop new competencies. They need permission to make mistakes and learn from them, and they need your guidance to facilitate their progress. (See Chapter 5 for ideas about working with students to widen the circle of caring and encourage community service projects.)

Your Role in Nurturing Student Leadership

- **Coach** young people on the tools of achievement, such as goal setting, self-assessment, learning from failure, persistence, discipline, and cooperation.
- **Lead** young people in developing a sense of their own self-worth, and identifying their unique gifts and contributions to the whole.
- **Help** young people in the classroom see themselves as members of a team, striving together for a common goal.
- **Witness** students' growth and **reflect** it back to them.
- **Champion** young people's efforts, increasing enthusiasm and buy-in, so progress in bullying-prevention spreads beyond the classroom/school and into the community.

Teaching Pro-Social Skills and Awareness

People often turn to curricula when they think of bullying prevention, but choosing a specific program is just one approach to bullying prevention. It is, however, a critical piece of a whole-school approach. Fortunately, many good bullying prevention programs exist, and there is overlap of core concepts within the fields of conflict resolution, violence prevention, anti-bias work, social and emotional learning, and character education. For that reason, the key concepts are outlined here. Feel free to draw from various sources for activities and lessons that will work best with your student population. A minimum of 10 to 20 skills lessons are recommended.

Key Bullying-Buster Concepts to Teach

- What bullying is (how to know it when you see it)
- How common myths about bullying perpetuate it
- Bullying hurts everyone (toxic environment)
- Everyone has a right to feel and be safe
- Our actions (and inactions) have consequences
- Problems can be solved nonviolently
- One of our responsibilities is to be an ally to someone who is being bullied or excluded

- Another responsibility is to be an ally to an ally
- Adults in the community are here to help you learn and keep you safe
- Telling is not tattling
- Differences among members enrich a community
- Conflict is a growth opportunity and leads to creative solutions
- Biases are often operating in our interactions, whether or not we are conscious of them
- Power dynamics and biases at work in a school culture reflect larger society's power dynamics and biases
- Expectations others have of us influence our behaviors (both positively and negatively)

Key Social Skills to Teach

- Perspective taking
- Anger management/impulse control
- Empathy
- Feelings vocabulary
- Healthy expression of feelings
- Cooperation
- How to be a friend
- Communicating needs (“I” messages)
- Active listening
- How conflict escalates
- Win-win conflict resolution
- Problem solving
- Assertiveness skills (interrupting bias and harassment)
- Positive self-talk
- Appreciation of differences

Launching the Classroom Component

A good place to begin your classroom component is a group discussion about feelings and thoughts about bullying. Most young people are not bullies, but the majority of us—adults included—have been involved in bullying, either by our silence as a witness to an event or by being party to more subtle forms of bullying such as exclusion, spreading gossip (or simply believing rumors), or teasing.

Your goals as you launch your effort are to:

- Help young people empathize with the pain of being targeted
- Explore the role of bystanders in bullying incidents
- Expand young people’s definition of bullying to include more subtle forms of bullying such as gossip, exclusion, and teasing
- Address common myths related to bullying (**See** Chapter 1)



School Spotlight: Huntington

The Gateway Middle School in Huntington, MA,⁹⁸ uses the following lesson to explore attitudes and opinions about bullying. This exercise is a good way to assess baseline attitudes toward bullying at the beginning of a unit and generate discussion about how students perceive school climate.

Attitudes and Opinions About Bullying (Grade 5) Lesson Plan

1. Read “Making Sarah Cry” in *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul II*
2. Post three signs around the room that say “Agree,” “Disagree,” and “Not Sure.” Ask students to move to the sign that reflects their opinion about each of the following statements:
 - Bullying is a problem at our school.
 - I see kids being picked on, or I am picked on daily.
 - I see kids being picked on less frequently than daily.
 - At least once a week I witness or experience a bullying incident.
 - I believe that there are things that I can do to help.
 - If I saw a kid being bullied, I would probably try to help.
 - I have learned skills to deal with bullies, and I use these skills when necessary.
 - I believe that everyone should feel safe coming to school every day.
 - Bullying is no big deal. It’s just a part of life.
 - It’s funny to pick on other kids—no one really gets hurt.
 - Kids who are bullied don’t feel safe at school.
3. Facilitate a discussion. Explore how it feels to be targeted; address myths about bullying; explore the role of bystanders; and together with students create a definition of bullying.



Delve Deeper

The Broken Toy Project offers films useful in launching bullying prevention efforts. Its films feature young people talking frankly about bullying and are appropriate for both elementary and secondary school levels. Go to http://brokentoyproject_1.tripod.com .

Moving From Bystanders to Allies

“It made me sad for the victim, and I wanted to help him, but I was afraid.”

— from a bystander who witnessed a bullying incident

Studies show that peer intervention is effective in stopping bullying in a majority of instances.⁹⁹ Boys and girls were equally effective, and the effectiveness of the intervention was not related to whether or not it was an aggressive strategy. This finding demonstrates that nonviolent solutions can work.



By the Numbers

Peers are present in **88%** of bullying incidents and intervene **17–19%** of the time.¹⁰⁰

R. J. Hazler’s article titled “Bystanders: An overlooked factor in peer on peer abuse” showed that children who do not intervene may have various reasons:

- They may be unsure of what to do
- They fear retaliation
- They worry about making it worse¹⁰¹

To combat bystanders’ fears, the book *Bully proofing your school: a comprehensive approach for elementary schools* recommends teaching young people to help targets through:

- Creative problem solving
- Seeking adult help
- Joining with the victim as an ally
- Being an ally to other allies
- Developing empathy for the victim¹⁰²

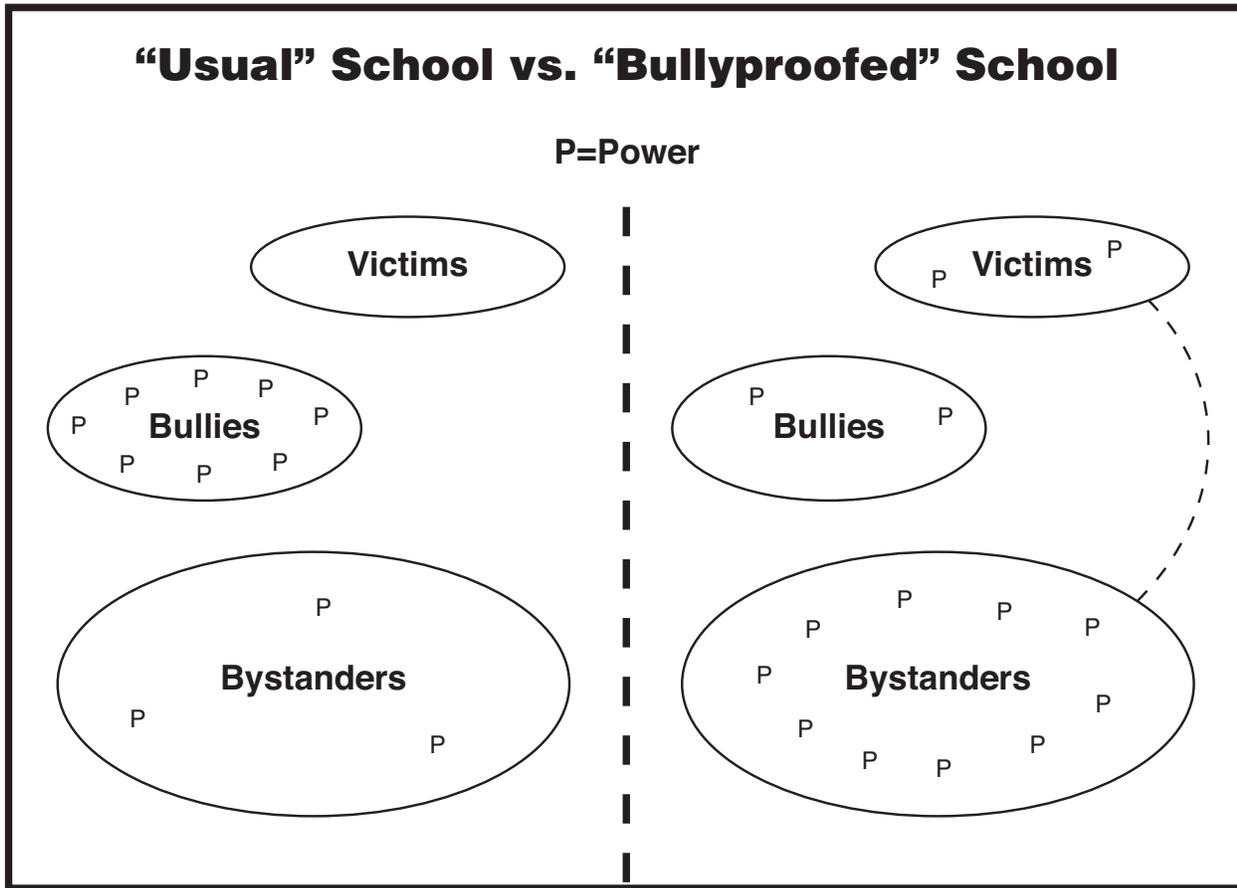


School Spotlight: Huntington

The Gateway Middle School in Huntington, MA, uses *The Power Demonstration* to look at the issue of how power is transferred from the bully to the target and bystanders when bystanders learn to become allies.¹⁰³

The Power Demonstration

1. Put the following graphic on the board.



2. Explain the terms bully, bystander, and target. Show the distribution of power in a non-bully proofed school, and how power shifts from the bully to bystanders and the target in a bully-proofed school.
3. Brainstorm ways to shift the power to bystanders. Ask: What are some agreements we might make that would shift the power away from the bully to the bystanders? (Or relate this challenge to the class or school agreements you have already made.) Some possible commitments are to become more inclusive, find ways to come to the aid of a target when s/he is being bullied, work at respecting oneself and others, and refrain from teasing.
4. Now divide students into three groups: bullies, targets, and bystanders, with the biggest groups being bullies. Take small pieces of paper with a “P” for power written on them. With students’ permission tape (or have them tape) pieces on the bullies, a few on the bystanders, and none on the targets. Tell them, “This is a typical school.”
5. Now, shift the power. Have students who are bystanders offer something they promise to do that week to help a target (e.g., include someone without friends in a game; stand up for someone being teased). For each suggestion, take a “P” from the bully and move it to the target or the bystander who offered the suggestion.

6. End the activity with a group “POWER” exercise. Stand in a circle holding hands, then crouch down and softly say “Power.” Stand back up and finish the “Power” as loudly as possible with hands in the air.

You can explore the dynamics of power involved in a bullying situation more deeply by looking at the ways bullying reflects issues of privilege and bias that permeate our culture. (See “Address Issues of Privilege, Power, and Bias” on page 93 for more information.)



School Spotlight: Salem

The Collins Middle School in Salem, MA, has done extensive anti-harassment program development. Its program titled Increasing the Peace was designed by a group of faculty and students in 1998 in response to a violent incident on campus. As part of the program, students are encouraged to be allies to the ally—that is to join in when other students are supporting a target so a group of young people ends up supporting a target, rather than just one person.

Because intervening in a bullying situation to help a target is difficult for everyone—even adults—give young people plenty of opportunities to learn and practice the skills involved in intervention.

Following is one activity from the *Don't Laugh at Me* project of Operation Respect. This activity was developed jointly by Operation Respect and Educators for Social Responsibility, www.esrnational.org.

Be a Bullying Buster¹⁰⁴

Materials Needed

- VCR and *Don't Laugh at Me* video cued to the Peter, Paul & Mary version, available for free download at www.operationrespect.org
- Poster paper
- One handout per student of “Five Steps for Sending Assertive Messages” on page 92 below.
- One index card per student (one third labeled “target,” one third labeled “bully,” one third labeled “ally”)

Gather Together: Explore Caring (5–10 minutes)

- Show the *Don't Laugh at Me* video. Ask students to write down the positive or hopeful images they see in the video.
- Discuss: What do these images have in common? (Many of the images include people showing caring—either by putting an arm around someone, giving someone an award, or cheering them on.)

Introduce Bullies, Targets, Bystanders, and Allies (15 minutes)

- 1) Explain that the group is going to figure out what can be done when we see someone being treated unkindly or bullied.
- 2) Ask: What types of behavior constitute bullying? (e.g., repeated name calling; making fun of people; picking on people; hitting, kicking, shoving, pushing, pinching, or threatening people; excluding someone from a group.)
- 3) Ask for a show of hands of everyone in the room who has seen someone being bullied or been bullied themselves. (Likely everyone will raise their hands.) Point out that everyone in this room will—or already has at some time—be in a situation where they are either a target of bullying (the person being bullied) or a bystander (someone who witnesses the bullying). When we witness a situation in which an individual or a group is targeted, we can make a choice to be a bystander who doesn't say or do anything to change the situation. Or we can choose to be an ally— someone who works with and acts in support of a targeted person or group.
- 4) Explain that students will learn: 1) how to be an ally when you see someone being bullied; and 2) how to stand up for yourself if you're bullied.
- 5) Divide students into groups of three. Distribute cards so that in each group there is one student per role: ally, target, and bystander. Give each student 1 minute to tell about a time when s/he was an ally, a target, or a bystander (the role as assigned on their card).
- 6) Allow bystanders and allies a minute to respond.
- 7) When everyone has finished, give the groups 3 minutes to debrief (1 minute per question): What did it feel like to be the target? What did it feel like to be the bystander? What did it feel like to be the ally?
- 8) Brainstorm with students a list of things you can do when you or someone else is being hurt or bullied. Explain that you are looking for ideas that are nonviolent.
- 9) Now record ideas on chart paper in two columns: ideas that mean confronting the bully and ideas that do not. Add to the students' ideas with suggestions from the following:
 - Refuse to join in (doesn't involve confrontation).
 - Report bullying you know about or see to an adult (doesn't involve confrontation).
 - Invite the person being hurt to join your group (might involve confrontation). Then ask the person who was bullied if it's okay to have the bully join your group if the bully apologizes (does involve confrontation).
 - Speak out using an "I" message. Say, "I don't like it when you treat him like that;" "I want you to stop calling him that name;" or "I wouldn't want someone to say that to/about me" (does involve confrontation.)
 - Be a friend to the person who has been bullied by showing him you care about him.
 - Put an arm around her or him, give him a word or two of compassion (doesn't involve confrontation).

- Distract the bully with a joke or something else so her or she stops the behavior (does involve confrontation).
 - Share your perspective (does involve confrontation). Say, “That sounds like an assumption to me . . .” or “From my point of view, it seems that . . .”
 - Provide accurate information (does involve confrontation). “Here’s what I know about (the situation/person) . . .”
- 10) Give students copies of the handout “Five Steps for Sending Assertive Messages” for review.
- 11) Go over the steps with them. One important rule to emphasize is that if students see someone being hurt physically or witness an interaction that might escalate into physical violence, they should not confront the bully. Rather, they should quickly go and get help from an adult. Discuss with students signs that might indicate such a physical threat.

Intervene in Bullying: The Bullying Buster Machine (15 minutes)

It takes courage and practice to act decisively without being mean when you or another person is being bullied. Tell the students you are going to create a Bullying Buster Machine.

- 1) To form the machine, have students break into two lines facing one another about 3 feet apart. They should imagine that they have switches on their arms. When you touch an arm, the Bullying Buster machine switches on. You will walk down the aisle between the students, pretending to be a bully. Once a student is “switched on,” that student should give out an assertive (strong, but not mean) message to the bully.
- 2) Walk along the aisle between the students. Recite a scenario from the ones listed below, or act it out if you are comfortable doing that. Then choose a student randomly and switch him or her “on” with a touch on the arm for a strong bullying buster response. Practice with several students before moving on to another scenario. Some possible situations, someone:
 - Calls you a bad name. (Possible Bullying Buster Machine response: “I feel hurt and angry when you call me that name. Please don’t do that.”)
 - Tells you to do something you don’t want to do.
 - Is calling someone else a bad name.
 - Is making fun of someone because she is disabled.
 - Wants you to call someone else a bad name.
 - Tells you that you can’t sit with them at lunch.
 - Demands that you give him some money.
 - Is teasing a friend of yours and she doesn’t like it.
- 3) Debrief the activity: What messages do you think were most effective?

Close Together (5 minutes)

Ask for a few volunteers to share the feelings they had during this activity?

Curriculum Connections

Following are a few examples of how to tie bullying into your curriculum:

Literature: Have students read Lois-Ann Yamanaka’s book *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* (Harvest Books, 1997), the coming-of-age tale of a 12-year-old Japanese-American girl named Lovey Nariyoshi living in Hawaii. Lovey struggles to fit in in a world where it feels important to have “straight blond hair and long Miss America legs.” Use this book as a launching point to discuss the various ways young people in your school who do not fit in, or are different in some way, are treated. Explore the role of peer pressure in acts of bullying, and bystander intervention as a response. Ask: “Has there ever been a time that you did something like make fun of someone else, just to fit in? How can we make being caring and appreciative of differences “cool” in our school? Any ideas?” A literary classic that addresses bullying head-on is *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, by the 19th century English author Thomas Hughes (Oxford World’s Classics, 1999). The book and the 2004 BBC film based on it demonstrate the importance of peer support for targets and the vital role that engaged administrators can play in promoting caring behavior among students. The book can serve as a catalyst for a discussions of bystander responsibility, and ways in which peers can come to the aid of targets. For more suggestions on using literature as an anti-bullying tool, see Hillsberg, C. and Spak, H. (2006) Young Adult Literature as the Centerpiece of an Anti-Bullying Program in Middle School. *Middle School Journal* 38(2) 23-28 (Available at http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/2b/25/3e.pdf)

Writing: Have students write in their journals for 10 minutes on the following topics:

- My feelings about being an ally to someone being bullied are . . .
- Who is someone you know who is a good example of an ally? What qualities does he possess?

Have students in pairs share their entries.

History: Connect this lesson to a look at groups who have been bullied by other groups in American history; many examples exist. (e.g., African Americans during times of slavery and during the civil rights movement, Cherokee Indians and the Trail of Tears, Japanese American internment camps during World War II, the treatment of women suffragists, the stigmatization of GLBT people, and the Salem Witchcraft Trials).

Five Steps for Sending Assertive Messages

1. Prepare the “I” message. (Think about it ahead of time. Talk about it with another person. It may be a good idea to practice saying it.)
2. Give the message to the person. (Use body language and a tone of voice that reinforces the message.)
3. Wait a moment or two. (The other person may not respond immediately. When the response comes, it may be defensive—the other person may offer excuses, attack, or withdraw.)

4. Listen actively to the response; paraphrase what the other person is saying and what feelings are being reflected. (Ask questions that encourage the other person to look for a solution. Restate the problem and ask, “What do you think would be fair? What can we both do now?”)
5. Look for a solution that meets both your needs.

Note: Depending on how the other person responds, you may need to go through the steps several times before reaching a solution.

Telling is Not Tattling

Discuss with students why reporting an incident of bullying to a teacher or other responsible adult is not “tattling.” Explain that being in a caring classroom carries some rights and responsibilities. You might explain that everyone has the right to feel safe in the school and we all have the right to be protected. Their responsibilities as members of the school community are to help ensure that sense of safety is possible for every student. Help them understand that when someone’s emotional or physical safety is at risk, it is their responsibility to tell an adult.

Address Issues of Bias, Disadvantage, and Oppression

Because bullying at school reflects power dynamics at work in society at large, explore with young people how characteristics such as a person’s size, race, age, culture, or perceived sexual orientation influence whether one is targeted. Concepts such as bias, discrimination, prejudice, privilege, and internalized oppression can be explored through the lens of bullying at your school:

- Who are the targets of harassment in your school?
- What gives some students advantages over others?
- How might being told you are inferior because of some unchangeable characteristic affect someone’s self-image over time?
- What is a hate crime?
- What can a student do to challenge bias?

Fortunately, there are many excellent resources to help you with this important inquiry.



Delve Deeper

Several organizations have excellent online resources, both free and available for purchase, to help you help young people fight hate. See the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Teaching Tolerance project at www.tolerance.org and The Anti-Defamation League at www.adl.org.

Cooperative Learning

The circle is a sacred symbol of life . . . Individual parts within the circle connect with every other; and what happens to one, or what one part does, affects all within the circle.

—Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve



Reflection

- In what ways does your classroom practice reward individual efforts over teamwork?
- What changes in classroom practice could you make to encourage teamwork?

Young people can't work together if they aren't taught the skills they need to do so successfully. Many of the social skills and concepts outlined previously can be used by students in their cooperative groups.

Cooperative learning is basically working together to achieve shared goals. It is a teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different ability levels, use a variety of learning activities to enhance their understanding of a subject. Each team member is responsible for learning what is taught and for helping teammates learn. Students work through an assignment until all group members understand and complete it.¹⁰⁵

According to David W. and Roger R. Johnson, professors and co-directors of the Cooperative Learning Center at the University of Minnesota, this style requires positive interdependence (we sink or swim together), individual accountability (we each have to contribute and learn), interpersonal skills (communication, trust, leadership, decision making, and conflict resolution), mutual beneficial success (we succeed together), face-to-face interaction, processing (reflecting on how well the team is functioning and how to function even better), and joint recognition for achievement.¹⁰⁶

Cooperative learning techniques set the tone of your classroom, encourage friendships and inclusion, and help young people appreciate one another's differences. Cooperative learning is also a way to level the playing field and give each student an equal chance to contribute and take on important leadership roles.

Tip: Be Intentional in Grouping Students

- Be mindful of social dynamics when you create groups for cooperative learning. Create a seating plan to help mix young people who otherwise might not connect. That is, be sure that the most popular students are not all together, excluding less popular students, and so forth.
- Arranging your room in a circle (where space allows) will also help facilitate a sense of community and equality among students.

Action Research

For a classroom teacher, action research can be a helpful reflection tool and offer insight into what works and doesn't work in your daily practice. If you are successful in investing, involving, and inspiring students in your classroom to join in your research, the resulting synergy will advance your efforts to transform your classroom's culture



Reflection: Together Examine Your Values

Action research enables you to more closely examine your own and your students' values related to bullying. Consider ways to complete these sentences:

- Something I did that I knew was wrong...
- The reason I did it anyway was...
- I wish I could have...
- Next time, I will...
- Bullying is...



Home Connections: Violence in Media

Help parents become more aware of their childrens' exposure to violent media. Research shows that young people who are regularly exposed to media violence are apt to become desensitized to real-life violence and to behave more aggressively.¹⁰⁷ Homework assignments that ask young people to chart violence, prejudice, or other prominent messages in television shows, music, and video games can be, with appropriate adult supervision, an opportunity for shared parent/child experiences. Encourage parents to discuss this issue with their children and be aware of the content of what they are watching or listening to.

Here are some additional suggestions for parents who are concerned about the content of the media their children are exposed to:

- Familiarize yourself with what your son or daughter is watching or listening—music, television shows, movies, online images/videos, and video games.
- Keep the television, video, and computer in a family area.
- Limit the amount of time for media viewing.

- Teach your son or daughter to be critical of common media messages and manipulations.
- Expose your children to media that promote the values you'd like them to learn.
- Be alert to the four danger signs a young person may exhibit when overexposed to anti-social media:
 - ⇒ Desensitization to violence
 - ⇒ Numbing
 - ⇒ Imitation
 - ⇒ Intimidating behavior
- Encourage young people to get involved with peers in activities that promote creative, responsible, pro-social, and civil behaviors.

Helping Kids With Disabilities



By the Numbers

A study by LaMarsh Center for Research on Violence and Conflict Resolution at York University revealed that **38%** of special education students were bullied, as compared to **18%** of students generally.¹⁰⁸

Young people with disabilities and learning differences are targeted for bullying more often than their peers. They are often also the young people who need the most help standing up for themselves and handling difficult social situations. Why are students with disabilities targeted? While many reasons exist, here are a few of the most common:

- Other students may pick on them because of their “difference,” not understanding that difference to be a disability.
- Students with disabilities, particularly developmental and neurological, may not pick up on typical social cues.
- They may be thought of as “stupid” or “slow,” making them more vulnerable to bullying.
- Other students may view them as easy targets, thinking the students with disabilities won’t “fight back.”
- Other students may feel nervous around young people with disabilities and react by bullying them.

Here are a few suggestions to stop or prevent bullying aimed at students with disabilities.

Education and Awareness

Have school-wide disability awareness education programs—include programs to educate teachers and other school personnel. Have classroom discussions about a variety of

disabilities. Awareness and education help students understand why some people look, behave, speak, or learn differently than they do and why that's OK.

Don't focus only on physical disabilities. Young people with neurological disorders and developmental delays who don't have a visible disability are frequently targets of bullying. Other students may not understand why they behave or speak differently, why they have trouble learning to read, or why they don't pick up on social cues when "they don't look disabled." Students may be less tolerant of someone's differences when they don't understand that person has a disability.

For example, certain behaviors, physical or verbal tics, anxieties, manners of speech, impulsiveness, repetitive behaviors, or needs for sensory activities may seem "weird" to the typical student.

Realization and Understanding

Help students realize that ignoring young people with disabilities is a form of bullying, even if it is unintentional. Everyone needs friends and to feel recognized and included. When young people are ignored by other students, it can lead to depression, loneliness, and low self-esteem.

When young people understand the nature of someone's disabilities, it becomes easier for them to talk with and include a student who has differences. Children with disabilities are often left out of groups and ignored by peers simply because the other students are nervous or unsure about what to say to them.

Perspective

Help students develop empathy and compassion, and to think about how students with disabilities may feel when they are bullied or left out. Ask, "How would you feel if you were ignored or ate lunch alone every day. How would you feel if you were being teased for something you couldn't change about yourself, like your skin color, eye color, or the way you walked?" Use social stories to discuss, build social skills, and role play kind behavior. Reward acts of kindness in the classroom, and create opportunities for students to "buddy up" with students who may need extra help making friends or completing a project.

Appreciation

Help students realize that children with special needs have differences, but those differences are not "wrong" or "odd;" they are simply part of what makes them unique. Find ways to celebrate and share the unique gifts of special needs students in your class. Everyone has talents, some are just not as obvious or measurable as academics or athletics. For example, the ability to be cheerful under stress, to be friendly to everyone, to show compassion, to memorize well, or to be creative are all valid talents.

Classroom Tips

- Teach students and educators to understand and tolerate differences, especially differences that are not visible. Programs such as "Kids on the Block," which uses puppets to enact problem situations, can help elementary school students with

acceptance, though they tend to focus on visible disabilities. (Information available at <http://www.kotb.com/>)

- Include a social skills curriculum in the school; it can be part of character education.
- Reconsider “zero tolerance policies.” The behavior of children with special needs can be misunderstood and may call for a more individual response. For example, a child with a sensory disorder may bump or crash into a classmate out of a need for sensory stimulation; but the other student (and teacher) may think the child was hitting on purpose, out of malice, or to start a fight. Or an accidental bump in the hallway may cause the special needs student to believe someone hit them on purpose. A child with impulse problems (caused by, *e.g.*, ADHD, fetal alcohol syndrome, or autism) may also upset another student (or teacher) unintentionally when they do or say something without thinking about the consequences. Such situations require sensitivity and adult intervention, as the child with neurological issues may not understand why s/he is being disciplined or why s/he upset someone.
- Have adequate staffing on the playground, in the halls, and in other unstructured times and places.
- Prepare students for the introduction of students with special needs into your class or into a group activity. Knowing what to expect is the key to acceptance.
- Be inclusive in your classroom activities so physically and mentally challenged students can participate. When appropriate, give them opportunities for leadership and responsibility.
- Use verbal instructions that children with neurological disorders and developmental delays will understand. Use written or pictorial instructions whenever appropriate. Many children with neurological disorders are visual/spatial learners. They may have challenges processing auditory information and may need to hear the instructions more than once.
- Give extra help to special needs students without obviously singling them out or making them feel different from their classmates. Extra attention can embarrass young people who just want to “fit in.”
- Offer opportunities for mainstream students to serve as “buddies” to students with disabilities during class, lunch, or recess, or to volunteer as a tutor for younger students with disabilities (having mainstream students tutor grade-level peers can lead to the students with disabilities feeling even more different and “slow”). Working and socializing one-on-one allows students to get to know young people with disabilities as individuals and to become invested in their success.

Social Skills and Bullying Prevention Curricula for Middle School

- ✚ *Adventures in Peacemaking: A Conflict Resolution Activity Guide for School-Age Programs* by William J. Kreidler and Lisa Furlong is available through Educators for Social Responsibility at www.esrnational.org or by calling 1-800-370-2515; or through Project Adventure at www.pa.org or by calling 978-524-4500.
- ✚ *Conflict Resolution in the Middle School* by William J. Kreidler, available through Educators for Social Responsibility at www.esrnational.org.

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- ✚ *Don't Laugh at Me*, Grades 6–8 by Laura Parker Roerden, a joint project of Operation Respect and Educators for Social Responsibility, available free at www.operationrespect.org
 - ✚ *Flirting or Hurting?* A Teacher's Guide on Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment in Schools by Nan Stein and Lisa Sjostrom (National Education Association 1994)

Chapter 4: Interventions That Help Bullies, Targets, and their Families

“Educators need to begin by identifying themselves as part of the solution and by searching for an effective path for helping the child to help him/herself”

— **Committee for Children, Second Step**

While this Guide’s focus is prevention, there will be times when you need to intervene in bullying incidents no matter how comprehensive your plan. How do you help targets? What can you do for bullies? Will you know bullying when you see it? Some general advice for handling bullying is offered here, but every situation and each young person are unique.

We recommend you work with your counseling staff to develop protocols for effectively intervening with targets, bullies, and their families. Be on the lookout for targets and bullies who are in need of professional counseling. The effects of bullying can cut a large swath emotionally through a young person’s life and working with a professional behavioral/mental health professional may be needed.



By the Numbers

One study showed that in 400 hours of videotaped episodes of bullying at school, teachers intervened in only one out of every 25 instances.¹⁰⁹

Warning Signs of Bullying

Adolescents are particularly adept at holding their feelings close to their hearts. It can be difficult for a young person to share that s/he is being targeted for abuse—even with a trusted adult. They may have internalized the abuse and believe they deserve such treatment. They may also feel so disempowered by the experience that they believe there is nothing you can do to help them.

A certain amount of adolescent angst is normal, but a sudden appearance of certain symptoms in a young person is a sign that all is not right; this young person may be the target of abuse at school. Find out more about how the young person is doing by taking the time to ask and listen.

Warning signs include:

- Symptoms of depression, such as withdrawal from normally enjoyable activities, insomnia, and lack of appetite
- Bouts of anger or other emotional outbursts
- Unexplained headaches, stomach aches, or the like
- Excuses to not go to school; increased absenteeism
- A new route to school; avoiding certain students or parts of school
- Refusal to take the bus; sudden requests for rides to school

- Requests for extra money
- Missing clothing or possessions
- Unexplained drop in grades and lack of interest in school
- Avoidance of social events (in school and out of school)
- Increasing isolation from peers

Tip: Bring It Home

Make sure parents know the warning signs of bullying, because they may see many of the behaviors at home.

Responding to Bullying

What to Do

When a young person has been targeted, follow the *10 Steps to Safety*:

1. **Validate the child's right to physical and emotional safety:** "You have a right to feel emotionally and physically safe at school and we will help you be sure that you can have that."
2. **Share your own experiences with bullying when you were that age** (either as a target or bystander). It can help the child not feel so alone; they might be surprised to learn that an adult they respect could have been targeted.
3. **Give assurance that there is nothing wrong with the target:** "You've done nothing to deserve this; it's the bully who is at fault."
4. **Validate feelings.** "That must really hurt. I remember how hard that was when I was your age."
5. **Provide protection.** Provide increased adult supervision of the young person throughout his or her day; build a protective peer network around him through cross-age buddy pairing.
6. **If you're the parent, tell the school what's going on.** With the school you can develop an action plan.
7. **Talk to parents of both targets and bullies:** Talking to parents of bullies should be done by the school, not the target's parent(s). It might escalate the behavior for a parent to go directly to a bully's parent(s).
8. **Get the target and bully help.** Counseling may be necessary for both parties. Help both parties develop social skills and learn new behaviors. Reassure the target that s/he did nothing to create the problem, but explain that are a few ways you can help him or her to be more effective in the situation and make friends and allies.
9. **Confront the bully in private.** Be firm about what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior.
10. **Intervene immediately.** Waiting to deal with a problem might be interpreted as a condoning it.

What Not To Do!

- Do not tell the person being bullied to:
 - ⇒ Toughen up
 - ⇒ Avoid the bully
 - ⇒ Fight back
 - ⇒ Try to solve the problem themselves
- Do not confront the bully or the target in front of their peers. Research shows this sort of attention might make the problem worse by elevating the bully's prestige and sense of power and diminishing the person being bullied.
- Do not ignore the incident. Inaction will be perceived as condoning it.
- Do not try to mediate the problem between a target and bully. The power imbalance makes this approach very unwise.

Targeting as a Symptom of School Climate Problems

It is important to listen to young people who have been targeted by bullying and offer appropriate resources and support. Yet it is also very important that the larger school structure address the overall power imbalances that are associated with bullying.

A school setting in which bullying is common affects the quality of the learning experience and the safety of all students, not just those most immediately involved. Episodes of bullying witnessed by adults are usually just the tip of the iceberg; it is likely there are many more manifestations of unhealthy power imbalances plaguing the school climate. A holistic approach to violence prevention is needed to build and sustain a non-violent school community where all students can learn and contribute their unique talents.



Things to Think About

- How can teachers give all students the opportunity to receive respect and appreciation for their unique talents?
- How can you facilitate learning approaches that appeal to all students and create new opportunities for participation?
- As non-violence is learned through role-modeling, practice, and a deepening understanding of the value of respect for others, what is your school doing to facilitate this learning?
- What other beneficial resources exist for students in the home or community?

Teach Assertiveness Skills to All Students

Teach youth how to respond assertively. Give young people plenty of opportunity to practice responding assertively in role-playing exercises and show them how subtle things, such as body language and tone of voice, can contribute to the message they send. (See Chapter 5 for more information about building skills for responding to bullying.)

Build Self-Esteem

Research shows the best ways to build young people's self-esteem is by giving them opportunities to take on challenges and meet those challenges successfully. But such success does not come without support. Top-performing athletes and others know the value of a coach, positive self-talk, practice, and hard work in developing needed skills.

Intervention programs that help young people develop a new skill—be it chess, art, music, or martial arts—can be extremely effective in developing resilience in young people to meet life's complex challenges. Draw attention to the positive qualities of students in individual and group settings, and always praise young people in a way that is concise, specific and sincere.

Tip

Debra Pepler and Wendy Craig at York University in Toronto advise that targets who have successfully learned to stand up for themselves do so in the first encounter with their bully. This way they will have intervened before the power dynamic becomes too entrenched. Once it has become entrenched, bystanders and caring adults are critical to intervention efforts.



Home Connections: Helping Families of Targets

"We had no way of knowing how much she was taunted."

– Parents of a girl who shot a classmate in retaliation for taunting

Research shows that families of targets are typically very close-knit.¹¹⁰ While caring is a strong value in such families, there might be a quality of over-protectiveness to the parenting. When working with such families, draw attention to the positive aspects of the family. These same positive qualities can also be harnessed as protective factors. Families need to know that you will partner with them to do everything you can to keep their children safe at school and keep them informed every step of the way. Likewise, they need to keep you informed of any changes in their children's moods or behavior, or incidents of bullying that occur outside of school.



Things to Think About (For Families)

- Does my child have the skills s/he needs to maintain friendships or relationships?
- Do I support my child's friendships as needed (e.g., with rides, privacy as appropriate)?
- Does my child have what s/he needs to fit in with his or her peers? (While it's great to encourage individuality in a child, respond as sensitively as possible, within your financial means, to requests for specific jeans or shoes, for example. Fitting in and appearing as normal as possible can be very important for targets.)
- What interests outside of school does my child have? How can I encourage her or him to gain skills or achievement with that interest?

Working with Bullies

“Hatred deforms the hater more than the hated.”—**St. Augustine**

Communicate your intolerance of bullying behavior, but not intolerance of the perpetrator. Many young people who bully are able to break out of patterns of aggression when give appropriate guidance.

Give Them Opportunity to Reflect

Bullies benefit from the chance to reflect on their actions. While this step is just one part of a comprehensive program, it is part of a bully’s coming to understand that you take the incident seriously and that, while there are consequences, you believe s/he can reform. You can prompt reflection through an interview, a survey, or some other self-administered tool. Be sure to include an opportunity to reflect on:

- Why the behavior was wrong
- What the impact was on the target (Encourage empathy and perspective taking; *i.e.*, “How would you have felt?” “How do you think X felt?”)
- What the intent of the comment or action was (or what was the need it was meeting in the perpetrator)
- How many incidents the student has been involved in
- What they think should be the consequence of their action. How s/he might make amends to the target. In many cases it is not a good idea to have the target and the bully confront one another; but in some cases, especially those where the problem is in its early stages or is not too severe, the bully might be able to write a note of apology or offer another non-threatening way to take responsibility for his actions.

Also include:

- An opportunity to recommit to the classroom or school agreements related to the incident
- A definition of the action (bullying, harassment, hate crime) or restatement of the policy the action violates

School Spotlight: Brookline¹¹¹



Harassment Policy Process Sheet (The Bay Cove Academy)

Definition: Harassment on the basis of race, gender, national origin, religion, disability, physical appearance, or sexual orientation in any form will not be tolerated. Sexual harassment is unwanted sexual attention. The range of behaviors include: verbal comments, subtle pressure for sexual activity, leering, pinching, patting, and other forms of unwanted touching.

- What was the harassing behavior?
- At whom was it directed?
- How do you think the behavior affected the other person(s)?
- What was the intent?
- What do you think the consequences of this kind of behavior would be at a job?
- How many times have you been called on this policy?

Provided by Bay Cove Academy, Brookline, MA¹¹²

Anti-Discrimination Process Sheet

Definition: When an individual refers to another person’s nationality, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or physical appearance negatively, in an offensive way, or with the intent to offend, consequences will occur.

1. What were your words/actions that were discriminatory?
2. What was the intent of your comment? For example:

I was mad at the person

I wanted to hurt the person’s feelings.

To make kids laugh

To get attention from staff

To be cool

I don’t know

Other _____

3. How do you think your comments affect the other person(s)?
4. Has anyone ever used those words towards you?
5. How did you feel then?
6. I realize that my words were offensive in the area of nationality, religion, age, race, sexual orientation, gender, or other.
7. How many times have you been called on this policy?

Re-channel Bullies’ Need for Power

Perpetrators of bullying can do well if they are placed in leadership roles that allow them to re-channel their power in positive directions. For example, when appropriate, pair them with younger students as a mentor or have them join the school safety patrol. But be honest with them about their strengths and weaknesses, and monitor their behavior to ensure the safety of other children and that positive change follows. Be sure they contribute to the school in a way that leverages their strengths and does not rely on weaknesses. What’s important to them? How do they think they might best contribute?

Bullies with a chronic pattern of aggression might be paired with an older mentor (high-school students or a respected adult) who can help them develop different ways to relate to other young people. Research from the **Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence** shows that the “Big Brothers Big Sisters” program, which involves adults volunteering as individual mentors, has been effective in reducing violence at schools.¹¹³



Delve Deeper: Are They Bullies?

Screening tools such as the *Systematic Screening for Behavioral Disorders* (Walker & Severson, 1992) might be helpful in identifying young people who are having behavior problems and are in need of professional intervention.



Home Connections: Working with Families of Bullies

Parents of bullies might have difficulty believing their children are engaging in the behavior. In some instances, parents might even condone the behavior because of the many myths about bullying (e.g., the students can handle it, it's normal to bully, or the target had it coming to him).

Interventions with parents of bullies need to model the type of relationships they should be providing at home. Be clear about boundaries and expectations for behavior at your school, be consistent in your communications, and help develop a secure and understanding relationship between the school and the family.

Tips

- Affirm something the family is doing right.
- Show that you care about the student and have faith in his or her ability to change.
- Join with parents for problem solving. (Rather than being the expert and telling them what they should do, ask: “What do you think we could do to help XX learn alternative ways of relating to other students?” or “Why do you think XX might be acting like this now? Has he done this before?”)
- Take a nonjudgmental, respectful attitude toward their beliefs (being open to cultural differences in child rearing).
- Correct misinformation about bullying whenever possible.



Things to Think About (for Families)

- Is there something going on in the young person's life that might be bothering him or her?
- Where might he have learned the bullying behavior? (Is there any way that you might be reinforcing the behavior?)
- How much violent media (movies, TV, computer games) is s/he exposed to?
- Have you communicated your disapproval of bullying?
- What types of supervision do you provide?
- How do you usually intervene when your child is aggressive?

Tips for Parents of Bullies

Help your son or daughter develop alternative options to aggression (and always intervene in aggression with clear, firm consequences). Ask: “How could you solve this problem differently next time?” Help your child learn problem-solving skills.

Monitor and limit exposure to violent media. Adolescents, whether or not they admit it, need limits and can feel that your efforts to protect them are a sign of caring.

Help your child address anything that might be bothering him or her: Ask how they are, then listen, listen, listen. If s/he is having problems, together create a plan for addressing the problems.

Seek counseling services, when appropriate. Nearly all young people can benefit from working with a trained therapist.

Together with your son or daughter create agreements for behavior at home and a system of non-punitive consequences. Be consistent in applying the consequences.

Responding To Hate

Here are some school-wide suggestions from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights for responding to hate crimes or other violations of your anti-harassment policy:¹¹⁴

- Immediately investigate all reported incidents to determine whether the alleged harassment occurred, determine the scope and severity of the behavior, identify the perpetrators, evaluate the harm to the victims, and determine the appropriate corrective action.
- Immediately refer to law enforcement authorities when the acts in question are violent or criminal in nature.
- Issue forthright announcements from school authorities condemning the harassment and promising appropriate corrective action when the incidents are well known or of public concern.
- Punish, as appropriate, harassers who violate provisions of the school’s disciplinary code, such as provisions against sexual, racial, sexual-orientation-related harassment, obscene language, vandalism, other property damage, physical assault, threats and intimidation.
- Use disciplinary action, as appropriate, against employees who violate the school’s policies against sexual, racial, sexual-orientation-related and other types of harassment.
- Offer ongoing remedial action intended to prevent recurrence, such as increasing adult supervision of an activity in which incidents have occurred and close monitoring of the victim’s security.
- Offer emotional and psychological support as needed for the harassment victim.
- Have informal procedures for resolution, such as peer mediation or counseling, when the incident is isolated and not severe. Informal resolution is voluntarily selected by the parties, the harassment victim has full knowledge of the right to pursue the

formal complaint process, and the school determines that informal resolution is appropriate for the incident in question.

- Teach students who engage in harassing conduct more acceptable behavior, especially when the students are very young or the conduct was not intended to be harmful.

Delve Deeper:

See the free resource from www.nssc1.org called "Working Together to Create Safe Schools" for great ideas for working with communities (under "Free Handout").



Home Connections: Violence and Prejudice Reduction Resources



Resources abound for teaming up with parents to prevent bullying and harassment.

A useful fact sheet on preventing violence and bullying can be found at www.yic.gov/drugfree/prevention.html.

"What to Tell Your Child About Prejudice and Discrimination," a joint effort of the National PTA and Anti-Defamation League (ADL), is available through the ADL's Resource Center, 823 United Nations Plaza, NY, NY 10017, or by calling 212-885-7951 or visiting www.adl.org.

A Note for Parents

If your child is being targeted or you suspect your child might be a perpetrator of bullying, there are a few options for approaching the school. Many schools advise going directly to the school administrators with your concerns. Certainly, it's important for parents to work with the school's administration and teaching staff to address episodes of bullying.

Victim advocate and harassment lawyer Sylvia Cedillo and bullying prevention expert Susan Limber recommend that parents also join forces with other parents through their PTA or other networks to address the issue, because the nature of the problem is systemic and not likely to be confined to one child. Collectively communicated concerns are more likely to get a systemic (and therefore more effective) response.

Chapter 5: A Power Play for Peace, *Cool Tools for Students*

“It looked like the bully thought he was more powerful.”

—a young person on “what bullying looks like”

This chapter was written with the needs of students in mind. A successful bullying prevention effort empowers young people to build a school community that makes them feel both physically and emotionally safe.

We envision this chapter being given to young people to equip them to take leadership roles in your prevention efforts. Included are tools they can use to remind themselves what to do when they are targeted or when they are a bystander to someone else being targeted. Also included is a process for planning a service learning project to widen the circle of caring into the community.

It’s All About Power

True bullying involves an imbalance of power. A bully might use his or her social clout or larger size or faster wit to put someone down and then keep them down. Often, the ones who have power are given it simply because of the groups to which they belong. Because some groups enjoy unique power and status, while others are disadvantaged, someone might be harassed simply because of who s/he is. Some students have been targeted because they are, or are perceived to be, gay; because they are Latino or Middle Eastern; or because they have special needs.

By harassing someone believed to be “less than” themselves to enhance their own power, bullies help maintain and reinforce bias in the larger society. In effect, bullies spread hate and infect others who witness their harassment who may be led to believe someone of a certain race, size, or sexual orientation deserves such treatment.

Targets of such harassment can be said to be oppressed. Over time, they may begin to believe deep within themselves that they are not as good as other young people, simply because of who they are. Usually, they are being targeted for something about themselves they cannot change. Or they might be targeted for something about themselves that, to remain true to themselves, they should not change (i.e., religious identity).

Bullies can seem powerful; but bullies gain their power through the response of those who witness bullying. Our silence, laughter, or tacit encouragement of bullying gives power to a bully. The bully can be stripped of that power when someone stands up for a student being targeted; and bullying can be stopped in its tracks.

Rather than gaining power, we all—bullies, targets, and bystanders alike—are weakened by the experience of bullying. True empowerment results when everyone works together to stop bullying.



Reflection

- Which groups in your school seem to have more power and privilege?
- Which groups in your school seem to be most often targeted for bullying?
- In what ways does your school encourage inclusion?
- In what ways does your school encourage exclusion?



Delve Deeper

Challenge Day is a powerful full-day experience for young people where they can explore the devastating effects of bullying and harassment. For more information, see www.challengeday.org.

You've Got the POWER!

The next time you see someone being bullied or are targeted yourself, remember you've got the **POWER**:

- P**lay it cool: Keep your cool; don't respond aggressively or violently.
- O**pen to options: Seek help from an adult; know there is a way out.
- W**ork together: Join together with others, rather than go it alone.
- E**liminate hate: Stop rumors; include excluded students; challenge bias.
- R**esolve to solve: Commit to ending bullying now; know that you can make a difference.

Play it Cool

Bullying behavior is reinforced by the perception that the bully has caused the target distress. The target might be able to withhold that reinforcement by pretending that she or he is unruffled by the harassment. A target might shrug and say, "Whatever," or simply walk away. However, if there is the possibility of physical danger, the nearest adult should be told immediately. Whether you are a bystander or a target, never respond to a bully's aggression with aggression or violence yourself. It will only make the situation worse and may end in someone getting hurt.

Be Open to Options

Sometimes it can feel like there is no way to stop a bully. Bullies depend on people keeping silent about their bullying so they can continue it. Some targets even say, "This is just how my life is going to be." But it is important not to give in. Being a target or witnessing a bullying event can certainly feel overwhelming, but remember that you have options. As a target, you can get help from others. Tell an adult what is happening. Practice some ways to

respond in role plays with friends, teachers, and family. Bystanders can likewise find options for supporting the target and help end bullying throughout the school. (See “20 Things You Can Do When Someone is Being Bullied”, below).

Work Together

There is safety in numbers. If you’re targeted, find a few friends to walk with you in places where you feel unsafe. If you witness bullying, be an ally to an ally. Join with other students—the more the better—to stop bullying as it is happening. Say, “We don’t like the way you’re treating him. Stop it.” Then tell an adult what happened.

Eliminate Hate

Gossip, rumors, graffiti, exclusion, name-calling, e-mails—there are so many ways hate can be spread throughout a school. Yet everyone has the ability to make a difference.

Take the high road and ask others to join you. If you see someone being targeted because of their race, gender traits, age, sexual orientation, religion, or physical or mental abilities, tell the person who did it to stop it and then tell an adult.

Resolve to Solve

It’s no laughing matter when students experience harassment. It ruins your school and makes it hard for everyone to concentrate on work and enjoy school. What can *you* do to help stop bullying? One way is to start a club devoted to ending bullying or join other young people in planning ways to bully-proof your school. *You* can make a difference.

(See “Widening the Circle of Caring —a Student Project” on page 112 for a way to work with other students to spread the word and be a bullying buster.)



Reflection

- Think of a time when you spread a rumor, put someone down, or excluded someone. How did it make you feel?
- Why do you think you did it?
- Were there any underlying emotional needs you were trying to meet?
- What kinds of actions from others make you feel respected?

20 Things You Can Do When Someone is Being Bullied

1. Tell an adult.
2. Tell the bully that you don't like the behavior.
3. Be a buddy (walk with a targeted person in places they are likely to be targeted).
4. Include young people who are usually excluded.
5. Stop gossip in its tracks.
6. Tell a target that you don't think s/he should be treated like that.
7. Invite a target to have lunch with you and your friends.
8. Don't laugh when someone makes fun of someone—even if it has humor to it.
9. Tell a target something that you like about him or her.
10. Support other students when they stand up to a bully.
11. Tell someone who stood up to a bully for someone that you really admired what s/he did.
12. Listen to a target's story and keep it confidential from other students; (remember that it's okay to tell an adult if someone needs help.)
13. Remove graffiti from walls.
14. Surprise a target with a thoughtful gift.
15. _____
(your idea)
16. _____
(your idea)
17. _____
(your idea)
18. _____
(your idea)
19. _____
(your idea)

Personal Bullying Buster Pledge

Everyone has a role to play in ending bullying. What will be your role?

After the following reflection, create your own pledge to end bullying.

My Bullying Buster Pledge

Beginning today, I will. . . .

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

How Am I Doing With My Pledge?

My Goal For The Week:



Reflection

One of the ways I am a good friend to others is. . .

One of the ways I'd like to be a better friends to others is. . .

Widening the Circle of Caring: A Student Project

In many ways, the bullying you see in your school reflects problems in our society. What problems in your community bother *you*? Is there anything you've learned from your experience of improving your school that you'd like to share with others? Do you want to

make a difference in the lives of students in other schools, or the people in your neighborhood, city, or town?

The following process can be used with a group of other concerned students who want to widen the circle of caring beyond your school. The process can be student or adult led. It will take two sessions of about 1 hour for planning, with at least a week in between the two sessions.

It might be helpful to enlist the aid of a caring adult in supporting your efforts. But whatever you do, make it your own. This is **YOUR** project!



Reflection

A time I feel I made a difference in the lives of others was . . .

It made me feel . . .

Activity: Heal the Hate!

Session 1: What Did We Learn?

Materials needed: large sheets of paper, enough markers for everyone, tape, a few balls, and a timer.

1. Play a game of group juggle.¹¹⁵ Have everyone (including the leader) stand in a large circle. For this game, everyone will need to say a word they think describes themselves that begins with the first letter of their first name—followed by their first name. For example, “Silly Sam,” “Fun Fran.” Be creative with this part. There’s no need to be modest! What about yourself are you proud of? You’ll need to listen to everyone’s name and try to remember it for the next part.
2. Once you’ve gone around the circle and everyone has said his or her name, bring out a ball. You’ll say your name and then “hello (description) (name)” to the person you will be throwing the ball to. Then throw the ball. That person then says, “thank you (description) (name),” and then “hello (description) name” and so on. The only rule is that you must throw to someone who has not yet had the ball thrown to him or her. You can throw the ball any way you want—under your leg, behind your back, with both hands, or with one hand.
3. Once everyone has had the ball thrown to him or her, stop and explain the next part. You’ll be going around the circle again with the ball, but you must now remember not only the names, but throw the ball in the same order and the same manner you did the first time. Only this time the group will try to do it more quickly.
4. Once you’ve gone around the circle again quickly, start again, in the same order and manner. But after the second or third throw, add a second ball. While the first ball is going around the circle, the second ball will also go in the same order and in the same

manner you established. Add a third ball. And a fourth! See how quickly everyone can do this! Do it a few times and see how good at it you can get.

5. Explain that you're all here to together plan a project that brings your bullying buster efforts to someone else. You might want to do something for another school or for your town or city. You don't know what you will do or for whom. And that's why you're all here together—to think about that. You'll have two sessions to plan your project.
6. Ask everyone to find another person they don't know very well. (Or if everyone knows everyone else well, you can count off up to half the number of people in the group twice. For example, if there are twenty people in your group, you'll count off to the number ten twice; then 1s, 2s, 3s and so on will be partners.)
7. In pairs, you will each have 2 minutes to finish a statement. (Put the statement up on poster paper so everyone can see it.) While one person is speaking, the other will merely listen and record—no commenting or interrupting. Another ground rule is that you should NOT name names of specific students or adults in your sharing. Then the partners will switch and the listener will speak and the speaker will listen. Here are the statements; assign one statement to each pair—it's okay for statements to be answered by more than one pair if you have a large group:
 - One thing I've noticed about bullying in our school is. . .
 - Ways our school has improved since we've been bullying busting. . .
 - Something important I realized or learned about bullying is. . .
 - Something I think encourages people to bully is. . .
 - If there were one thing everyone should know about bullying it would be. . .

Tell everyone when 2 minutes have elapsed and it is time to switch who is speaking and who is listening. Ask the pairs to write down their completed statements. When you are finished, ask for a few pairs to volunteer to share what they said.

8. Now hang up the written statements around the room. There will be five stations, with the above statements on the top of the poster paper and several sheets of paper next to the statement. Students can circulate to any of the stations and add their ideas about that statement to the blank pages with a marker. The same ground rule as before applies: No naming of specific young people or adults. It's fine to talk to one another about the questions as you walk around—in fact, it's encouraged!
9. Once everyone has finished addressing the statements, the group should look at each station. Give everyone a few minutes of silence to read the answers. Then facilitate a discussion. Ask: Are there any questions anyone would like to ask about anyone's answers? Is there anything you'd like to comment on? Is there anything you'd like to add? What do you notice about the answers on these sheets? Summarize any key points made.
10. Tell the group: "Now that we've thought about what we've learned from our efforts thus far, our job is to think about some way we can spread our bullying busting beyond our school. For the next week, we're going to be like roving reporters in our

community. Our job is to look for a problem to solve or an opportunity to spread caring and heal the hate.

Pretend you are visiting here from another country. You've never been to the United States; you've never even seen American television shows or movies. What do you notice about how people treat one another? What examples of caring do you see? What examples of uncaring behavior do you see? Keep notes of what you observe. (On a sheet of paper write two columns: *Caring Behaviors* and *Uncaring Behaviors* to use for the next session). Next week you'll meet to share what we noticed."

(**NOTE:** Keep the written statements from #8 for next session.)

Session 2: It's Just Not Right That. . . .

Materials Needed: Rope cut into 3-foot lengths (one length per person); poster paper and markers; the written statements from session #1 (hang them around the room).

1. Begin with a game of "Our Island."¹⁶ For this game, give everyone a length of rope and tell them it has magical properties. "When you step into this rope circle, you immediately are in a safe place where nothing and no one can harm you. We can create our own islands of caring." Invite everyone to become their own little island (they will put an unbroken circle on the floor with their rope and then step into it.) There is only one rule to this game: "Everyone has to be on an island (with his or her feet within a rope circle) or they will fall into the deep sea of despair."
2. "So how does it feel? Hmm. A little boring, huh? Maybe someone wants a little company?" Now (without warning) remove one rope circle from the floor. And then another. And then another. Hopefully, each person who has been left "shipwrecked" will be invited onto another island. If not, prompt the group by restating the only rule of the game: "Everyone has to be on an island (with his or her feet within a rope circle) or they will fall into the deep sea of despair."
3. Keep removing circles until there is only one circle left. (This will become a group problem-solving activity, as everyone tries to find a way to keep everyone from falling into the sea of despair.) Do not help the group problem solve, but keep restating the one rule of the game. (**NOTE:** Their feet have to be in the circle, but they do not have to be standing! Many groups have solved this problem by sitting in a circle with just their heels inside the rope circle, technically meeting the one requirement of the game.)
4. Now have a brief discussion: "How did it feel as each rope circle was removed?" "What went well?" "What could have gone better?"
5. "Give yourself a big hand for saving everyone from the sea of despair!" Explain that today you will both identify a problem in your community to solve and create a plan to solve it.
6. Have everyone bring out their "reporter notebooks" and on the poster papers chart suggested "Examples of caring behavior" and "Examples of uncaring behavior." As you chart, point out any common themes that emerge.
7. Break students into pairs to share: "Thinking of what you saw in your communities, and what you heard other young people saw, complete the statement 'A big problem

in our community is. . . ? Give each person 2 minutes to share. Announce when it's time to switch partners.

8. Ask each pair to report out about what they discussed and chart the responses. In the large group, look at the things that students identified as “really big problems” in your community. Tell students you want to choose one problem and then plan to solve it. Facilitate a discussion about which problem would be a good one to work on. Move the group to consensus about which problem they will solve together.
9. Now together follow steps 1 through 4 of the STP problem-solving process (below) for the problem you identified.

STP: A Problem-Solving Process

1. Specify the problem
 2. List helping and hindering forces
 3. Specify multiple solutions
 4. Plan for action
 5. Anticipate obstacles
10. Create a timeline for the project. Now elect various committees to plan the execution of your action plan, addressing step 5 of the STP problem-solving process.



Delve Deeper

Great resources for young people can be found at www.bullystoppers.com.

In Conclusion...

Bullying is characterized by an imbalance of power between target and bully; intent to harm; the threat of further aggression, and the creation of a hostile environment for one or more students. Bullying behavior which is left uncorrected harms targets, bullies, bystanders, and the overall school environment. When common myths about bullying are dispelled, students, educators, and parents alike come to realize the importance of both bullying prevention activities and interventions in episodes of bullying when they occur. This Guide provides tools useful in bringing about a systemic change in the culture of your school; a culture in which students are encouraged to be more proactive in showing care and respect for one another, and in which adults take an active interest in the safety and character development of students. It is equally important that adults and responsible bystanders intervene in bullying episodes when they become aware of them. Moreover, bullying has evolved with the advent of new technologies, so that cyberbullying is a key concern for 21st century educators, and needs to be addressed just as energetically as more physical forms of intimidation.

Everyone in a school and community has a role to play in bully-proofing the school. Students can become invested in bullying prevention through the process of co-creating “Group Agreements for Behavior” which go above and beyond the minimum standards of a student code of conduct. Students can also be nurtured as they show pro-social skills, like offering support to a target, and withdrawing the tacit permission bystanders can give to bullies with their silence. Adults provide leadership by stressing that each student is entitled to a safe place to learn, so that s/he can take full advantage of opportunities to develop his or her unique gifts and abilities. Adults can also discourage bullying behavior by ensuring that bullying is met with appropriate consequences which will help the bully understand the harm that is done and channel his or her need for power and status along more constructive paths. A school can also reduce bullying by increasing supervision of students in hallways, locker rooms, playgrounds, and cafeterias, where misconduct often goes on out of the sight of teachers and administrators. Open lines of communication between educators and students are essential, so that bullies cannot hide behind a “code of silence” that gives them shelter for wrongful conduct.

Teachers set an example for students in the way they conduct their classroom activities, with the behaviors they themselves model and the ways in which they stimulate students’ moral thinking and positive behaviors. Through constructive discipline, teachers can harness teachable moments which arise when bullying comes to their attention. The objective is less to punish the bully than to help her or him modify problem behaviors through social learning. Teachers can also reduce the incidence of bullying by taking steps to alleviate the power imbalance between bully and target, and mobilizing peer support for targets.

Educators, parents, and the adults in young peoples’ lives need to be alert for the warning signs of bullying. The “10 Steps to Safety” at page 100-01 provide a roadmap for effective interventions. Bullying cannot be allowed to continue and interventions must occur

as soon as possible. Inaction will likely be interpreted as condoning the behavior or suggesting that adults will do nothing about it.

Like the title character in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, students who are allies to targets are heroes whose moral courage should be held up as an example for emulation. There are many ways bystanders can help targets out, some of which involve confronting the bully and many that can defuse situations without confrontation. The social skills and character traits that lend themselves to being an ally to a target are also the qualities prized in model citizens.

While certain students like LGBT youth and students with mental or physical disabilities are at higher risk for being targeted, bullying also cuts across traditional social boundaries. Prejudice reduction efforts can help change a school climate which might be fuelling social conflict. Yet the culture of caring and respect advocated in this Guide is a prophylactic against cruel behaviors that do not necessarily reflect divisions in the society at large.

The moral and legal responsibility schools have for the well-being and academic development of students requires that bullying be acknowledged as a problem in need of solutions. This Guide is intended to equip all the relevant actors to make a difference in bully-proofing a school. The steps outlined are not exhaustive, but they can focus a school's willingness to act with the appropriate skills and techniques that have proven effective against bullying in Massachusetts schools in actual practice. Ultimately, however, each school and community need to take ownership of their own specific problems with bullying, and tailor responses to the circumstances of their site. There is no "one size fits all" approach. Most essential to effective anti-bullying strategies are a willingness to acknowledge the problem exists, and a collective effort among students, educators, school staff, parents, and the community.

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