

## Bullying Conflict Resolution

### Rationale

The purpose of the procedure on bullying is to promote consistency of approach and to create a climate in which all types of bullying are regarded as unacceptable. Attitudes and practices can contribute to bullying, to lower levels of confidence, self-esteem and lack of achievement.

### Aims

The anti-bullying program with the district schools seeks to accomplish the following goals:

- To promote a secure and happy environment free from threat, harassment and any type of bullying behavior.
- To take positive action to prevent bullying from occurring.
- To inform parents and students of the school's expectations and to foster a productive partnership which helps to maintain a bully-free environment.
- To make staff aware of their role in fostering the knowledge and attitudes which will be required to achieve the above items.

### Definition of Bullying

Bullying can be defined as repeated and systematic harassment and attacks on others, perpetrated by individuals or groups. Bullying takes many forms and can include many different behaviors, such as but not limited to:

1. Physical violence and attacks
2. Verbal taunts, name-calling and put-downs including ethnically-based verbal abuse and gender-based put-downs
3. Threats and intimidation
4. Extortion or stealing of money and possessions
5. Exclusion from the peer group

### Crucial Factors to Combat Bullying

1. Awareness and involvement on the part of adults, with regards to bully/victim problems.
2. Survey of bully/victim problems to determine the scope of the problem in each school.
3. A school conference day devoted to bully/victim problems.
4. Appropriate supervision during recess, lunch time and changing of classes by adult staff.
5. Consistent and immediate consequences for aggressive behavior.
6. Generous praise for pro-social and helpful behavior by students.

### Crucial Factors to Combat Bullying (cont'd)

7. Specific class rules against bullying.
8. Class meetings about bullying.
9. Serious individual talks with aggressors and with victims.
10. Serious talks with parents of bullies and victims.
11. A meeting of the school's parent organization on this topic.
12. A curriculum that promotes communication, friendship and assertive skills.
13. Improved communication among administrators, teachers, parents and staff.
14. Listening respectfully to bullying concerns raised by student, parents and staff.
15. Avoidance of sex-role stereotyping. (e.g. males need to be strong and tough)
16. Avoidance of competitiveness at school.
17. Use of classmates to help alleviate the plight of victims and include them in group activities.

The above measures are considered part of an effective school-wide anti-bullying program, per research on this topic.

### Staff Responsibilities

1. To implement procedures to confront bullying in any form.
2. To listen to all parties involved in incidents.
3. To investigate as fully as possible.
4. To take appropriate action, or to refer the matter to a member of the administration.
5. To record and inform parents of bullying incidents.
6. To promote the use of a range of teaching and learning styles and strategies which challenge bullying behavior.
7. To promote open management styles which facilitate communication and consultation throughout the school setting.
8. To foster by example the values the school believes in.
9. To promote the use of interventions which are the least intrusive and most effective.
10. To hold regular discussions on this issue with administration, staff, students and parents.
11. To support victims of bullying by means of individual and peer counseling.
12. To initiate efforts to change the behavior of the bullies through class discussions, counseling, reinforcement and sanctions where appropriate.

**Suggested Steps for Intervening in Bullying Situations**

- Intervene immediately; stop the bullying behavior once seen or as soon as aware of it.
- Talk to the bully and victim separately. If more than one child is involved in perpetuating the bullying, talk to each of the perpetrators separately, in quick succession.
- If a peer mediation program is in place, be careful in referring cases where there is bullying, as the power imbalance will likely make this a very intimidating situation for the victim. The victim's communication and assertiveness skills may be very low and will be further eroded by fear resulting from past intimidation and fear of future retaliation. Consider excluding such cases from peer mediation.
- Consult with administrators and/or other teachers to gain a broader perspective on the problem and to alert them to the problem. Get advice as to how this situation fits with Board and school policies and/or refer to written guidelines.
- Expect that the perpetrators will minimize and deny his/her/their actions and responsibility.
- Refer to school and class codes of conduct in telling the bully why the behavior was unacceptable. Indicate the expected behavior. Inform the bully(ies) of the sanctions which will be imposed and that their parents will be involved.
- Reassure the victim that all possible steps will be taken to prevent a recurrence.
- Inform the parents of the bully and of the victim as soon as possible. Involve parents early before behavior patterns become entrenched and more serious.
- Involve parent in designing a creative plan of action, whenever possible.
- Involve victims in groups and situations in which they can make appropriate friends and develop social skills and confidence. (e.g. peer support groups, new student orientation group, class cooperative learning group, special activity group or club) The goals are to develop the child's peer support network, social and other skills and confidence. Specific instruction in assertiveness may also be helpful.
- For the bully(ies) provide specific re-education regarding his/her/their behavior in addition to sanctions such as removal of privileges, detention, etc.
- Follow up in communicating with parents and with other teachers and administrators about the situation until it is clearly resolved.

**Suggested Steps for Intervening in Bullying Situations (cont'd)**

- Monitor the behavior of the bully and of the victim on a school-wide basis.
- If the bully(ies) do not change their behavior, despite concerted efforts by school personnel, they, not the victim, should be removed from the class or school or transferred to another program/situation. Consequences for the perpetrators will be of considerable interest to all students and will set the tone for future situations.

**Classroom Activities and Resources**

Classroom activities on an ongoing basis are important to the anti-bullying program. The following measures should be taken in the classroom:

- Developing a class code of conduct with regard to treatment of other students, with specific reference to bullying and exclusion of other students. Both desirable and unacceptable behavior should be simply and clearly defined and written, with student input.
- Following up with immediate, consistent, non-violent consequences for all bullying and aggressive behavior.
- Recognizing and praising positive, friendly and supportive behaviors of students toward one another on a frequent basis.
- Teaching non-violent, non-racist and non-sexist ideas, values and behaviors, as a core part of the daily curriculum.
- Teaching social skills, including communication, making friends, accepting feedback from others, conflict resolution, appropriate assertiveness and problem solving.
- Modeling by the teacher of positive, respectful, and supportive behavior by teacher toward students.
- Using cooperative learning groups to include less popular, more timid children in small, positive and accepting social groups.