

Bullying

What Students and
Their Families Need
to Know

Gateway Regional School District
12 Littleville Road
Huntington, MA 01050

Bullying

What Parents and Students Need to Know

Most parents assume that children generally get along with one another, yet the occurrence of bullying is more prevalent than most parents realize. Bullying is a serious problem that can affect a student's academic and social progress. A comprehensive prevention and intervention plan that involves students, parents school staff, and the community can help ensure that all students are able to learn in a safe and fear-free environment. Safe schools are everyone's responsibility!

What is Bullying?

A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, **repeatedly** and **over time**, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself. The definition also includes the following components:

- An imbalance of power
- Aggressive behavior that involves unwanted, negative actions
- Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or the target's property
- Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to self or damage to their property
- Creates a hostile environment for the target
- Infringes on the rights of the target
- Intentional

. Boys typically engage in direct bullying whereas girls are more apt to use subtler, indirect strategies. Direct bullying seems to increase through the elementary years, peak in the middle school/junior high years, and decline during the high school years. Direct physical assault seems to decrease with age; verbal abuse appears to remain constant.

Be alert to warning signs of bullying

- Watch for signs that your child might be participating in bullying behaviors. Here are some questions that you might want to ask yourself:
- Has my child ever been accused of being a bully?
- Has my child ever been in trouble for fighting (physically or verbally) with other children?
- Does my child become easily frustrated when he/she does not get his/her way?
- How does my child interact with other children? Is he/she dominant or aggressive?
- Does my child refer to other children as "stupid" or use other negative terms to describe others?

Definitions/Bullying Behaviors

Bully (Aggressor, perpetrator)

Anyone who repeatedly threatens or intimidates others on purpose either physically or emotionally

Target (Victim)

A person who is bullied or hurt by another person's intentional actions

Bystander

A spectator or onlooker who is near a bullying event or situation, but does not participate

Physical Aggression

Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, destroying property

Social Aggression

Spreading rumors, racial slurs, excluding or isolating from a group, silent treatment

Verbal Aggression

Name calling, teasing, threatening, intimidating phone call/messages

Intimidation

Graffiti, playing dirty tricks, taking possessions, coercion, eye-rolling, recurring put-downs

Written Aggression

Note writing, graffiti

Sexual Harassment

Comments or actions of a sexual nature which are unwelcome and make the recipient uncomfortable. Examples: rumors of a sexual nature, inappropriate touching, grabbing, comments about someone's body.

Cyberbullying

Tormenting, threatening, harassing, humiliating, embarrassing or otherwise targeting someone through the use of technology or any other electronic communication.

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What You Can Do If You Suspect Your Child Is Bullying

If you discover that your child is bullying others, it may be very difficult for you to understand or accept. Here are some suggestions:

- Discuss school rules and behavior expectations with your child. Ensure that your child understands what behaviors are acceptable and what behaviors are unacceptable.
- Find out what your child has been doing. What has your child been accused of doing? What does he admit to doing?
- Calmly talk to your child about why he/she is engaging in such behaviors. Do not be accusational or confrontational as your child may be experiencing social or emotional difficulties that he/she may not understand or know how to handle. Some children may feel pressure to participate in bullying behaviors in order to fit in with peers or to avoid being bullied themselves.
- Report any incidents of bullying behaviors to school officials, even if your child may be participating in the bullying behaviors. Hold your child accountable for his/her behaviors.
- Don't be afraid to seek outside help. Your child's counselor may be able to offer additional suggestions or work with you and your child to change behavior.

What You Can Do If You Think Your Child Is Being Bullied

- Ask your child what takes place in school, what he/she does when there is free time, how he/she has been feeling. Talk with your child regarding his/her feelings about school.
- Teach your child that reporting bullying is NOT tattling! Encourage him/her to report bullying to school officials.
- Report any incidences of bullying behaviors, even if your child is not the target of the bullying. Talk to the school counselor or administrator.
- Do not confront the bully on your own. This may only escalate the situation and ultimately make things worse for your child.

How to Help Your Child Take A Stand Against Bullying

What students (bystanders) can do to support a caring community:

- Stop rumors
- Don't pass on hurtful notes, emails, messages etc.
- Speak up for the target
- Speak up to a bully: "We don't do that here."
- Ask someone new to join you at lunch
- Join up with someone who is being bothered and take him or her out of the situation
- Let adults know when someone needs help
- Includes others in your group or activity
- Do not participate in gossip

But also, let your child know that when taking a stand to never put itself in danger.

Normal Conflict and Bullying

Conflict is a normal part of relationships and an integral part of childhood learning. It is important for children to distinguish the difference between normal conflict and bullying.

Recognizing the Difference

<u>Normal Conflict</u>	<u>Bullying</u>
Equal power-friends	Imbalance of power, not friends
Happens occasionally	Repeated negative actions
Accidental	Purposeful
Not serious	Serious-threat of harm
Equal emotional reaction	Strong emotional reaction on part of the victim
Not seeking power or attention	Seeking power, control
Not trying to get something	Trying to gain things or power
Remorse – take responsibility	No remorse, blames victim
Effort to solve the problem	No effort to solve the problem

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When Is Telling Not Tattling?

Sometimes children become confused about the difference between *telling* and *tattling*. Below you will see a chart that will help you understand and explain the difference to your child.

<u>Tattling</u>	Versus	<u>Telling</u>
Unimportant	vs	Important
Harmless	vs	Harmful or dangerous
Can handle by self	vs	physically or psychologically Needs help from an adult to solve
Purpose is to get someone in trouble	vs	Purpose is to keep people safe
Behavior is accidental	vs	Behavior is purposeful

Bullying Prevention Resources

Websites:

www.olweus.org Dan Olweus, creator of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*

www.MARCCenter.com Excellent resource for parents, schools and communities

<http://www.paxis.org> Dr. Dennis Embry's site about the Kernels approach. Good information.

www.antibullying.net Anti-bullying network, includes specific tips for school staff and parents.

www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov Stop Bullying Now! – site for children, parents, other adults.

<http://ncpc.org/> National Crime Prevention Council

www.ncdjdp.org/cpsv Center for Prevention of School Violence – statistics, funding sources.

<http://allstarsprevention.com/> All-Stars, a model middle school prevention curriculum.

www.teachingtolerance.org Southern Poverty Law Center's website includes tips on what can be done at school, community, family to model and teach tolerance.

www.rosalindwiseman.com Rosalind Wiseman's site – includes information about "Owning Up" middle/high school prevention curriculum, as well as information about her books, including *Queen Bees & Wannabees*.

<http://www.netlingo.com/> Link to online/cell phone acronyms

<http://www.missingkids.com/adccouncil/lingo.html> Link to acronyms

<http://real-knowledge.com/chatacro.html> Link to acronyms

Books:

Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls by Rachel Simmons (2002) Harcourt Press

The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander by Barbara Coloroso (2003) Harper Collins

Schools Where Everyone Belongs by Stan Davis (2005) Research Press



TRUE OR FALSE: A LITTLE QUIZ FOR YOU

1. Your child's school has a Bully Prevention curriculum that is taught in Health Class.

True _____ False _____

2. It is bullying if an older child says mean things to a younger child as he gets on the bus each day.

True _____ False _____

3. A child who is being bullied should keep it to themselves and hope that it stops.

True _____ False _____

4. Tattling and reporting incidents of bullying are NOT the same thing.

True _____ False _____

5. A parent should work with teachers, the counselor and other workers at the school when their child is either a target or is showing signs of being a bully.

True _____ False _____

Dear Parents – Could you go over this packet with your child, please, and then do this little quiz. When you sign and return the quiz, each child will get a sticker and the quiz will be returned as a way of recognizing their participation.

THANK YOU SO MUCH !

Parent or child's
signature _____

