

Building a Culture of Belonging: Our Approach to Bullying Prevention

February 19, 2026



Connection Before Content:

Think back to when you were in Elementary School.

What was one specific thing a teacher or a peer did that made you feel completely safe to be yourself?



Bullying Prevention: Overview

- Our Approach
- Guidance and Response
- Systems of Belonging



Our Approach

Our work is both proactive and responsive. We work hard to prevent bullying before it starts, and we respond clearly and consistently when concerns arise.



PROACTIVE:

How We Prevent Bullying & Build Belonging

Belonging is not accidental — it is structured.

Building a Community of care

Morning meetings building community

Positive teacher language

ICS Way & Speak up

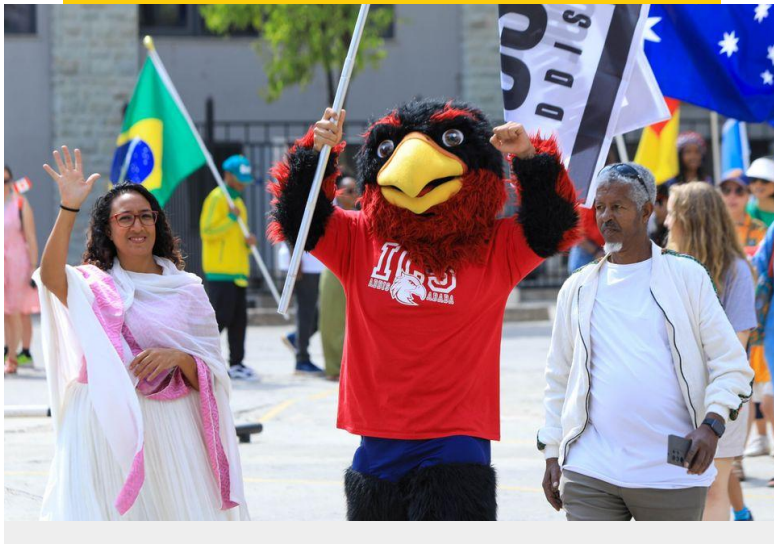
Teaching skills with Second Step

- SEL
- Child Protection
- Bullying Prevention





PROACTIVE: What is in Your child's Toolbox?



- The ICS Way
- Speak Up
- Social & Emotional Curriculum
- Restorative Practices
- ICS Response Process

PROACTIVE: Second Step Bullying Prevention Unit



HELP STOP BULLYING

Recognize **R**eport **R**euse

Is it mean on purpose?
Am I able to get it to stop?

I need to report bullying.

Stop it.
Stand up.

Be respectful and kind.

Include others.

BYSTANDER POWER

Stand up for someone being bullied.

Don't join in.

Walk away and report.

secondSTEP

- Whole ES Focus
- Second Step Unit
- EY5-G5 (EY Kindness)
- Counselors very involved
- Reinforced by all ES staff including specialists
- Assemblies
- STUCO

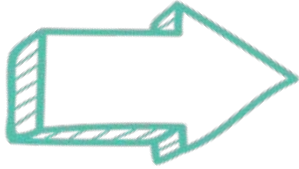
Bullying Prevention Unit

Core Components



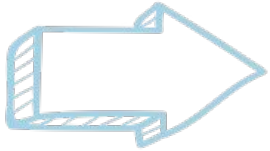
- **Recognize** (What is Bullying?):
 - Rude behavior, mean behavior , bullying
 - Bullying (repeated, intentional harm, power imbalance)
- **Report** Bullying:
 - Telling a trusted adult if they or someone else is being bullied,
 - Distinguishing this from "tattling".
- **Refuse** Bullying:
 - Use a calm, respectful, and strong voice to tell someone to stop.
- Being an **Upstander**
 - Empowering students to take action by supporting the victim, not feeding into the bully's power, and reporting.

Inappropriate Behavior



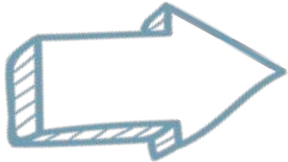
Rude

- **Unintentional** action that hurts another person's feelings or body
- Bad manners / Being impolite
- Action is **NOT** repeated and not targeted at anyone in particular



Mean

- An **intentional** comment or action that hurts another person's feelings or body.
- Action is not repetitive or ongoing
- Can be verbal or physical



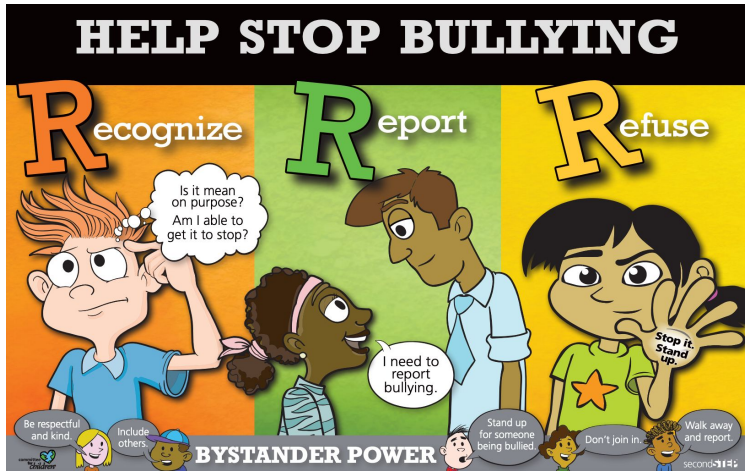
Bullying

Bullying is an **ongoing** and **deliberate** misuse of **power** in relationships through **repeated** verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological **harm**.

(NCAB)



Key Aspects to Bullying Behavior:



- It's Hurtful
- It's Intentional
- It's Repetitive
- It involves a Power Imbalance



Behaviors we See: The impulse Stage

Lower Elementary






Developmental Context



In these years, children are learning how to be a friend by trial and error.

- **Relationships** are “fluid.” A best friend at 9:00 AM can be an “enemy” by 10:00 AM.
- **The “Me” Center:** They are still developing perspective-taking. They don’t just **have** a feeling; they **embody it** (and one feeling at a time).

Common Behaviors:

-  **Physical Impulsivity:** Hitting, kicking, or grabbing when words fail.
-  **Social Testing:** “You’re not my friend anymore” or “You can’t come to my party.”
-  **Bossiness:** High desire to be “the leader” or the one who sets the rules of the game.
-  **Rule Rigidity:** Tattling is common because they are obsessed with “fairness” and following rules.
-  **Parallel to Interactive Play:** Learning how to move from playing **near** someone to truly collaborating.

At this age, “bullying” is rarely premeditated. It is usually a lack of impulse control and a desire for **immediate power**.



Behaviors we See: The Social Stage

Upper Elementary

The Rise of Social Logic & Group Dynamics



As children mature, their cognitive abilities sharpen. They become more aware of “the group” and their place within it.

- **Friendships** become more stable but also more exclusive.
- They care deeply about what their peers think. They are more “reasonable”, but they use that logic to navigate (and sometimes manipulate) social circles.

Common Behaviors:



Relational Aggression: Using “The Silent Treatment” or spreading rumors to maintain social status.



Exclusionary “Clubs”: Intentional “leaving out” based on shared interests or perceived “coolness.”



Verbal Sparring: Using sarcasm, teasing, or “inside jokes” that might make others feel small.



Competitive Play: Arguments over “cheating” or skill levels in sports and games.



Identity Awareness: Becoming highly conscious of difference (clothing, hobbies, abilities) and using them to categorize peers.

Our goal is to move from **compliance** (following rules) to **conscience** (understanding how my social choices and my words affect the emotional safety of my community).



RESPONSE: When Bullying Concerns Arise

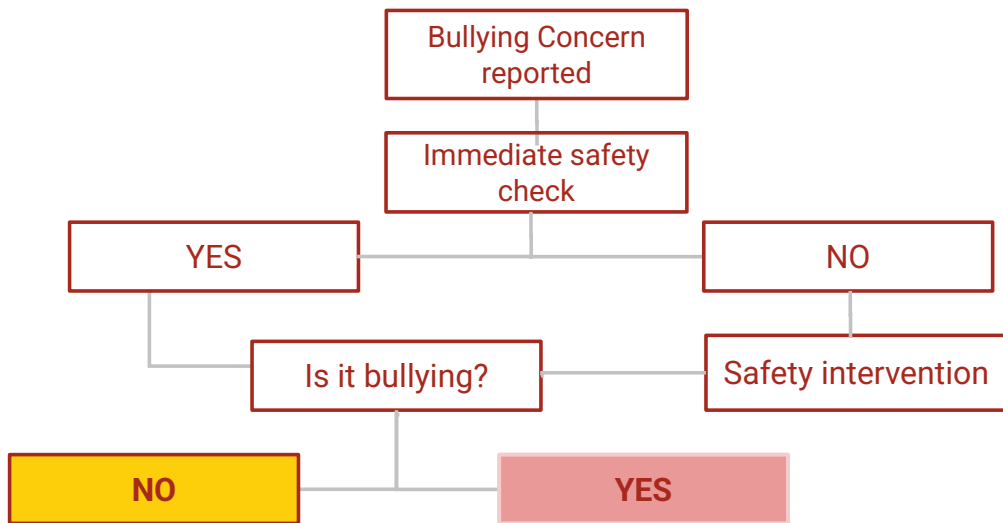
Immediate Priorities

- When a concern is reported:
- Ensure student safety
- Gather information from all involved
- Determine: conflict, rude or mean behavior, or bullying



“Bullying is not handled with punishment. It is handled with structure, support, accountability, and monitoring.”

Responding to Misbehavior



The process includes:

1. Communicate with families
2. Provide support to the harmed student
3. Intervene with the student displaying harmful behavior
4. Determine clear consequences (when appropriate)
5. Provide skill-building interventions
6. Conduct restorative conversations (when appropriate)
7. Monitor with ongoing supervision

“Our goal is behavior change, not just behavior control.”

Parents can expect:

- Timely communication
- Transparency about steps taken for your child
- Ongoing updates if behavior continues
- Confidentiality for all students involved





THE PROBLEM SOLVING MODEL



Small Problem:



I can solve it!

Medium Problem:



I can try to solve it. If the problem is still there, I will ask an adult for help

Big Problem:



someone may be hurt or in danger, I need adult help right away.

Response: Parents as Partners

Supporting and guiding your child through peer conflict

Small Problem:

Small problem/ Child Owned Problem (RUDE BEHAVIOR)



I can solve it!



Listen + Guide

Step 1: Get on their level and make eye contact

Step 2: Listen to your child without distractions

Step 3: Validate how they feel and brainstorm together (guide)



Partnership: What can you say?

“How did you feel when this happened?”

“Is there anything that I can do to help?”

“What do you think you can say next time? What do you think might work?”

“Tell me more about what was happening around you.”



“What’s going to make you feel better about this situation?”



Response: Parents as Partners

Supporting and guiding your child through peer conflict

Shared Problem (MEAN BEHAVIOR)

Medium Problem:



I can try to solve it. If the problem is still there, I will ask an adult for help

Listen + Support

Step 1: Active Listening

Step 2: Find out how your child tried to handle the situation and the context.

Step 3: Brainstorm solutions, role play

Step 4: Let the teacher know and copy your child's School Counselor and Deputy Principal on the email



Partnership: What can you say?

What can you do if this happens again? Let's practice together!

"That sounds really hurtful. Can you tell me exactly what happened right before that was said/done?"

"It sounds like there's some friction there. What do you think started the conflict?"

What do you think they were trying to get out of that interaction? Were they angry, or just trying to look cool?



"I will contact your teacher so we can help you together with this. How do you feel about that?"





Response: Parents as Partners

Supporting and guiding your child through peer conflict



Adult Owned Problem (BULLYING)

Listen + Guide + Inform

Step 1: Listen to + manage **your** feelings

Step 2: Active listening skills

Step 3: Give them time before you talk and gather information

Step 4: Letting your child know this is an **Adult Owned Problem.**

Step 5: Partner with the School Team (Deputy Principal, Teacher, Counselor)

Step 6: Follow up

Big Problem:



someone may be hurt or in danger, I need adult help right away.



Partnership: What can you say?

"I am so glad that you are sharing this with me. I want you to tell me everything that happened."

"I hear you, and I believe you."

"It took a lot of courage to share this. This is not your fault, and you don't have to carry this by yourself anymore."

"I want to make sure I have all the details right when I talk to the school. Can you help me understand how long this has been going on?"



"Are there specific places—like the playground or the cafeteria—where you feel the least safe?"



Partnership: SIGNS AT HOME TO CONSIDER

Significant changes such as:

- **School Avoidance:** Frequent morning "stomach aches," headaches, or excuses to stay home.
- **Increased Fragility:** Becoming unusually teary, panicky, or sensitive to small frustrations.
- **Social Withdrawal:** Losing interest in playdates, hobbies, or suddenly stopping talking about friends.
- **Loss of Confidence:** Making self-deprecating comments or appearing more anxious and "small."
- **Somatic Shifts:** Significant changes in sleep (insomnia or oversleeping) and eating habits.
- **Displaced Aggression:** Acting in a "bossy" or unkind way toward siblings, pets, or parents to reclaim a sense of power.
- **Unexplained Anger:** A "short fuse," explosive outbursts, or mood swings that seem to come out of nowhere.
- **Academic Impact:** A sudden lack of focus, "forgetting" assignments, or a noticeable drop in grades.
- **Physical Red Flags:** Unexplained injuries (bruises/scratches), torn clothing, or frequently "lost" or damaged belongings.



Why do we do what we do?

We address behavior in school because:

1. **Safety comes first:** Kids who feel unsafe can't learn.
2. **Building character matters most:** We're helping kids become good people, not just test-takers.
3. **Relationships make the difference:** When a teacher addresses behavior, they're showing they care and want to help.
4. **Communities based on a culture of care** is what we aim to develop.



Q&A + Resources

