

What is Bullying?

“It is really a fundamental democratic or human right to be spared this kind of humiliating, degrading treatment, which makes life miserable for thousands and thousands of young people for no good reason” – Dan Olweus, University of Bergen, Norway.

Annette and Walsleben (1998) point out that in the U.S., bullying has traditionally been viewed as child’s play, its occurrence usually being responded to by the common phrase, “kids will be kids.” Today, bullying is being recognized for what it is.

Bullying occurs when one child or group of children repeatedly hurts another child through actions or words. Bullying may involve physical or verbal aggression, or more subtle aggression, such as socially isolating a child.

Why focus on bullying?

All of us are concerned about the levels of violence among young people in our communities and schools. Studies have shown that children identified as bullies in grades 6-9 are more likely to have criminal records by early adulthood. We need to address these children’s behavioral problems at an early age, before they become even more serious. In addition, victims of bullies may have problems with depression, poor school attendance, and low self-esteem. It is important to help create a school environment where all students feel safe and can learn to the best of their abilities.

It is important that students learn social skills that address bullying.

Victims should be taught to:

- ◆ ignore the bully’s behavior
- ◆ walk away from a situation
- ◆ rebuff in a firm manner
- ◆ request that the bully stop
- ◆ report it to an adult.

Bullies should be taught social skills such as assisting others, asking for permission, sharing, in place of aggression and intimidation. Bullies should be monitored and rewarded for appropriate behavior and for improvements as well as given clear consequences for acts of bullying.

Bystanders should be taught to request that the bully stop, seek adult help, and speak up and/or offer support to the victim.

For as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. has said: *“It is not malicious acts that will do us in, but the appalling silence and indifference of good people.”*

By involving the total effort of all school staff as well as students, parents and other community members, we can ensure a safe and positive learning environment for all students.

Resources: Safe Schools Center
Addressing Bullying in Schools
U.S. Department of Justice
Bullying in Schools

Torrance Unified School District

Parent Guide to Anti-Bullying



How can I tell if my child is being bullied?

Your child may be the victim of bullying if he or she:

- ◆ Comes home from school with torn or dirty clothing, or damaged books;
- ◆ Has cuts, bruises or scratches
- ◆ Has few, if any, friends
- ◆ Seems afraid to go to school, or complains of headaches or stomach pains
- ◆ Doesn't sleep well or has bad dreams
- ◆ Loses interest in schoolwork
- ◆ Seems sad, depressed or moody
- ◆ Is anxious or has poor self-esteem and/or
- ◆ Is quiet, sensitive or passive

When Your Child is being Bullied

- ◆ Find out in detail what happened
- ◆ Contact your child's teacher, counselor or administrator to alert them and to request their assistance
- ◆ Avoid blaming anyone
- ◆ Look at your child's behavior, dress, and style of interacting, but do not convey to the child that something is wrong with him or her. The bully's behavior is the problem
- ◆ Do not encourage your child to be aggressive or to strike back
- ◆ Discuss and role-play with your child assertive alternatives to responding to bullies (e.g., have your child practice not reacting, saying "You're right," walking away)
- ◆ Be patient. It often takes awhile to resolve the problem
- ◆ Contact local law enforcement officials if the problem persists or escalates. Acts of bullying should not be tolerated in the school or in the community



How can I tell if my child is bullying others?

Your child may be bullying others if he or she:

- ◆ Teases, threatens or kicks other students
- ◆ Is hot-tempered or impulsive, or has a hard time following rules
- ◆ Is aggressive toward adults
- ◆ Is tough or shows no sympathy for children who are bullied and/or
- ◆ Has been involved in other antisocial behavior, such as vandalism or theft

When Your Child is the Bully

- ◆ Find out in detail why your child is being called a bully
- ◆ Make yourself listen (The discussion is about the well being of your child)
- ◆ Do not blame (others or your child)
- ◆ Point out that bullying is NOT acceptable in our family or in society
- ◆ Specify the consequences if the bullying continues
- ◆ Teach, including role playing, and reward appropriate behavior and improvement
- ◆ Teach your child to speak out on behalf of anyone he or she observes being bullied



What are schools doing to address bullying?

Reducing bullying in our schools involve the total effort of all school staff (teachers, principals, counselors, assistants, etc.), as well as students, parents, and other community members.

The school's efforts will include:

- ◆ *Identify bullies and their victims, to address individual problems and needs*
- ◆ *Establish school-wide rules and applying consistent consequences against bullies*
- ◆ *Establish a confidential reporting system*
- ◆ *Provide close monitoring of areas where bullying is more likely to occur*
- ◆ *Help to establish a climate throughout the school that promotes understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of individual differences*
- ◆ *Reward students for good social behaviors*
- ◆ *Use books and other resources on bullying*

