



What Parents and Teachers Should Know About Bullying*

What is Bullying?

- Direct behaviors, such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, and stealing
- Indirect behaviors, such as spreading rumors, intentional exclusion
- Boys who bully typically use direct bullying methods
- Girls who bully are more likely to use subtle, indirect methods
- Key component of bullying: physical or psychological intimidation that occurs repeatedly over time to create an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse

How Extensive Is Bullying?

- 15% of students are either bullied or initiate bullying behavior
- Direct bullying increases through elementary; peaks in middle school and declines in high school
- Although direct bullying decreases with age, verbal abuse remains constant
- School size, racial composition, and school setting (rural, suburban, urban) do not seem to be distinguishing factors in predicting the occurrence of bullying
- Boys are more likely than girls to engage in bullying behavior and to be victims of bullies

What Are Some Characteristics of Bullies?

- A need to feel powerful and in control
- Derive satisfaction from inflicting injury and suffering on others
- Have little empathy for victims
- Defend action by saying victims provoked them in some way
- Often come from homes in which physical punishment is used; children are taught to strike out physically as a way to handle problems
- Parental involvement and warmth are frequently lacking
- Are generally defiant or oppositional toward adults; are antisocial, and are likely to break school rules
- Possess strong self esteem and has little anxiety

What Are the Consequences of Bullying?

- There is a strong correlation between bullying other students during the school years and experiencing legal or criminal troubles as adults
- Victims of bullies fear school as an unsafe and unhappy place
- 7% of eighth graders stay home from school at least once a month because of bullies
- Victims tend to become more isolated by other students for fear of losing social status by associating with the victim or they do not want to increase the risk of being bullied themselves
- Being bullied often leads to depression and low self esteem

What Are Some Perceptions of Bullying?

- Parents are often unaware of the bullying problem
- Students feel adult intervention is infrequent and ineffective
- Students feel telling adults about bullying will only bring more harassment from bullies
- Students report that teachers seldom or never talk to their classes about bullying
- School personnel may view bullying as a harmless rite of passage that is best ignored unless it crosses into physical assault or theft

What Are Some Intervention Programs?

- Effective programs involve the entire school community and parents
- Whole school bullying policy that is uniformly enforced
- Curricular measures: role playing activities and classroom discussions
- Improve school environment; bully prevention program
- Empower students through conflict resolution programs, peer counseling, assertiveness training
- Conduct student, parent, teacher and school administrator survey to include questions designed to assess the extent of the bullying problem; frequency of teacher intervention; knowledge of parents about their children's experience at school
- Results of the survey can serve as a benchmark to measure any changes in school climate
- Parents can participate in a campaign through parent-teacher conferences, parent newsletters, and PTA to increase parental awareness of the bullying problem and to stress the importance of parental involvement in and support of the school's anti-bullying efforts
- Teacher training in anti-bullying programs; classroom rules against bullying
- Cooperative learning activities to reduce social isolation
- Increase in adult supervision at key bullying times such as recess or lunch

*A summary of *Parent Brochure: What Parents and Teachers Should Know About Bullying*, based on the 1997 ERIC Digest *Bullying in Schools* written by Ron Banks of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education

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