Bullying Among Children and Youth with Disabilities and Special Health Needs

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- ***An Imbalance of Power:*** Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.

- ***Repetition:*** Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

What is known about bullying among children with disabilities and special needs?

Children with disabilities—such as physical, developmental, intellectual, emotional, and sensory disabilities—are at an increased risk of being bullied. Any number of factors— physical vulnerability, social skill challenges, or intolerant environments—may increase the risk. Research suggests that some children with disabilities may bully others as well.

Kids with special health needs, such as epilepsy or food allergies, also may be at higher risk of being bullied. Bullying can include making fun of kids because of their allergies or exposing them to the things they are allergic to. In these cases, bullying is not just serious, it can mean life or death.

Through a small but growing amount of research, we have learned that:

- Although little research has been conducted on the relation between learning disabilities (LD) and bullying, available information indicates that children with LD are at greater risk of being bullied (Martlew & Hodson, 1991; Mishna, 2003; Nabuzoka & Smith, 1993; Thompson, Whitney, & Smith, 1994; Twyman, Saylor, Saia, Macias, Taylor, & Spratt, 2010). At least one study also has found that children with LD may also be more likely than other children to bullying their peers (Twyman et al., 2010).

- Children with attention deficit or hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are more likely than other children to be bullied. They also are somewhat more likely than others to bully their peers (Twyman et al., 2010; Unnever & Cornell, 2003; Weiner & Mak, 2009).

- Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are at increased risk of being bullied and ostracized by peers (Twyman et al., 2010). In a study of 8-17-year-olds, researchers found that children with ASD had bully victimization scores that were more than three times as high as students in a control group with no special needs.

- Children with epilepsy are more likely to be bullied by peers (Hamiwka, Yu, Hamiwka, Sherman, Anderson, & Wirrell, 2009), as are children with medical conditions that affect their appearance (e.g., cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, and spina bifida). Frequently, these children report being called names related to their disability (Dawkins, 1996).

- Children with hemiplagia (paralysis of one side of their body) are more likely than other children their age to be victimized by peers, to be rated as less popular than their peers, and to have fewer friends than other children (Yude, Goodman, & McConachie, 1998).

- Children who have diabetes and who are dependent on insulin may be especially vulnerable to peer bullying (Storch et al., 2004).

- Children who stutter may be more likely than their peers to be bullied. In one study, 83 percent of adults who had problems with stammering as children said that they had been teased or bullied; 71 percent of those who had been bullied said it happened at least once a week (Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999).

How does bullying affect children?

Kids who are bullied can experience negative physical, school, and mental health issues. Kids who are bullied are more likely to experience:

- Depression and anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy. These issues may persist into adulthood.

- Health complaints

- Decreased academic achievement—GPA and standardized test scores—and school participation. They are more likely to miss, skip, or drop out of school.

Is bullying of kids with disabilities covered by federal law?

Yes. Bullying behavior may cross the line to become "disability harassment," which is prohibited under Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* and Title II

of the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*. According to the U.S. Department of Education, disability harassment is "intimidation or abusive behavior toward a student based on disability that creates a hostile environment by interfering with or denying a student's participation in or receipt of benefits, services, or opportunities in the institution's program" (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). This behavior can take different forms including verbal harassment, physical threats, or threatening written statements. When a school finds out that harassment may have occurred, staff must investigate the incident(s) promptly and respond appropriately.

Disability harassment can occur in any location that is connected with school: in classrooms, in the cafeteria, in hallways, on the playground or athletic fields, or on a school bus. It also can occur during school-sponsored events (Education Law Center, 2002).

What can I do if I think my child is being bullied or is the victim of disability harassment?

- Be supportive of your child and encourage him or her to describe who was involved and how and where the bullying or harassment happened. Be sure to tell your child that it is not his or her fault and that nobody deserves to be bullied or harassed. Do not encourage your child to fight back. This may make the problem much worse.
- Usually children are able to identify when they are being bullied by their peers. Sometimes, however, children with disabilities do not realize they are being targeted. (They may, for example, believe that they have a new friend, when in fact, this "friend" is making fun of them.) Ask your child specific questions about his or her friendships and be alert to possible signs of bullying–even if your child doesn't label the behaviors as bullying.
- Talk with your child's teacher immediately to see whether he or she can help to resolve the problem quickly.
- If the bullying or harassment is severe, or if the teacher doesn't fix the problem quickly, contact the principal and put your concerns in writing. Explain what happened in detail and ask for a prompt response. Keep a written record of all conversations and communications with the school.
- Ask the school district to convene a meeting of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team or the Section 504 team, a group convened to ensure that the school district is meeting the needs of its students with disabilities. This meeting will allow you to explain what has been happening and will let the team review your child's IEP or 504 plan and make sure that the school is taking steps to stop the harassment. If your child needs counseling or other supportive services because of the harassment, discuss this with the team.

- As the U.S. Department of Education (2000) recognizes, "creating a supportive school climate is the most important step in preventing harassment."Work with the school to help establish a system-wide bullying prevention program that includes support systems for bullied children.

- Sometimes children and youth who are bullied also bully others. Explore whether your child may also be bullying other younger, weaker students at school. If so, his or her IEP may need to be modified to include help to change the aggressive behavior.

- Be persistent. Talk regularly with your child and with school staff to see whether the behavior has stopped.

What if the bullying or harassment does not stop?

If your school district does not take reasonable, appropriate steps to end the bullying or harassment of your child, the district may be violating federal, state, and local laws. For more information about your legal rights, you may want to contact:

The U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights
Phone: (800)-421-3481;
or Web: http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html

The U.S. Department of Education
Office of Special Education Programs
Phone: (202) 245-7468;
or Web: http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html

The U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division
Phone: 1-877-292-3804;
or Web:http://www.justice.gov/crt/complaint/#three

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GUIDE FOR PARENTS

What to do about bullying?

By Sarah Emerson Shea, MD

It is both painful and frightening to suspect that your child is being bullied by another child at school or in the neighborhood. It is also painful and frightening to suspect that your child habitually bullies others. How do you know if there is a problem?

It is normal for children to tease one another. Arguing is also common and should not be regarded as a problem, provided the balance between the children is relatively equal. Even physical roughness, while undesirable, is common enough in schoolyards that it should not by itself be interpreted as evidence of bullying behavior.

Parents should be concerned if they learn that a child is repeatedly and deliberately victimizing other children. Examples include vicious and persistent teasing, poking or hitting, or taking advantage of another child by extorting money, food, toys, or assistance with school work. Children who come home with unexplained money or toys should be suspected of bullying or stealing. Schoolyard bullies usually engage in similar activity in other settings. At home they may defy authority figures, including parents, and engage in angry or destructive behavior.

Sorting out whether your child is being bullied or simply getting his or her fair share of teasing can be more difficult. Children who are by nature shy or lacking in confidence are especially susceptible to bullying. Obviously, if a child regularly reports being taunted, hit, or having belongings damaged or stolen, you should be concerned. Watch too for the child who starts to demonstrate fearful behavior or refuses to attend school or participate in activities with other children.

If you are not sure whether your child is being bullied, ask indirect questions about how he or she is spending lunch periods and about what it is like walking to school or taking the bus. Ask if there are children at the school or in the neighborhood who are bullies, without personalizing it to your child. Remember that children feel humiliated if they are victims. Often, they doubt the willingness or capacity of adults to help, and they fear that complaining to the authorities will provoke further retaliation from the bullies.

If your child is a bully

☹ ***Take the problem seriously.*** Children who are aggressive and bullying when young are at high risk for social problems later on in life.

☹ ***Look for underlying problems that may be causing your child to feel angry or frustrated.*** Is your child experiencing bullying from someone else, then passing it on to the next victim? This "food chain" phenomenon can be observed in children who are themselves exposed to verbal or physical abuse from parents, siblings, or other children.

☹ ***Supervise your child's behavior more closely.*** Arrange to increase his or her participation in supervised, organized activities such as sports or scouting. Stay in the vicinity as much as possible when your child is playing with others.

☹ ***Make sure your child understands that you won't tolerate behavior that hurts other people.*** Talk about the rights and feelings of others. For example, if you hear that someone has been hurt physically or emotionally, share the story with your child and ask, "How do you think he is feeling now? How would you be feeling if that happened to you? What might help him feel better?" Talk about TV shows or films: "How do you think Forrest Gump felt when everybody teased him? How can you tell?"

☹ ***Respond to incidents of bullying behavior with negative consequences.*** A particularly good consequence is withdrawal of time with others. Most bullying children do not like being alone.

Continued

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GUIDE FOR PARENTS

☹ ***Teach alternative approaches.*** Bullies may be in the habit of coercing others rather than negotiating. Teach and practice negotiating skills. Many schools now offer programs or have materials on nonviolent problem solving. Talk to your principal or parent-teacher group to find out about these.

☹ ***Notice and reward good play and good negotiation.*** Your praise and attention along with tangible rewards such as special outings can encourage your child to stick with nonbullying behavior.

If your child is bullied

☹ ***Do not overreact.*** Take a deep breath while you look at your options. Depending on the severity of the problem, you will need to decide whether to notify school authorities and other parents.

☹ ***Listen to your child.*** Remember that your child has been victimized. Do not add to his or her burden with an angry, blaming, or anxious response. Avoid questions such as "Why don't you just stand up to him?" Let your child tell you how he or she feels. The act of unburdening can be very helpful to your child.

☹ ***Talk to your child about what makes people act like bullies.*** Help your child understand that he or she is not to blame in any way and that the bully is the one with the problem. Explain that children who bully are usually confused or unhappy.

☹ ***Review options with your child.*** It is not a good idea to tell the victim of bullying to respond in kind. Remember that children who are bullied are often shy and nonaggressive and it is unrealistic to expect them to change. Responding in kind, especially to physical aggression, also places your child at risk. The other extreme, going along with whatever the bully says, is equally unacceptable.

Offer your child the option of maintaining some dignity while trying to get out of the situation. Suggest that he or she look the bully in the eye, say, "I don't like your teasing. Stop," and then walk away from the situation, ignoring any further taunt. Suggest that your child seek the company of others. Discuss whether your child can avoid, within reason, situations that place him or her at risk of being bullied.

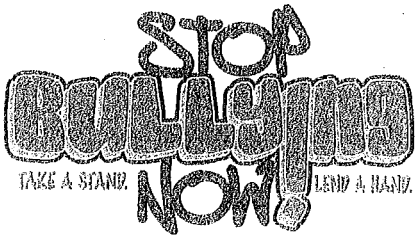
☹ ***Encourage other friendships.*** Some children get stuck in relationships with bullies, especially within neighborhoods, for lack of other social options. Create other options by encouraging your child to join clubs or teams. Invite other children over to play on a regular basis.

☹ ***Remember that your child's self-confidence needs boosting.*** Praise him or her for facing up to fears. Remember that the simple act of going to school knowing that one may be bullied is an act of bravery. Make sure your child participates in activities he or she enjoys and can excel at or develop expertise in.

Community approaches

Rather than accepting the bully/victim phenomenon as part of childhood, families, schools, and the larger community should work to eliminate these behaviors. Talk to neighborhood parents and school parent/teacher associations about your concerns regarding aggression and bullying. If the problem is widespread, it may be an indication for action at a broader level, such as development of social skills programs, better supervision of play, richer community recreation options, and support from mental health services.

This material is adapted from *Contemporary Pediatrics*/Canada, June 1994, p 14, and used with permission.



Best Practices in Bullying Prevention and Intervention

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. Often, it is repeated over time and can take many forms. In many respects, research on bullying prevention is still in its infancy. Although researchers have documented success of some comprehensive programs in reducing bullying, we still have much to learn about which aspects of these programs are most important.

However, a review of existing bullying prevention programs and feedback from educators in the field led us to suggest ten strategies that represent "best practices" in bullying prevention and intervention.

1. Focus on the social environment of the school. To reduce bullying, it is important to change the climate of the school and the social norms with regard to bullying. It must become "uncool" to bully, "cool" to help out students who are bullied, and normative for staff and students to notice when a child is bullied or left out. This requires the efforts of everyone in the school environment—teachers, administrators, counselors, other non-teaching staff (such as bus drivers, nurses, school resource officers, custodians, cafeteria workers, and school librarians), parents, and students.

2. Assess bullying at your school. Intuitively adults are not always very good at estimating the nature and extent of bullying at their school. Frequently we are quite surprised by the amount of bullying that students experience, the types of bullying that are most common, or the "hot spots" where bullying happens. As a result, it is often quite useful to assess bullying by administering an anonymous questionnaire to students about bullying. What are the possible benefits of conducting a survey of students?

- Findings can help motivate adults to take action against bullying;
- Data can help administrators and other educators tailor a bullying prevention strategy to the particular needs of the school; and
- Data can serve as a baseline from which administrators and other educators can measure their progress in reducing bullying.

3. Garner staff and parent support for bullying prevention. Bullying prevention should not be the sole responsibility of an administrator, counselor, teacher—or any single individual at a school. To be most effective, bullying prevention efforts require buy-in from the majority of the staff and from parents.

4. Form a group to coordinate the school's bullying prevention activities. Bullying prevention efforts seem to work best if they are coordinated by a representative group from the school. This coordinating team (which might include an administrator, a teacher from each grade, a member of the non-teaching staff, a school counselor or other school-based mental health professional, a school nurse, and a parent) should meet regularly to digest data from the school survey described in Strategy 2; plan bullying prevention rules, policies, and activities; motivate staff, students, and parents; and ensure that the efforts continue over time. A student advisory group also can be formed to focus on bullying prevention and provide valuable suggestions and feedback to adults.

5. Train your staff in bullying prevention. All administrators, faculty, and staff at your school should be trained in bullying prevention and intervention. In-service training can help staff to better understand the nature of bullying and its effects, how to respond if they observe bullying, and how to work with others at the school to help prevent bullying from occurring. Training should not be available only for teaching staff. Rather, administrators should make an effort to educate all adults in the school environment who interact with students (including counselors, media specialists, school resource officers, nurses, lunchroom and recess aides, bus drivers, parent volunteers, custodians, and cafeteria workers).

6. Establish and enforce school rules and policies related to bullying. Although many school behavior codes implicitly forbid bullying, many codes do not use the term or make explicit our expectations for student behavior. It is important to make clear that the school not only expects students not to bully, but that it also expects them to be good citizens, not passive bystanders, if they are aware of bullying or students who appear troubled, possibly from bullying. Developing simple, clear rules about bullying can help to ensure that students are aware of adults' expectations that they refrain from bullying and help students who are bullied. For example, one comprehensive program, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (see resources section on the Web site) recommends that schools adopt four straightforward rules about bullying:

- We will not bully others.
- We will try to help students who are bullied.
- We will make it a point to include students who are easily left out.
- If we know someone is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

School rules and policies should be posted and discussed with students and parents. Appropriate positive and negative consequences also should be developed for following or not following the school's rules.

7. Increase adult supervision in hot spots where bullying occurs. Bullying tends to thrive in locations where adults are not present or are not vigilant. Once school personnel have identified hot spots for bullying from the student questionnaires, look for creative ways to increase adults' presence in these locations.

8. Intervene consistently and appropriately in bullying situations. All staff should be able to intervene effectively on the spot to stop bullying (i.e.., in the 1–2 minutes that one frequently has to deal with bullying). Designated staff should also hold sensitive follow-up meetings with children who are bullied and (separately) with children who bully. Staff should involve parents of affected students whenever possible.

9. Focus some class time on bullying prevention. It is important that bullying prevention programs include a classroom component. Teachers (with the support of administrators) should set aside 20–30 minutes each week (or every other week) to discuss bullying and peer relations with students. These meetings help teachers to keep their fingers on the pulse of students' concerns, allow time for candid discussions about bullying and the harm that it can cause, and provide tools for students to address bullying problems. Anti-bullying themes and messages also can be incorporated throughout the school curriculum.

10. Continue these efforts over time. There should be no "end date" for bullying prevention activities. Bullying prevention should be woven into the entire school environment.

Working with Young People Who are Bullied: Tips for Mental Health Professionals

Mental health professionals are often asked to support young people who have been bullied. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. Often, it is repeated over time and can take many forms. It is important to know what these young people need from us—and what approaches are unlikely to help.

Children who are bullied need

- Permission and support to tell what has happened to them and to talk about their feelings;
- Protection from continued bullying through adult supervision, consequences for the young people who bully, and adults' taking reports of bullying seriously;
- Strong, positive relationships with adults and peers;
- Assistance from peers in feeling that they belong;
- Assistance in not blaming themselves for the bullying; and
- Support with post traumatic stress symptoms, in some cases, even after the bullying has been stopped.

What probably won't help:

- The primary focus of our interventions should be (1) protection from repeat bullying and (2) limiting the effects of past bullying. If mental health professionals focus primarily on how these young people should prevent future bullying with their own actions, we risk confirming their belief that the bullying was their fault.
- Encouraging children who have been bullied to "work things out" with the young person who has bullied them (especially alone or with the support of peer mediators) may make things worse. Mediation-based approaches tend to imply that both parties are partly to blame. Young people who bully are unlikely to listen to the youth they have chosen as their target. When mental health professionals encourage such discussions, we risk further victimization or control of the target.
- Avoid advice that will not work or that children and youth have already found ineffective. When we ask young people to "Tell me how you feel," "Just walk away," "Don't let it bother you," or "Just make a joke of it," we may risk them feeling that they have failed when these strategies don't work. If they have already tried these strategies unsuccessfully before talking with us, we diminish their regard for us as resources.
- Be careful not to treat these youth like time bombs at imminent risk of aggression to others, unless there are indications of such risk. Most young people who are bullied direct their anger at themselves rather than at others.

Why young people who have been bullied may not talk about it

Young people who have been bullied may resist talking about the bullying for several reasons:

- They may be ashamed. The person who bullied them may have succeeded in convincing them that they deserve the bullying.

- They may have come to believe the usually misguided message that if they only "stood up to" the bully once, the bullying would stop. As a result, they may feel weak because they were not able to stop the bullying on their own.

- They may have found that telling adults does no good—that they are blamed, not believed, told to stop tattling, or given advice that doesn't work.

- They may not believe that adults will protect them. They may have found that they will not be protected from retaliation for telling.

- They may have become convinced that telling an adult about a problem is a sign of immaturity or that it is not "macho" (for boys).

- They may not be convinced that adults care about stopping bullying because they may have seen adults watching bullying without doing anything.

Helping these youth talk about the bullying and avoid self-blame

To encourage youth who are bullied to talk about what has happened requires the same orientation we would use with targets of sexual harassment, spouse abuse, or racism—three behaviors that share the same dynamics as bullying:

- The victim did not cause the problem and will not be asked to solve the problem alone.

- The victim has the right to tell, to be protected from retaliation for telling, and to have advocacy and protection. The person causing the abuse will be held fully responsible for his or her behavior.

- The victim may have been hurt in stages—by the abuse, by the inaction of others who should have helped, by unearned self-blame, and by social isolation. Each of these issues should be addressed.

How can mental health professionals effectively intervene to help a young person who has been bullied?

- Advocate and help parents advocate for supervision, staff training, consequences for the youth who bully, and adult and peer support in the situation in which bullying is taking place.

- Work with parents, school administrators and teachers, and (via the school, coach, or other intermediaries) with peers, to help the young person be less isolated and more connected with peers.

- Help parents and the youth lessen isolation by connecting with peers who have shared interests.

- Explore unearned self-blame and help the young person see that the child who bullied him or her is responsible for the bullying.

- Explore and commend the steps the young person used to try to stop the bullying. Help him or her find effective ways to be safe. Identify advocates and resources in the environment. Help the student accept the probable necessity of using these allies.

- Assist the youth in reducing the pain associated with memories of victimization. The techniques that mental health professionals use to help a young person experiencing loss and anxiety will be helpful.

- Remember that a young person who is bullied also may bully others, though most do not. Mental health professionals also may need to focus on aggression toward others.

- Consult with administrators at the bullied child's school about effective prevention strategies that will help to reduce bullying among students and improve the climate of the school.

What about young people who seem to provoke bullying?

For the most part, these young people have few other ways to make connections with peers. They may find that provoking peers' aggression toward them is better than being ignored. As we help them make more positive peer connections, they can often give up the provoking behaviors. This process may take some time. During this transition, the youth who seem to be provoking the bullying and anyone who bullies them should both be held fully responsible for their actions. Often both youth involved will learn consequences in such a situation. Harassment by peers should not be seen as a natural consequence for the provoking behavior.

What about young people who over-react to relatively minor act of bullying?

Some young people cry, yell, or otherwise react strongly to small acts of bullying, strongly reinforcing the person who bullies. These young people who over-react need to learn to moderate their reactions to bullying. Mental health professionals can teach them to calm themselves and to focus on the individual incident. At the same time these young people often need to have specific adult advocates in their environment who will make sure that they do not get too much sympathy and that their reports of bullying will be taken seriously. Sometimes parents are part of the problem if they over-react themselves. Parents often are able to moderate their own overprotective reactions when they know that advocates are available to make sure their child's concerns are heard.

What about relational aggression?

If the bullying has taken place over time within a relationship that the young person describes as a friendship, mental health professionals should work with the young person and his or her parents to help them disconnect from that relationship in the same way that we would help someone disconnect from an abusive dating relationship. Children and youth should not be encouraged to "work things out" with the abusive "friends."

In summary

Mental health professionals can help stop bullying as they advocate for effective interventions and help parents be more effective advocates. They can help young people overcome the emotional aftermath of bullying after supports and protection are in place.

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Dr. Sam Zinner's DBPEDS website for resources,
https://depts.washington.edu/dbpeds/Resources.html

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Bullying Intervention Strategies That Work

SHARE ARTICLE

"Bullying," according to noted expert Dan Olweus, "poisons the educational environment and affects the learning of every child." Learn what you can do to keep bullying behavior from poisoning your school. Included: Practic al tips for changing the behavior of bullies and their victims.

In 1982, three Norwegian boys, ages 10 through 14, committed suicide, apparently as a result of severe bullying by their classmates. The event triggered shock and outrage, led to a national campaign against bullying behavior, and finally, resulted in the development of a systematic school-based bullying intervention program. That program, developed by psychologist Dan Olweus, was tested with more than 2,500 students in Bergen, Norway. Within two years, incidents of school bullying had dropped by more than 50 percent. Since then, a number of countries, including England, Germany, and the United States, have implemented Olweus's program with similar results.

HOW IT WORKS

Olweus based the program on principles derived from research into behavior modification techniques for aggressive or violent children. The program restructures the learning environment to create a social climate characterized by supportive adult involvement, positive adult role models, firm limits, and consistent, noncorporal sanctions for bullying behavior.

In order to effectively accomplish its goals of reducing existing bullying problems and preventing the development of future problems, the program leads teachers, administrators, and staff through a series of tasks that make them aware of the extent of the bullying problem and help them solve it. Those tasks include the following:

At the school level:

- a bullying survey to determine the extent of the problem.
- a conference day to educate teachers, administrators, school staff, parents, students, and community members about bullying behaviors, response strategies, and available resources.
- increased supervision in the cafeteria, hallways, bathrooms, and on the playground, where most bullying behavior occurs.
- a coordinating group --, typically consisting of an administrator; a teacher from each grade level; a guidance counselor, psychologist, and/or school nurse; and parent and student representatives -- to manage the program and evaluate its success.
- ongoing meetings between parents and school staff.
- discussions of bullying issues at regularly scheduled PTO meetings.

At the classroom level:

- a curriculum that promotes kindness, communication, cooperation, and friendship and includes lessons and activities stressing empathy, anger management, and conflict resolution skills.
- class rules against bullying. Rules should be brief and clear. Olweus suggests the following examples:

1. We will not bully other students.
2. We will try to help students who are bullied.
3. We will include students who might be left out.

- immediate consequences for aggressive behavior and immediate rewards for inclusive behavior. Possible sanctions include having the bully

1. apologize;
2. discuss the incident with the teacher, principal, and/or parents;
3. pay for damaged belongings;
4. spend time in the office or another classroom;
5. forfeit recess or other privileges.

- weekly meetings to communicate to students clear and consistently enforced expectations and to engage them as resources in preventing bullying behavior.
- ongoing communication with parents.

At the individual level:

- serious talks with bullies and victims.
- serious talks with the parents of bullies and victims.
- role playing of non-aggressive behavior with bullies.
- role playing of assertive behavior with victims.

The key components of the bullying intervention program, according to Olweus, are increased adult supervision in all areas of the school, increased consequences for bullying behavior, and a clear message that bullying will not be tolerated.

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Steps for Intervening in Bullying Situations

The Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System of the London Family Court Clinicrecommends the following steps for dealing with a bullying situation at school:

* Intervene immediately to stop the bullying.

* Talk to the bully and the victim separately. If more than one student is involved in bullying behavior, talk to each separately, in quick succession. (Expect bullies to minimize and deny their actions.)

* Remind the bully about school and classroom rules, reiterate what behavior is expected, and discuss sanctions that will be imposed for future bullying behavior.

* Reassure the victim that everything possible will be done to

Olweus also recommends that for a bullying intervention program to be successful, schools must do the following:

- Place primary responsibility for solving the problem with the adults at school rather than with parents or students.
- Project a clear moral stand against bullying.
- Include both systems-oriented and individual-oriented components.
- Set long-term and short-term goals.
- Target the entire school population, not just a few problem students.
- Make the program a permanent component of the school environment, not a temporary remedial program.
- Implement strategies that have a positive effect on students and on the school climate that go beyond the problem of bullying.

Bullying behavior, according to Dr. Olweus, is evident even in preschool and the problem peaks in middle school. It's important, therefore, that bullying intervention strategies be implemented as early as possible. Even if only a small number of students are directly involved, Olweus points out, every student who witnesses bullying is affected in some way. Even students who initially sympathize with or defend victims may eventually come to view bullying as acceptable if responsible adults fail to say otherwise. Over time, ignoring -- or being ignorant of -- bullying behavior will result in a social climate that fosters bullying, fighting, truancy, and other social and learning problems in all students.

"The school," said Olweus, "has a responsibility to stop bullying behavior and create a safe learning environment for all students."

prevent a recurrence.

* Make other students aware of the consequences of the bullying behavior. Reiterate the school's policy of zero tolerance toward bullying.

* Phone the parents of both the bully and the victim as soon as possible. If possible, involve the parents in designing a plan of action.

* Continue to monitor the behavior of the bully and the safety of the victim.

* Consult administrators, teachers, and staff members to alert them to the problem and to get a better understanding of it.

* If the situation doesn't change, remove the bully -- not the victim -- from the classroom.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources provide additional information about the bullying prevention program developed by Dan Olweus:

- Overview of the Bullying Prevention Program
  The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, offers online information excerpted from "Blueprints for Violence Prevention, Book Nine: Bullying Prevention Program," by Olweus, Limber, and Mihalic.

- *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do,* by Dan Olweus
  This book provides information about the results of Olweus' bullying surveys, as well as a detailed description of his school-based bullying prevention program. (To obtain a copy, contact Blackwell Publishers, c/o AIDC, P.O. Box 20, Williston, VT 05495.)

For information on how to order a teacher handbook, student questionnaire, or other materials from the Bullying Prevention Program, write: BVP-Dan Olweus, Vognstolbakken 16, N-5096 Bergen, Norway.

MORE BULLYING RESOURCES FROM EDUCATION WORLD

Education World has provided extensive coverage of the "bullying" issue as it affects your classroom and your school. Following is a sampling of the stories we've published:

- Sticks and Stones and Names Can Hurt You: De-Myth-tifying the Classroom Bully!Bullies are raised in the home, but their victims are too frequently created in the classroom. Learn how what you believe about bullies can hurt your students! Included: Ten myths about bullies, and the research that helped identify those myths!
- Stop Bullying Before It Starts! Bullying is no longer seen as the norm in the school or the community at large, and prevention has become the name of the game. Included: Poor and good solutions to bullying.
- Bully-Proof Your School Recognized as more than just a problem between kids, schools are called upon to put forth a team effort to end bullies' longtime reign of terror.

- *Taking the Bully By the Horns* All kids know how to recognize bullies -- or do they? *Taking the Bully by the Horns,* written by Kathy Noll and Jay Carter, teaches kids how to spot a bully, how to recognize bully "games" -- and how *not* to play.
- Picture Books Help Kids Handle Anger and Bullying This week, Education World reviews *Bullies and Gangs, The Ant Bully,* and *When Sophie Gets Angry -- Really, Really Angry...* These three new picture books support classroom discussions of anger, bullying, violence, and tolerance.
- Ten Web Sites for Exploring Conflict Resolution in the Classroom Education World offers ten sites that provide a wide range of practical materials for supporting and instituting conflict resolution programs in our schools.
- One Character Education Program That Works! Many schools, lacking the time and resources required to develop their own character education curricula, are instead turning to established programs that have proven successful in other school districts. Read about one such program -- recently adopted by schools in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania -- in which the whole community is involved.
- Is Character Education the Answer? As incidents of in-school violence become more common, and strict disciplinary techniques and increased security measures fail to control the problem, many parents, educators, politicians, and social leaders are looking for reliable methods of prevention. Is character education the answer?
- Teaching Citizenship's Five Themes Activities from the editors of Weekly Reader can help develop K-6 students' understanding of the five citizenship themes -- honesty, compassion, respect, responsibility, and courage.