

## ANTI-BULLYING CURRICULA

### Program Overview

This program is intended for middle school administrators and teachers as an introduction to the prevalence and implications of adolescent bullying on school campuses. The program includes two 60 minute lectures and one 45 minute lecture. It also includes three sample activities for teachers to implement into the classroom. Depending on the time allotted for this program, there is the opportunity to facilitate these activities with school administrators and teachers as a form of practice for future anti-bullying curricula. The lectures and activities all have a focus on student involvement, as well as a whole-school approach to combating bullying. The first step to implementing an anti-bullying program in any middle school is to unite the administrators and teachers on the issue at hand and this program is designed to do this.

## TEACHER/ADMINISTRATOR

Bullying Awareness*Time*

60 minutes

*Goals*

The goal of this lesson is to inform school teachers and administrators about the impact bullying can have in school environments today. Not only is bullying prevalent everywhere, the impacts are very serious. In order to combat bullying, there must be a clear understanding of the problem.

*Objectives*

Inform school teachers and administrators of the prevalence and impact of bullying in school environments.

*Preparation*

Review lecture notes and current bullying statistics.

*Activities*Lecture

- Vignette: *Jared hides behind the school building for an hour, hoping Tom has forgotten about him and walked home already. Maybe this will be the first night he will make it home without being pushed or taunted. Jared slowly leaves his hiding spot, gripping his backpack as tight as he can. As he gets farther away from school, his stomach begins to unknot. He is relieved that he will make it home tonight without incident. Just then, Tom appears around the corner with a smirk on his face, ready to fight.*
- Bullying Statistics
  - A main characteristic of a bully is his or her need to gain control over another (Kaiser & Rasminsky, 2003). Bullies can gain control over others through physical force or threats, verbal teasing, and exclusion from peers (Beale & Scott, 2001).
  - Argenbright and Edgell (as cited in Beale & Scott, 2001) described four specific types of bullies.
    - Physical bullies often hit, kick, or shove others.
    - Verbal bullies use words to harm others through name-calling, insulting, making racist comments, or harsh teasing.
    - Relational bullies often focus on excluding one person from their peer group and usually do so through verbal threats and spreading rumors.
    - Reactive bullies are individuals who are often both bully and victim.
  - While both boys and girls engage in and are victims of bullying, research has shown differences in their bullying behaviors. For example, boys engage in bullying more

frequently than girls (Nansel et al., 2001; Seals & Young, 2003). Also, boys are more likely to engage in physical or verbal bullying, while girls often revert to relational bullying (Nansel et al., 2001).

- Bullying in the United States
  - Bullying among students in other countries (particularly Norway, Australia, and England) has been studied extensively for the past 30 years, but recently researchers in the United States have also begun to examine bullying and victimization in schools.
  - Studies show that bullying tends to peak in late childhood/early adolescence, making prevention and intervention efforts in middle school crucial.
- Bullying Research
  - Oliver, Hoover, and Hazler (1994) examined bullying by administering surveys to students in grades 7 through 12 from schools in three Midwestern states.
    - Overwhelmingly, participants reported they felt victims of bullying actually brought on the bullying.
    - Less than half believed bullying was done in an attempt to teach a lesson. Students also believed bullies to be more popular than victims.
    - Oliver, Hoover, and Hazler (1994) found students believed most teasing they witnessed had been done with no malicious intent, but that victims perceived the teasing as bullying.
  - In their national study of 15,686 students in grades 6 through 10, Nansel and associates (2001) reported nearly 30% of students indicated more than occasional involvement as a bully and/or victim of bullying.
    - Males were more frequently involved as both bullies and victims, as were students in grades six through eight (compared to those in grades nine and ten).
    - Hispanic students reported slightly higher involvement as bullies than White or African American students, while African American students reported being bullied less frequently than both White and Hispanic students.
    - More students from rural areas reported bullying than did individuals from suburban and urban areas.
  - Nansel and associates (2001) also examined the frequency of various types of bullying as well as psychosocial adjustment of students who bully or who are bullied.
    - Verbal bullying was most prominent for both males and females, with students being recipients of negative comments about their appearance in addition to being recipients of sexual comments and being targets of rumors.
    - Negative comments about race or religion were rarely reported.
    - More males than females reported being victims of physical bullying, indicating they had been hit, slapped, and pushed.
    - With regard to psychosocial adjustment, Nansel and associates (2001) found positive correlations between bullying behavior and fighting, alcohol use, smoking, and ability to make friends.
    - Poor academic achievement and poorer perceived school climate were also associated with being a bully.
    - For middle school males, loneliness was also positively correlated with being a bully.
    - Negative correlations were found between victims and both alcohol use and the ability to make friends.
    - Being a victim was positively correlated with fighting.

- As part of a larger study, Casey-Cannon, Hayward, and Gowen (2001) conducted a qualitative investigation of the experiences and perceptions of relational bullying among middle school girls (ages 13 and 14) from Northern California.
  - The majority of participants reported experiencing either overt (i.e., physical or verbal) or relational bullying.
  - Participants reported emotional reactions including sadness, anger, and rejection.
  - Behavioral responses included ignoring the bully, approaching an adult for help, being assertive, and bullying back (i.e., reactive bullying). Other consequences included losing friends, negative thinking, and changing schools (Lane, 2005).
- Most recently, Seals and Young (2003) gathered data addressing the prevalence of bullying among students in grades seven and eight.
  - The 454 participating students represented urban, suburban, and rural school districts, and most were African American and White.
  - Twenty-four percent of students reported either bullying or being bullied.
  - Males were involved in bullying (as bullies and victims) significantly more often than females, and significantly more seventh grade students than eighth grade students were involved as well.
  - Nearly 14% of students reported being called mean names, and others reported being hit or kicked, being teased, or being threatened.
  - Most incidents of bullying occurred at lunch or recess, but many occurred on the way to or from school as well as in class.

### Discussion

- Are these statistics familiar?
- Is this happening at your school? If so, to what degree?
- Is your community aware of effects of bullying?

## Bullying and the Law

### *Time*

60 minutes

### *Goals*

The goal of this lesson is to inform school administrators and teachers about the role that the law plays in bullying on school campuses. It is important for school administrators and teachers to know about the resources that are there for them to use when needed.

### *Objectives*

Inform school administrators and teachers about bullying and the law, and offer resources to help combat bullying.

### *Preparation*

Review lecture notes and current state laws on bullying.

### *Activities*

#### Lecture

- What is the law on bullying in school?
  - Each state has a unite view on bullying and the law. Some states have specific laws against bullying and others do not.
  - Students have the right to be educated in an atmosphere which is free from fear. Teachers and administrators have a duty to do all that they reasonably can to protect pupils in their charge from intimidation, assault or harassment.
  - Schools are subject to the law. Assault, harassment and intimidation are offences, whatever the age of the perpetrator or victim.
  - Although there is no law which states that schools must have a specific anti-bullying policy, there is a strong recommendation by the Department of Health and Human Services that they should.
- When should bullying be referred to the police?
  - The legal system is rarely involved in dealing with school bullying. There are very good reasons for this. Less serious bullying can and should be dealt with within the school. By working together, parents, teachers, pupils and other members of the wider school community develop effective reactive strategies which can be implemented quickly. It is most important that bullying is resolved as quickly as possible before any serious damage is done to the personal development or education of the young people involved.

- However there may be circumstances in which the police are called in, either as a last resort or because of the seriousness of an incident. Anyone can make a complaint about bullying to the police. Teachers, parents or other members of a school community may decide to do so if:
  - A bullying incident could have serious consequences for the victim - making a judgment about this can be very difficult because even incidents which are perceived as being minor by an observer can have potentially serious long-term consequences for a victim.
  - Other strategies have failed or are considered to be inappropriate because of the seriousness of what has happened
  - There is a reasonable possibility that making such a report could make the bullying less likely to recur and produce an outcome that helps the victim
- There may be occasions when an episode of bullying involves incidents both in and out of school. In such circumstances it is vital for teachers and parents to work together with the police and other appropriate agencies such as social services or youth organizations
- What can the police do?
  - The police will investigate reports of serious incidents of physical bullying or harassment.
    - If they are satisfied that an offence has been committed and that a person or persons who may be responsible have been identified and are under 16 they will normally file a report.
- What are the advantages of taking legal action?
  - Victims and their families sometimes feel that their concerns are not being treated seriously, the police can offer external support
  - The police can provide support to individuals who may feel powerless against school authorities
  - A court decision in favor of a victim could help that person to come to terms with their experiences by ruling that the school did not act properly
  - The court may order that damages be paid as compensation for the harm suffered
  - A high profile court case can help to clarify the duty of schools to protect victims. This could make it less likely that others will suffer in the future
- What are the disadvantages of taking legal action?
  - It can be very stressful. If the case is defended, an emotionally fragile victim may be subjected to lengthy cross-examination.
  - Any resolution will be severely delayed. Papers have to be prepared and witnesses who are willing to testify must be found. Meanwhile victims and their families will not be able to put the events behind them and get on with the rest of their lives
  - The outcome is uncertain
  - Enormous expense can be involved, especially if the claimant does not receive legal aid
  - A head teacher may fear the consequences of being “wrong” about the bullying

Discussion

- What are the bullying laws in this state?
- How could this school better use and understand current laws regarding school bullying?
- Why is this important?

## Whole School Approach

### *Time*

45 minutes

### *Goals*

The goal of the whole school approach is to raise awareness and knowledge about the issue of bullying, as well as create a plan for dealing with bullying in the school. This process must be tied to the school and its philosophy.

### *Objectives*

Create a plan for dealing with bullying, gathering information on bullying, developing a common understanding of bullying and passing the information on to the community.

### *Preparation*

Review lecture notes and discussion questions

### *Activities*

#### Lecture

- Stages for a Whole School Approach
  - Use a full staff meeting to raise awareness and knowledge of the issue. The anti-bullying initiative must be tied to the school's philosophy as laid out in the charter. Emphasize the school's statutory obligation to provide a safe environment.
  - A brief presentation to the Board of Trustees about the nature of bullying will be useful to ensure that the subsequent policy will gain their support and acceptance.
  - Gather Information:
    - Find out what similar schools have done
    - Survey staff to find out what existing programs or initiatives complement an anti-bullying approach
    - What approach would best fit the current culture of the school?
    - Develop some base-line data that will give some quantitative information on levels of bullying
    - Investigate perceptions staff, pupils and parents have on bullying
  - The development of a 'common understanding' of bullying and expressing this in a policy is the key to reducing bullying. It must be supported by clear guidelines on how to deal with cases of bullying.
  - Parent / caregiver meetings that allow everyone to look at the issues, the nature of the behavior and the consequence and impact of bullying on all participants
  - Develop advice / information pamphlets and/or personalize other anti-bullying flyers

#### Summarization



- There needs to be a plan of attack for this process
  - Select a leader to get the process going
- Make sure to include the entire school and community!

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Defining Bullying*Time*

30-45 minutes

*Goals*

Help the students identify or name what they are seeing, feeling, hearing, and experiencing. It is much easier to get to the root of the individual problems if the students have a vocabulary in which to share what is going on.

*Objectives*

Specifically define four types of bullying.

*Materials*

Butcher paper, markers

*Preparation*

Review types of bullying, the processes of bullying and “just kidding” phrases.

*Activities*

- Inform the class of the four types of bullying:
  - Verbal – Leave physical marks
  - Physical – Can be heard
  - Social – Heard by others
  - Intimidation – Look, gesture, or comment
- Divide the class into four groups
  - Each group defines one type of bullying
  - What does it look like, feel like and sound like
  - Brainstorm a list on butcher paper
- Class discussion
  - Discuss the definitions and any missing terms
  - Verbal and physical bullying may be easy to understand, but what about social bullying and imitation?
    - Are these two precursors to verbal and physical bullying?
  - What is the process to bullying? Does it escalate?
  - “Just kidding” comments are a way of making bullying acceptable
    - “You are such an idiot... just kidding”
    - This is still bullying

Joking, Teasing, or Bullying?*Time*

20 minutes

*Goals*

The goal of this lesson is to let the students decide if the vignette would be considered bullying or not. This activity allows for extended discussion about the types of bullying and helps students identify bullying within a relevant context.

*Objectives*

Allow students to identify bullying in a relevant context.

*Materials*

Vignettes

*Preparation*

Review vignettes

*Activities*You Decide

- Vignette: *Sonia recently moved to Lincoln Heights and just finished her first week at the local middle school. At 5 ft 8 in, she towered over most of the students in her 7th grade class. While looking for a place to sit, another student called to her, "Hey, shorty, there's a spot over here!" Sonia paused for a moment and another girl from the group waved her over. "Don't pay attention to her," she told Sonia. "That's just the way we talk to each other. They call me Einstein because I got all C's on my last report card."*
  - Discussion: Joking, teasing or bullying?
    - Why or why not?
- Vignette: *For years, Angel has made fun of his best friend, Dave's, peanut butter obsession. "You'd eat my gym sock if it was covered in peanut butter," he once told Dave. One day in science lab, the students designed mazes to test the intelligence of white mice. When the teacher told the class that they would be baiting the mazes with peanut butter, Angel called out, "Better be careful - Dave might get to the end of the maze before the mice!" The other students broke out in laughter.*
  - Discussion: Joking, teasing or bullying?
    - Why or why not?
- Vignette: *On Monday afternoon, Rob used his recess time to hang campaign posters around the school, which read, "Vote Rob for Student Council President." On Tuesday*

*morning in homeroom, Rob found one of his posters taped to the blackboard in the front of the classroom. Someone had crossed out the word, "President," and replaced it with "First Lady." One of Rob's classmates pointed to a girl in the first row, indicating that Maria had altered the poster. Rob glared at her as he tore down the poster. "It's just a joke," Maria laughed. "Lighten up - I'm gonna vote for you."*

- Discussion: Joking, teasing or bullying?
  - Why or why not?

### Summarization

- Bullying can be hard to identify in social contexts
- Knowing how to identify bullying can make it easier
- There may be situations where you need adult assistance and that is okay

## Bullying Contract

### *Time*

30 minutes

### *Goals*

The final step in understand and combating bullying in an anti-bullying contract. The goal is to come up with a contract that the student population as a whole would be willing to sign in order to combat bullying in their school.

### *Objectives*

Create an anti-bullying contract with the participation of students and have each individual sign and commit to it.

### *Materials*

Contract

### *Activities*

- The class brainstorms consequences for those who choose to engage in bullying.
  - These could include items such as peer mediation or lunch detention
- After the class has reached a consensus on consequences, each student signs a contract through which he or she agrees to be a positive leader in the classroom and also to abide by the consequences agreed upon
  - Every contract will be different and each school/class needs to decide how they would like to format theirs

References

A. Milsom & L. Gallo. *Bullying Statistics*. <http://www.mnsa.org>

Anti-Bullying Network. *Information on bullying and the law*. <http://antibullying.net/lawinfo6.htm>

No Bully. *Stop bullying: Guidelines for school*. <http://www.nobully.org.nz/guidelines.htm>

Teaching Tolerance. *Contract*. <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/contract-bullying>