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Home

What is Bullying?

- [What is Cyber Bullying?](#)
- [Other FAQs](#)

State Laws & Information

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

Testimonials & Videos

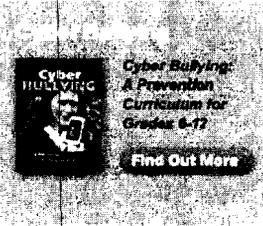
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Cyber Bullying

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### What is Cyber Bullying?

Cyber bullying is bullying through email, instant messaging (IMing), chat room exchanges, Web site posts, or digital messages or images sent to a cellular phone or personal digital assistant (PDA) (Kowalski et al. 2008). Cyber bullying, like traditional bullying, involves an imbalance of power, aggression, and a negative action that is often repeated.

Cyber bullying has some rather unique characteristics that are different from traditional bullying:

- **Anonymity:** As bad as the "bully" on the playground may be, he or she can be readily identified and potentially avoided. On the other hand, the child who cyber bullies is often anonymous. The victim is left wondering who the cyber "bully" is, which can cause a great deal of stress.
- **Accessibility:** Most children who use traditional ways of bullying terrorize their victim at school, on the bus, or walking to or from school. Although bullying can happen elsewhere in the community, there is usually a standard period of time during which these children have access to their victims. Children who cyber bully can wreak havoc any time of the day or night.
- **Punitive Fears:** Victims of cyber bullying often do not report it because of: (1) fear of retribution from their tormentors, and (2) fear that their computer or phone privileges will be taken away. Often, adults' responses to cyber bullying are to remove the technology from a victim - which in their eyes can be seen as punishment.
- **Bystanders:** Most traditional bullying episodes occur in the presence of other people who assume the role of bystanders or witnesses. The phenomenon of being a bystander in the cyber world is different in that they may receive and forward emails, view web pages, forward images sent to cell phones, etc. The number of bystanders in the cyber world can reach into the millions.
- **Disinhibition:** The anonymity afforded by the Internet can lead children to engage in behaviors that they might not do face-to-face. Ironically, it is their very anonymity that allows some individuals to bully at all.

### Common Forms of Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying can take many forms. However, there are six forms that are the most common.\*

- **Harassment:** Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages
- **Denigration:** Distributing information about another that is derogatory and untrue through posting it on a Web page, sending it to others through email or instant messaging, or posting or sending digitally altered photos of someone
- **Flaming:** Online "fighting" using electronic messages with angry, vulgar language
- **Impersonation:** Breaking into an email or social networking account and using that person's online identity to send or post vicious or embarrassing material to/about others.
- **Outing and Trickery:** Sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information, or tricking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information and forwarding it to others
- **Cyber Stalking:** Repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm or are highly intimidating, or engaging in other online activities that make a person afraid for his or her safety (depending on the content of the message, it may be illegal)

\*Nancy Willard with the Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use (CSRUI) has developed this useful taxonomy of the various forms of cyber bullying. [Visit CSRUI's site](#)

### What are the Warning Signs of Cyber Bullying?

The warning signs of cyber bullying are similar to those for traditional bullying in terms of emotional effects; however, there are some differences. For example, a bruise or torn clothing is not expected as a sign that a child is being cyber bullied, but it is also important to keep in mind that some children who are cyber bullied may also be experiencing traditional bullying at school.

A child may be experiencing cyber bullying if he or she:

- appears sad, moody, or anxious
- avoids school
- withdraws from or shows a lack of interest in social activities
- experiences a drop in grades or decline in academic performance
- appears upset after using the computer or being online

# Guidance on Bullying and Cyberbullying

Provided by the New York State Education Department

The US Department of Health and Human Services' National Bullying Prevention Campaign "Take a Stand. Lend a Hand. Stop Bullying Now!" defines bullying as "aggressive behavior that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Usually, it is repeated over time. Traditionally, bullying has involved actions such as: hitting or punching (physical bullying), teasing or name-calling (verbal bullying), or intimidation through gestures or social exclusion. In recent years, technology has given children and youth a new means of bullying each other. Cyberbullying, which is sometimes referred to as online social cruelty or electronic bullying, can involve: sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images; posting sensitive, private information about another person; pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad; (or) intentionally excluding someone from an online group" (<http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adults/cyber-bullying.aspx>). The New York State Education Department (NYSED) has taken the position that one incident of bullying is too many. Bullying in general and cyberbullying in particular are becoming increasingly important concerns to educators, students, and parents and have created new challenges for school administrators in their efforts to create and maintain safe and secure learning environments. Students need to feel safe in order to maximize their academic and social potential. The threats of cyberbullying and its 24/7 exposure to students makes this a particularly important topic for all school building administrators, teachers, and support staff to address. The fact that cyberbullying has no geographic boundaries adds another level of complexity to the issue. Thus, students require clear and unambiguous guidance so they do not become overwhelmed or feel as though they have to manage the threat alone if confronted by a cyberbullying or bullying threat.

This guidance provides educators with policy, program, and legal considerations that need to be addressed when dealing with the issues of bullying, cyberbullying, and general internet safety. It is also designed to assist school districts and their respective schools, BOCES, and County Vocational Education and Extension Boards (CVEEBs) in developing a comprehensive approach for dealing with these issues, which, if left unaddressed, can lead to the creation of unsafe school environments. The Safe Schools Against Violence in Education Act of 2000 (SAVE) requires a focus on all acts of violence including, but not limited to, the impact of acts of bullying, threats, harassment or intimidation, disruptive behavior in class, carrying of weapons, fighting, physical assaults, and other behaviors that impede learning. Educators are encouraged to consult with the attorney in their school district, BOCES, or CVEEB during the development of their bullying, cyberbullying, and internet safety policies.

## **School and District Practice and Policies**

Tools available to create a comprehensive response to bullying and cyberbullying include policies and programs that address School Climate; Code of Conduct; Children's Internet Protection Act; Internet Safety Policies; and analysis of Violent and Disruptive Incidents Reports (VADIR).

- **School climate:** This may be the single most important factor in preventing, limiting, and/or dealing with bullying and cyberbullying incidents. Educators need to work diligently to create school environments that value and teach respect for all. The most positive school climates are culturally sensitive and model positive behavioral interactions that clearly show that no tolerance exists for certain types of behaviors, including, but not limited to, bullying. The prevailing attitude at some schools is that there is no such thing as an innocent bystander as it relates to certain incidents. NYSED, in concert with the NYS Office of Mental Health, has developed Guidelines and Resources for Social and Emotional Development and Learning (SEDL) in New York State. This document and other SEDL resources to assist schools in

developing positive school climates can be found at the following web address:  
[www.emsc.nysed.gov/sss/sed/](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/sss/sed/)

- **Code of Conduct:** All school districts, BOCES, and CVEEBs must adopt and enforce a code of conduct (COC) for the maintenance of order on school property and at school functions. The COC governs the conduct of students, teachers, other school personnel and visitors (see, Education Law §2801[2] and 8 NYCRR §100.2[1][2][i]). A summary of the COC must be provided to students and all persons in parental relation to students at the beginning of each school year. This also provides an opportunity for school personnel to both review the COC with students and parents and identify possible gaps in policy, practices, and procedures. The COC is an ideal document to use to establish expectations and consequences for student and staff conduct regarding internet safety and the use of technology while on school grounds and/or at school functions. In addition, the COC is the framework by which school administrators can implement and equitably enforce a safe school climate. School personnel must be provided with a copy of the COC and copies of the COC must also be made available for review by students, persons in parental relation to students, and other community members (see, Education Law §2801[4] and 8 NYCRR §100.2[1][2][iii][b]). COCs are often posted on the districts', BOCES' and CVEEBs' websites.

NYS law requires that all COCs be reviewed annually and updated if necessary (see, Education Law §2801[5] and 8 NYCRR §100.2[1][2][iii][a]). As stated above, this annual review provides an opportunity to assess whether the COC needs to be revised to address, among other things, the use of new forms of technology on school grounds and/or at school functions by students, teachers, other school personnel and visitors. A district may establish a committee to facilitate the review of its COC and the district's response to COC violations. The review team/committee should include students, teachers, administrators, parent organizations, school safety team, school staff, concerned community members, and law enforcement officials. It is also recommended that individuals with strong technology skills and a thorough understanding of how students, teachers, and staff are using technology be recruited to assist in the review of the COC. This will help ensure that the COC reflects current and anticipated challenges that have been created or are anticipated through the evolution of technology.

The COC should address such internet and electronic device safety issues as cyberbullying and sexting. The NYSED VADIR Glossary of Terms defines Intimidation, Harassment, Menacing, and Bullying (IHMB) as “[t]hreatening, stalking or seeking to coerce or compel a person to do something; intentionally placing or attempting to place another person in fear of imminent physical injury; or engaging in verbal or physical conduct that threatens another with harm, including intimidation through the use of epithets or slurs involving race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, religious practices, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability that substantially disrupts the educational process” (8 NYCRR §120.2[gg][1][vi][j]). Since the descriptions of cyberbullying and sexting are not in statute, regulation, and/or case law, the following definitions from the NYS Department of Criminal Justice Services (NYSDCJS) may be used as a guide to develop the policies and practices in these areas. Cyberbullying is “the repeated use of information technology, including e-mail, instant message, blogs, chat rooms, pagers, cell phones, and gaming systems, to deliberately harass, threaten or intimidate others.” Cyberbullying, unlike physical bullying, does not provide an option for its victims to walk away ([http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/missing/i\\_safety/cyberbullying.htm](http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/missing/i_safety/cyberbullying.htm)). NYSDCJS defines sexting as “sending, receiving or forwarding sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude photos through text message or email” ([http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/missing/i\\_safety/i\\_intro.htm](http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/missing/i_safety/i_intro.htm)).

The COC should include statements that make it abundantly clear that cyberbullying is a form of electronic aggression and that both it and sexting are inappropriate and will not be tolerated on school grounds or at school-sponsored events or functions, using either school or personal information technology equipment. Sexting incidents should be reported on the VADIR in either IHMB (category 10) or other disruptive incidents (category 20), provided these reporting thresholds are met: the incident is violent/disruptive; it occurred on school property/ school sponsored events; and it meets/exceeds the disciplinary actions. Disciplinary or referral actions include the following:

- Referral to counseling;
- Teacher removal (formal 3214 hearing);
- Suspension from class or activities; in-school equivalent of one full day; Activities or transportation for five (5) consecutive school days;
- Out of school suspension: equivalent of one full day;
- Transfer to alternative setting; or
- Transfer to law enforcement.

(<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ssae/schoolsafety/vadir/glossary08aaug.html>)

Incidents in the IHMB category that come to the attention of the principal or school administrator, but do not rise to the disciplinary threshold, are logged by the school and are reported in Item 2 on page 3 of the VADIR Summary each year. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms used in reporting Violent and Disruptive Incidents for a description of the incident categories at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ssae/schoolsafety/vadir/glossary08aaug.html>. For further clarification on reporting, refer to the VADIR Questions & Answers at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ssae/schoolsafety/vadir/VADIRQA1008final.html>.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for school administrators related to cyberbullying and sexting is how to legally and effectively deal with behavior and/or incidents that take place off campus that may endanger the health or safety of pupils within the educational system or adversely affect the educative process. It should be noted that prior Commissioner's decisions have upheld the suspension of students for off-campus conduct (Appeal of K.S., 43 Ed Dept Rep 492, Decision No. 15,063; Appeal of Ravick, 40 id. 262, Decision No. 14,477; Appeal of Orman, 39 id. 811, Decision No. 14,389). Case law has also recognized that students may be disciplined for conduct that occurred outside of the school that may endanger the health or safety of pupils within the educational system or adversely affect the educative process (Matter of Coghlan v. Bd. of Educ. of Liverpool Cent. School Dist., 262 AD2d 949, citing Pollnow v. Glennon, 594 F.Supp. 220, 224, affd 757 F.2d 496). However, since regulation of bullying, particularly cyberbullying and sexting, may involve free speech and expression, there are constitutional limitations on the ability of a school district, BOCES, or CVEEB to restrict these forms of speech and expression and to discipline students for engaging in them pursuant to Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Community Sch. Dist., 393 US 503 (1969) and subsequent cases. We recommend that school districts, BOCES, and CVEEBs consult with their school attorneys in developing policies on bullying, cyberbullying, and sexting to determine whether the proposed policy is consistent with the decisions of the Commissioner relating to discipline for off-campus conduct and whether the proposed policy is constitutional under the Tinker standard as it has been applied by the courts. Because of national concerns over bullying, including cyberbullying and sexting, this is a rapidly evolving area of constitutional law, so we further recommend that districts, BOCES, and CVEEBs periodically review their policies with their school attorneys to make sure that they reflect current developments in the law.

- The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA): This is the primary federal law concerning access to offensive content over the internet on school and library computers (<http://fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/cipa.html>). Requirements of this law include:
  - Schools and libraries subject to CIPA may not receive the discounts offered by the E-rate program unless they certify that they have an internet safety policy that includes technology protection measures. The protection measures must block or filter internet access to pictures that are: (a) obscene; (b) child pornography; or (c) harmful to minors (for computers that are accessed by minors). Before adopting such an internet safety policy, schools and libraries must provide reasonable notice and hold at least one public hearing or meeting to address the proposal.
  - Schools subject to CIPA are required to adopt and enforce a policy to monitor online activities of minors.
  - Schools and libraries subject to CIPA are required to adopt and implement an internet safety policy addressing: (a) access by minors to inappropriate matter on the internet; (b) the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications; (c) unauthorized access, including so-called "hacking," and other unlawful activities by minors online; (d) unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal information regarding minors; and (e) measures restricting minors' access to materials harmful to them.
  
- Internet Safety Policies: In light of these requirements, a school district, BOCES, or CVEEB should revisit its policy regarding the use of social networking web sites and Instant Messaging Centers. A decision needs to be made as to whether the school district, BOCES, or CVEEB supports the use of these sites to encourage communication between staff, students, and persons in parental relation to students. If it encourages the use of these sites for such communications, it is wise to establish some proprietary parameters to ensure that staff, students, and persons in parental relation to students are not placed at risk.
  
- Analysis of anti-bullying legislation and reporting requirements: Since 2006, approximately 20 states have enacted cyberbullying legislation. A review of this enacted legislation shows a focus on expanding the definition of bullying and/or harassment to include the use of information technology equipment, including, but not limited to, e-mail, instant messaging, blogs, chat rooms, pagers, cell phones, and gaming systems, to carry out the acts. Many states require school districts to implement anti-bullying policies in all of their schools and to report violations of these policies within their schools. In New York State, bullying incidents are documented and reported through the Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting (VADIR) System. Within this system, the Intimidation, Harassment, Menacing, and Bullying incident category definition is broad enough to include cyberbullying incidents, thereby allowing the state to capture the frequency, geographic area, and specific school in which both the highest and lowest levels of incidents occur.

**Reporting and Preventing Incidents**

As noted, the reporting of bullying incidents can be accommodated by the VADIR system. The analysis of the VADIR data might also provide clues for what should be included in procedures for investigating and preventing bullying and cyberbullying. Of course, a strong school culture that does not tolerate such behavior, as well as good prevention policies and sound, research-based programs will minimize the need for investigation. There are a number of programs that are supported by scientifically-based research that have components dealing with bullying and cyberbullying. Please visit the Safe Schools and Alternative Education web site at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ssae/>, and the New York State Center for School Safety web site <http://nyscenterforschoolsafety.org>, for information regarding such programs. Good intervention efforts will help establish a culture and climate within the school that supports civility and respect and recognizes there are no innocent bystanders as it relates to bullying issues.

## Resources

- The monitoring of student behaviors and supports is an often overlooked aspect of a comprehensive policy for dealing with issues of bullying and cyberbullying. As a consequence, students who are victimized often become alienated because they are unsure of the appropriate steps to take. To ensure that these situations do not occur, schools are encouraged to investigate and provide support for these students through guidance, social work, and/or psychological services in the district. Districts are encouraged to include local municipality social services if possible.
- Additionally, advice is provided by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in its Stop Bullying Now! Campaign. Visit <http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adults/default.aspx>

Among other ideas, the HHS indicates that schools should:

- Educate students, teachers, and other staff members about cyberbullying
  - Be sure that the school's anti-bullying rules and policies address cyberbullying
  - Closely monitor students' use of computers at school
  - Use filtering and tracking software, but don't rely solely on this software, to screen out cyberbullying and other problematic online behavior
  - Investigate reports of bullying and cyberbullying immediately
    - Notify parents of all children involved
    - Closely monitor the behavior of affected students
    - Investigate to see if the victim could use some support
- Two programs that have been recognized to improve school climate and address bullying issues are the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and the Promoting Alternative Thinking strategies (PATHS) program.
  - For additional resources for schools, visit the Safe Schools and Alternative Education website: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ssae/schoolsafety/sdfsc/>.
  - School personnel will also find useful guidance in a Fact Sheet entitled "*What is Cyberbullying?*" Developed by the New York Center for School Safety, this Fact Sheet includes a number of recommendations that schools, parents and teachers can follow to address this issue. Please go to <http://nyscenterforschoolsafety.org>.
  - The Department will continue to expand its curricular guidance in internet safety. For more information, please visit [http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/technology/internet\\_safety/](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/technology/internet_safety/).

### **Funding Availability**

- Local educational agencies will not receive new Title IVA allocations in the 2010-2011 school year, but they are encouraged to either utilize all funds or carry over the allowable 25 percent to the 2010-2011 school year to assist in the development of policy, programs, and training on these issues. A memorandum dated January 8, 2010 was shared with the field regarding the loss of NCLB Title IV, Part A of Safe and Drug Free Schools Communities Act (SDFSCA) Funding for 2010-2011.

### **Additional Assistance**

This guidance is meant to provide you with ideas to address the issue of cyberbullying. You are invited to contact the Office of Student Support Services at (518) 486-6090 or the Office of Educational Design and Technology at (518) 474-5283 if you require additional assistance.



## Safe Schools & Alternative Education

### Glossary of Terms Used in Reporting Violent and Disruptive Incidents - Posted August 5, 2008

#### Incident Categories

1. **Homicide:** Any conduct which results in the death of another person, with or without a weapon.
2. **Sexual Offenses:**

2.1 **Forcible Sex Offenses:** Involving forcible compulsion and completed or attempted sexual intercourse, oral sexual conduct, anal sexual conduct or aggravated sexual contact, with or without a weapon, including but not limited to, rape and sodomy. Pursuant to Penal Law §130.00(8), "**forcible compulsion**" means "to compel by either: (a) use of force; or (b) a threat, express or implied, which places a person in fear of immediate death or physical injury to himself, herself or another person, or in fear that he, she or another person will immediately be kidnapped." Pursuant to Penal Law §130.00(11), "**aggravated sexual contact**" means "inserting, other than for a valid medical purpose, a foreign object in the vagina, urethra, penis or rectum of a child, thereby causing physical injury to such child." "**Oral sexual conduct**" and "**anal sexual conduct**" mean oral or anal sex.

2.2 **Other Sex Offenses:** involving inappropriate sexual contact but no forcible compulsion, with or without a weapon. Other sex offenses, includes, but is not limited to, conduct that may be consensual or involve a child who is incapable of consent by reason of disability or because he or she is under 17 years of age. However, it does not include consensual conduct involving students and/or non-students 18 years of age or under, unless at least one of the individuals participating in the conduct is at least 4 years older than the youngest participant.

Inappropriate sexual contact requires physical contact with another person but no forcible compulsion. It includes, but is not limited to, the following conduct:

- a. touching or grabbing another student on a part of the body that is generally regarded as private, such as buttocks, breast, genitalia, etc.
- b. removing another student's clothing to reveal underwear or private body parts
- c. brushing or rubbing against another person in a sexual or provocative manner
- d. a student first rubbing his/her own genitalia and then touching another person's body

**Note: Verbal sexual harassment is reported in category 10 (Intimidation, Harassment, Menacing or Bullying). Self-exposure or "mooning," depending on the circumstances, are reported in either category 10 (Intimidation, Harassment, Menacing or Bullying) or category 20 (Other Disruptive Incident).**

3. **Robbery:** Forcible stealing of property from a person by using or threatening the immediate use of physical force upon that person, with or without a weapon.
4. **Assault with Serious Physical Injury:** Intentionally or recklessly causing serious physical injury to another person, with or without a weapon, in violation of the school district's code of conduct. Pursuant to Penal Law §10.00(10), "serious physical injury" means physical injury creating a substantial risk of death or serious and protracted disfigurement or protracted



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## What is Bullying



**Author:**

**Source:** The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment

### What is Bullying?

1. Bullying is not fair. Bullies are more powerful than their victims because of an advantage of age, size, ability or social status (being more popular, having more money). Bullies may also have power if they harass or tease other students about a sensitive issue, such as being short or overweight, or about race, sexuality, family, religion, etc.
2. Bullies harass on purpose – their behavior is not accidental.
3. Bullying is not fun for the victims. Victims may feel angry, upset, afraid, sad, embarrassed and ashamed. Victims often feel unsafe at school.
4. Bullying happens over and over again.

### What are the Types of Bullying?

#### Direct (face-to-face)

- Verbal (teasing, insults, put-downs)
- Physical (shoving, pushing, hitting, assault)
- Psychological (“dirty looks,” uttering threats, rolling your eyes, making a mean face)

#### Indirect (behind someone’s back)

- Gossip
- Leaving out, excluding someone
- Social aggression (telling people not to be friends with a victim)

### How are Students Involved in Bullying?

Students may be the:

- Bully
- Victim
- Bystanders – students who see and/or hear the bullying incident.
- Interveners – students who step in and do something to stop the bullying.



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- [What is Cyber Bullying?](#)
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Testimonials & Videos

Training & Conferences

Funding

News

Related Publications

## What is Bullying?

Dan Olweus, creator of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*, provides us with this commonly accepted definition for bullying in his book, *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*:

**"A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself."**

This definition includes three important components:

1. Bullying is aggressive behavior that involves unwanted, negative actions.
2. Bullying involves a pattern of behavior repeated over time.
3. Bullying involves an imbalance of power or strength.

## Types of Bullying

Bullying can take on many forms. As part of the *Olweus Bullying Questionnaire*, students are asked if they have been bullied in any of these nine ways:

1. Verbal bullying including derogatory comments and bad names
2. Bullying through social exclusion or isolation
3. Physical bullying such as hitting, kicking, shoving, and spitting
4. Bullying through lies and false rumors
5. Having money or other things taken or damaged by students who bully
6. Being threatened or being forced to do things by students who bully
7. Racial bullying
8. Sexual bullying
9. Cyber bullying (via cell phone or Internet) [Learn more](#)

## Why Students Bully

Information about bullying suggests that there are three interrelated reasons why students bully.

1. Students who bully have strong needs for power and (negative) dominance.
2. Students who bully find satisfaction in causing injury and suffering to other students.
3. Students who bully are often rewarded in some way for their behavior with material or psychological rewards.

## Impact of Bullying

A single student who bullies can have a wide-ranging impact on the students they bully, students who observe bullying, and the overall climate of the school and community.

**Students Who are Bullied** - Students deserve to feel safe at school. But when they experience bullying, these types of effects can last long into their future:

- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Health problems
- Poor grades
- Suicidal thoughts

**Students Who Bully Others** - Students who intentionally bully others should be held accountable for their actions. Those who bully their peers are also more likely than those students who do not bully others to \*:

- Get into frequent fights
- Steal and vandalize property
- Drink alcohol and smoke
- Report poor grades
- Perceive a negative climate at school
- Carry a weapon

\* Not all students who bully others have obvious behavior problems or are engaged in rule-breaking activities, however. Some of them are highly skilled socially and good at ingratiating themselves with their teacher and other adults. This is true of some boys who bully but is perhaps even more common among

## Funding

Find out what [new funding opportunities](#) are available for schools and other institutions.

## Exclusive offer

Bullying can lead to suicidal thoughts. *Lifelines: A Suicide Prevention Program* can help.



Special discount: Olweus.org customers get 10% off when they order *Lifelines*.

[Learn More](#)

Studies show that bullying affects student achievement, school attendance and school climate.

[Learn More](#)

bullying girls. For this reason it is often difficult for adults to discover or even imagine that these students engage in bullying behavior

**Observers of Bullying** - Students who see bullying happen also may feel that they are in an unsafe environment. Effects may include feeling:

- Fearful
- Powerless to act
- Guilty for not acting
- Tempted to participate

**Schools with Bullying Issues** - When bullying continues and a school does not take action, the entire school climate can be affected in the following ways:

- The school develops an environment of fear and disrespect
- Students have difficulty learning
- Students feel insecure
- Students dislike school
- Students perceive that teachers and staff have little control and don't care about them

Find out how the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* addresses the issues surrounding bullying and provides [Benefits for Schools](#) and [Benefits for Other Institutions](#).

**Bullying is a Serious Issue**

Bullying may vary greatly between schools and school districts, but it is very prevalent:

- Statistics show that 23 percent of students in grades 4-6 had been bullied "several times" or more; 20 percent had bullied others (1998 study of 6,500 students in rural South Carolina)
- Statistics show that 17 percent of students in grades 6-10 reported having been bullied "sometimes" or more, with 8 percent being bullied once a week. 19 percent said they had been a bully to others "sometimes" or more. (2001 study of 15,000 U.S. students)

**The Bullying Circle**

Nearly one in five students in an average classroom is experiencing bullying in some way. The rest of the students, called bystanders, are also affected by the bullying.<sup>1</sup>

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program describes students involved or witnessing a bullying situation as having roles in the Bullying Circle<sup>2</sup>:

**A. Students Who Bully.**  
These students want to bully, start the bullying, and play a leader role

**B. Followers or Henchmen**  
These students are positive toward the bullying and take an active part, but don't usually initiate it and do not play a lead role

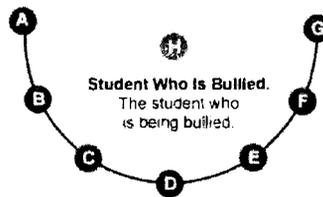
**C. Supporters or Passive Bullies**  
These students actively and openly support the bullying, for example, through laughter or calling attention to the situation, but they don't join in

**D. Passive Supporters or Possible Bullies**  
These students like the bullying but do not show outward signs of support

**E. Disengaged Onlookers**  
These students do not get involved and do not take a stand, nor do they participate actively in either direction. They might think or say "It's none of my business," or "Let's watch and see what happens."

**F. Possible Defenders**  
These students dislike the bullying and think they should help the student who is being bullied but do nothing

**G. Defenders**  
They dislike the bullying and help or try to help the student who is being bullied



<sup>1</sup>C. Salmivalli, K. Lagerspetz, K. Björkqvist, K. Osterman, and A. Kaukiainen. "Bullying as a Group Process: Participant Roles and Their Relations to Social Status within the Group," *Aggressive Behavior* 22 (1996): 1-15.

<sup>2</sup>Dan Olweus, "Peer Harassment: A Critical Analysis and Some Important Issues," in *Peer Harassment in School*, ed. J. Juvonen and S. Graham (New York: Guilford Publications, 2001), 3-20.



*A Strong Partnership  
in Bullying Prevention*

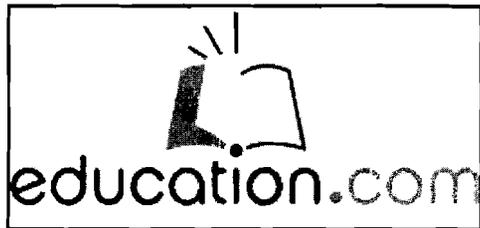
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## Ten Actions ALL Parents Can Take to Help Eliminate Bullying



**Author:**

**Source:** [Education.com](#)

The latest research shows that ***more than half of all children are, at least on occasion, directly involved in bullying as a perpetrator, victim, or both.*** And many of those who are not directly involved witness others being bullied on a regular basis. No child is immune - kids of every race, gender, grade and socio-economic sector are impacted. But it doesn't have to be this way. As parents we have the power to help reduce bullying. Here are Education.com's top ten actions **you** can take to help address bullying:

1. **Talk with and listen to your kids - everyday.** Research shows that parents are often the last to know when their child has bullied or been bullied. You can encourage your children to buck that trend by engaging in frequent conversations about their social lives. Spend a few minutes every day asking open ended questions about who they spend time with at school and in the neighborhood, what they do in between classes and at recess, who they have lunch with, or what happens on the way to and from school. If your children feel comfortable talking to you about their peers *before* they're involved in a bullying event, they'll be much more likely to get you involved *after*.
2. **Spend time at school and recess.** Research shows that 67% of bullying happens when adults are not present. Schools don't have the resources to do it all and need parents' help in reducing bullying. Whether you can volunteer once a week or once a month, you can make a real difference just by being present and helping to organize games and activities that encourage kids to play with new friends. Be sure to coordinate your on-campus volunteer time with your child's teacher and/or principal.
3. **Be a good example of kindness and leadership.** Your kids learn a lot about power relationships from watching you. When you get angry at a waiter, a sales clerk, another driver on the road, or even your child, you have a great opportunity to model effective communication techniques. Don't blow it by blowing your top! Any time you speak to another person in a mean or abusive way, you're teaching your child that bullying is ok.
4. **Learn the signs.** Most children don't tell anyone (especially adults) that they've been bullied. It is therefore important for parents and teachers to learn to recognize possible signs of being victimized such as frequent loss of personal belongings, complaints of headaches or stomachaches, avoiding recess or school activities, getting to school very late or very early. If you suspect that a child might be bullied, talk with the child's teacher or find ways to observe his or

her peer interactions to determine whether or not your suspicions might be correct. Talk directly to your child about the situation.

5. **Create healthy anti-bullying habits early.** Help develop anti-bullying and anti-victimization habits early in your children, as early as kindergarten. Coach your children what *not* to do - hitting, pushing, teasing, "saying na-na-na-na," being mean to others. Help your child to focus on how such actions might feel to the child on the receiving end (e.g., "How do you think you would feel if that happened to you?"). Such strategies can enhance empathy for others. Equally if not more important, teach your children what to *do* -- kindness, empathy, fair play, and turn-taking are critical skills for good peer relations. Children also need to learn how to say "no" firmly, and how to avoid being mean to others. Coach your child about what to do if other kids are mean - get an adult right away, tell the child who is teasing or bullying to "stop," walk away and ignore the bully. It may help to role play what to do with your child. And repetition helps: go over these techniques periodically with your Kindergarten and early Elementary school aged children.
6. **Help your child's school address bullying effectively.** Whether your children have been bullied or not, you should know what their school is doing to address bullying. Research shows that "zero-tolerance" policies aren't effective. What works better are ongoing educational programs that help create a healthy social climate in the school. This means teaching kids at every grade level how to be inclusive leaders and how to be empathic towards others and teaching victims effective resistance techniques. If your school does not have effective bullying strategies and policies in place, talk to the principal and advocate for change.
7. **Establish household rules about bullying.** Your children need to hear from you explicitly that it's not normal, ok, or tolerable for them to bully, to be bullied, or to stand by and just watch other kids be bullied. Make sure they know that if they are bullied physically, verbally, or socially (at school, by a sibling, in your neighborhood, or online) it's safe and important for them to tell you about it and that you will help. They also need to know just what bullying is (many children do not know that they are bullying others), and that such behavior is harmful to others and not acceptable. You can help your children find other ways to exert their personal power, status, and leadership at school, and that you will work with them, their teachers, and their principal to implement a kindness plan at school.
8. **Teach your child how to be a good witness.** Research shows that kids who witness bullying feel powerless and seldom intervene. However, kids who take action can have a powerful and positive effect on the situation. Although it's never a child's responsibility to put him or herself in danger, kids can often effectively diffuse a bullying situation by yelling "Stop! You're bullying!" Kids can also help each other by providing support to the victim, not giving extra attention to the bully, and/or reporting what they witnessed to an adult.
9. **Teach your child about cyberbullying.** Children often do not realize what cyberbullying is. Cyberbullying includes sending mean, rude, vulgar, or threatening messages or images; posting sensitive, private information about another person; pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad; and intentionally excluding someone from an online group. These acts are as harmful as physical violence and must not be tolerated. We know from research that the more time a teen spends online, the more likely they will be cyberbullied – so limit online time.
10. **Spread the word that bullying should not be a normal part of childhood.** Some adults hesitate to act when they observe or hear about bullying because they think of bullying as a typical phase of childhood that must be endured or that it can help children "toughen up". It is important for all adults to understand that bullying does not have to be a normal part of childhood. All forms of bullying are harmful to the perpetrator, the victim, and to witnesses and the effects last well into adulthood (and can include depression, anxiety, substance abuse, family violence and criminal behavior). Efforts to effectively address bullying require the collaboration of school, home, and community. Forward this list and articles you've read to all the parents, teachers, administrators, after school care programs, camp counselors, and spiritual leaders you know. Bullying is an enormous problem but if we all work together, it's one we *can* impact.

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## Some Myths and Facts about Bullies and Victims



**Author:** [Sandra Graham](#)

**Source:** Bullying Special Edition Contributor

Based on what we see on television or read in the newspapers, many of us develop beliefs about bullies and victims. Sometimes those beliefs are more myth than fact. In this article I describe a few commonly held myths about bullies and victims. I label these beliefs as myths because researchers who study bullies and victims of many different ages and in many different contexts have not found them to be true.

### **Myth #1: Bullies are rejected by their peers and have no friends.**

Many people believe that everybody dislikes the class bully. But in truth, the research shows that many bullies have high status in the classroom and lots of friends (1). Particularly during the middle school years, some bullies are actually quite popular among their classmates who perceive them as especially “cool” (2). As young teens try out their need to be more independent, it seems that bullies sometimes enjoy a new kind of notoriety. Many classmates admire their toughness and may even try to imitate them.

### **Myth #2: Bullies have low self-esteem.**

Just as it has been incorrectly assumed that bullies are rejected by peers and have no friends, there is a general belief that such youth are low in self-esteem. That myth has its roots in the widely accepted view that people who bully others must act that way because they think poorly of themselves. Some readers may remember the self-esteem movement of the 1980s when many people argued that raising self-esteem was the key to improving the outcomes of children with academic and social problems (3). But there is not much evidence in peer research that bullies suffer from low self-esteem (4). To the contrary, many studies report that bullies perceive themselves in a positive light, perhaps sometimes displaying inflated self-views, and that high self-esteem can sometimes encourage bullies to rationalize their antisocial actions (5).

### **Myth #3: Being a victim builds character.**

Another misconception is that bullying is a normal part of childhood and adolescence and that the

experience of peer harassment builds character. In contrast to this view, research findings quite clearly show that bullying experiences increase the vulnerabilities of children. For example, we know that children who are passive and socially withdrawn are at heightened risk of getting bullied and that these children become even more withdrawn after incidents of harassment (6).

#### **Myth #4: Many childhood victims of harassment become violent as teens.**

The portrayal of victims lashing out at their tormentors has been reinforced by the media portrayals of school shooting incidents over the past few years (7). However, the truth is that most victims of bullying are more likely to suffer in silence than to retaliate. As indicated above, many victims experience psychological adjustment problems like depression and low self-esteem, which may make them inclined to turn inward rather than outward.

#### **Myth #5: There is a victim personality.**

Although certain personality characteristics (e.g., the tendency to be shy or withdrawn) indeed place children at higher risk for being bullied, there are also a host of situational factors (e.g., being a new student in school) and social risk factors (e.g., not having a friend) that increase the likelihood of a child being or continuing to get bullied. These situational factors explain why there are more temporary than chronic victims of bullying (8).

#### **Myth #6: Bullying involves only perpetrators and victims.**

Many parents, teachers, and students view bullying as a problem that is limited to bullies and victims. Yet, there is much research showing that bullying involves more than the bully-victim dyad (9). For example, bullying incidents are typically public (rather than private) events that have witnesses. Studies based on playground observations have found that in most incidents, at least four other peers were present as witnesses, bystanders, assistants to bullies, reinforcers, or defenders of victims (10). One observation study found that in more than 50% of the observed incidents of bullying, peers reinforced bullies by passively watching. In only about 25% of the incidents did witnesses support the victim by directly intervening, distracting, or discouraging the bully (10).

Understanding facts versus myths about bullies and victims is important for intervention. The problems of victims and bullies are not the same. Victims of harassment need interventions that help them develop more positive self-views and that teach them not to blame themselves for their experiences with harassment. Interventions for bullies do not need to focus on self-esteem. Rather, bullies need to learn strategies that help them control their anger and their tendency to blame other people for their problems. And peers need to learn that bullying is a whole school problem for which everyone is responsible. There is no such thing as an innocent bystander.

### **Additional Resources**

#### **U.S. Department of Education Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS)**

Initiative A federal grant-awarding program that allows schools districts to apply for funds to support programs that promote a safe school environment.

[www.ed.gov/programs/dvpsafeschools/](http://www.ed.gov/programs/dvpsafeschools/)

#### **UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools/School Mental Health Project**

This website allows access to a clearinghouse of resources for enhancing mental health in schools. Among the resources that can be accessed are consumer information outlets, national organizations

whose mission focuses on mental health in schools, relevant government agencies, listservs, and electronic journals and newsletters.

[www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu](http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu)

### **For further reading**

Hyman, I., Kay, B., Tabori, A., Weber, M., Mahon, M., & Cohen, I. (2006). Bullying: Theory, research, and interventions. In C. Evertson & C. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues* (pp. 855-884). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

A comprehensive and up-to-date review of the topic of bullying in schools. There is a particularly relevant section on interventions to address school bullying

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