

## An Intervention Strategy

Teachers should take the following steps when bullying has been observed or reported:

- Elicit an account from and feelings of the victim and really listen to what they have to say. The circumstances are not especially important but the effects are. Allow the victim to fully express their feelings. Pictures or writing may also be helpful.
- Convene a meeting of all those involved in the bullying – up to six to eight students, if possible. Where only one or two are the chief instigators, include observers or those who passively assist by failing to intervene.
- Explain, or have the victim explain, the problem and recount his/her story in a clear way so that his/her distress is described.
- Do not attribute blame but state that everyone involved is responsible in some way and can do something about it. Focus on the reason an offense is unacceptable, rather than on the offender.
- Ask all of the group members if they can make some suggestions about ways in which they might help. For older students a problem solving approach can be taken, but for younger students it might be better to ask for ways in which the story of the victim could be given a “happy ending.” List all of the ideas and leave it there. Do not go on to extract a promise of improved behavior.
- Arrange to meet each group member alone within a week to find out how things are going.
- Convey throughout this process your belief that the students involved are not “bad,” are capable of kind behavior, and that they will help the victim.
- Teach respect by modeling it in classrooms, hallways and lounges.
- Nurture student leadership in responding to and preventing bullying.

### For additional information contact:

Alternative and Safe Schools/  
Instructional Support Section  
Division of School Improvement  
919.807.3947

## Curriculum Materials and Teacher Guides

Looking for America, Vol. I: Promising Practices in Intergroup Relations (1994), National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 100 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116.

Anti-Defamation League Catalog for Classroom and Community, Anti-Defamation League, World of Difference, 823 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017.

Flirting or Hurting? A Teacher’s Guide to Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment in Schools (1994), Wellesley College Center for Women, Publications Department, 106 Central Street, Wellesley, MA.

Healing the Hate: A National Bias Crime Prevention Curriculum for Middle Schools (1997) , Education Development Center, Inc., and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Washington, D.C., 800-225-4276 or 800-638-8736.

Tolerance for Diversity of Beliefs: A Secondary Curriculum Unit, Social Science Education Consortium, Boulder, CO, 303-492-8154.

Quit It, A Teacher’s Guide to Teasing and Bullying for Use with 4th and 5th Grade Students, Nan Stein and Lisa Sjostrom, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women and NEA Professional Library, Publications Department, 106 Central Street, Wellesley, MA 02181

Teacher, they called me a \_\_\_\_\_! Confronting Prejudice and Discrimination in the Classroom, Deborah Byrnes, Anti-Defamation League, 823 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017.

Teaching Tolerance, Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104, 334-264-0286.

Pride in Who We Are: Compendium of Model Programs and Prejudice Reduction and Hate Crime Prevention: An Annotated Bibliography of Resources for Teachers and School Administrators, New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Student Services, Office of Bilingual Education and Equity Issues (1997), 609-292-8777.

Talking to Our Children about Racism, Prejudice and Diversity, Leadership Conference Education Fund, 1629 K Street NW, Suite 1010, Washington, D.C. 20006 202-466-3434.

Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP), RCCP National Center, 40 Exchange Place, Suite 1111, New York, NY 10005, 212-509-0022.

# Bullies and Victims

## What Schools Can Do To Change Bullying Behavior and Assist Vulnerable Children

Victims



Public Schools of North Carolina  
State Board of Education  
Department of Public Instruction

# Bullies and Victims

## What Schools Can Do To Change Bullying Behavior and Assist Vulnerable Children

Bullying is long-standing violence, physical or psychological, conducted by an individual or a group and directed against an individual who is not able to defend himself/ herself in the actual situation.

## Overview of the Problem

Bullying is an underrated but enduring problem in our schools. Bullying, like child abuse, is a problem which many will deny exists. However, the evidence from both children and parents is that bullying can profoundly affect the lives and school achievements of children. On this basis alone it is a problem that schools should address by having clearly defined policies and procedures.

Research suggests that as many as a fourth of all children in school are probably, at some time, involved as either bully or victim. Studies of children between the ages of 5–16, found that 68% complained of being bullied at least once, while 38% reported being bullied more than once and had experienced a particularly terrifying bullying incident.

A child may indicate by signs or behavior that he or she is being bullied. If teachers or parents become aware of any of the following, they should investigate further.

### A child or student who may:

- . Be frightened of walking to or from school
- . Be frightened of or unwilling to go to school
- . Begin doing poorly in his/her school work
- . Come home regularly with possessions or books missing or destroyed
- . Continually 'lose' pocket money
- . Come home hungry (because lunch money was taken)
- . Become depressed, withdrawn, or stop eating
- . Cry her/himself to sleep at night, or have nightmares
- . Have unexplained bruises, scratches, cuts

There is a greater amount of bullying among boys and physical violence is often involved in these situations. Boys tend to direct their bullying at both boys and girls. Victims are usually those who appear weak, cautious and withdrawn, have low self-esteem and find it difficult to make friends. Girls also bully, but are more likely to use verbal and psychological types of behavior and to direct their bullying at other girls. Females bully for assurance that they are "in", males bully to display power.

## Guidelines for Action: K-12

Bullying is a form of violence against vulnerable students that must not be tolerated. School administrators must do their best to let students, staff, and parents know through written policies, seminars, and actions that:

- a) Bullying behavior will not be tolerated.
- b) All accusations of bullying will be taken seriously.
- c) The school will work to empower students and staff to constructively deal with bullying.
- d) Efforts will be made to protect the rights of everyone involved as the school attempts to resolve bullying situations.

The following strategies are recommended for dealing with bullying in the schools.

**Breaking the Code of Silence** – Many incidents are never reported. The need for everyone in the school to recognize the damage that silence can cause is of crucial importance, as well as understanding that silence is not a solution to the problem.

**School Rules** – Rules or procedures must be explicit, be positively stated and sympathetically implemented. Many schools present their code of conduct in a negative way, "You must not..." Schools should reduce their rules to a minimum and state these as an explicit description of what is required, e.g., walk in the corridors, pick up litter when you see it.

**Adult Supervision** – Most bullying incidents happen in situations where adults are not in the vicinity. Closer supervision of stress areas and organized play-times have all helped alleviate the problem.

**Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution** – A problem solving approach which identifies the problem and then comes to an acceptable solution is more useful than attempting to analyze why the problem occurred and who is at fault. Open and clear communication about the problem, and the generation of possible solutions, can increase group empathy and lead to changes in the interactions between bullies and victims.

**Student/Teacher Relations** – The ability to influence values and attitudes of young people is enhanced where relationships are good and when appropriate intervention strategies are used as an alternative to power and punishment.

**Active Listening** – If teachers desire that students change their behavior, they must spend time listening, really listening to students' account of what is happening and to their suggestions about what can be done.

**Using the Peer Group** – The approval of the group is of great importance to students. Group opinions and pressure are powerful ways to change attitudes. If the group rejects bullying, the motivational force that drives bullying can be broken.

**Parental Involvement** – Close contact and cooperation between home and school are crucial for bullies and victims. The school's approach to and confidence that the problem can be resolved will help to reduce anxiety for both students and their parents.

**Training for Staff and Students** – Training should enable staff and students to identify bullying, understand its causes and effects, learn methods of opposing bullying, and feel more comfortable reporting incidents of bullying.