

## Use song to get anti-bully messages to youngsters

While early intervention is best when it comes to addressing bullying, it's not always easy to get anti-bullying messages across to elementary students.

### Key points

- Children remember anti-bullying messages in song lyrics.
- Lively actions with songs help messages sink in.
- Learning by singing changes kids' thinking, conduct. ■

Educators can use creative interactive music to translate bullying prevention themes into short simple songs that youngsters find easy to recall and use.

Leonardo Biciunas of Chicago started presenting anti-bullying messages in song at schools after he discovered that he could use music to

communicate with his younger brother who is autistic and has Down syndrome.

Today, Leonardo and the Makin' Waves Band play familiar rock tunes laced with bullying prevention themes in schools to help districts reduce bullying. Biciunas researches the latest bullying prevention resources so his words emphasize key advice. Simplicity and repetition in the jingles stick with students, Biciunas said. "We learn our ABCs through music — so why can't we learn to teach students to respect each other that way?" he asked. Acting out motions while singing helps reinforce the messages for kids in fun ways, he added.

Biciunas shares the following bullying prevention tips in songs.

#### ■ Promote school loyalty in diverse settings.

In the song *B True 2 Your School* Biciunas nurtures school spirit in students to help kids feel connected to school and care about their classmates, even those who differ from them, he said. Students need to feel part of something bigger than themselves so they want to protect their school and friends, he explained. This song promotes accepting others from diverse backgrounds "because one of the main tenets of bullying prevention is to avoid excluding someone because they are a different race, color, creed, or because they have a disability," he said.

■ **Make bullying unpopular.** The song *That's A Bully*, exposes "the myth that bullying is the

dominant," normal behavior of students, or an acceptable way "to get what you want," Biciunas said. The songs make it clear that "when youngsters use verbal tools to say, I'm picking a fight with someone, that's bullying, and that is not cool," he said.

■ **Issue students a call to action.** It's often up to one student in a bullying incident to stand up for what is right, Biciunas said. The song *Makin' Waves* references historical figures who stood up to others, he said.

"I'm hoping that educators run with it and apply historical references in classes to emphasize anti-bullying messages," he added.

The song reminds students that while it's not easy, they can be like a famous person who stands up and helps out. The song shares a progressive set of instructions such as: speak up, befriend the victim, and influence others as a leader at school. Also, another song, *Tell Somebody*, urges kids to report bullying to an adult at school who can help them, he said.

#### ■ Instill hope for success so students focus on positive behavior.

The song *No More Bullies* teaches students the golden rule and promotes respect for others, Biciunas said. Students are less likely to bully classmates when they have a dream to follow and friends that support their dream, he said. In the song, *Ready for Success*, we ask students to spend more time thinking about how to reach their dream than how to behave in ways that interfere with that dream, he said. When a student is targeted by a bully, he needs to see it in perspective instead of giving in to despair, Biciunas said. So the song, *Trouble*, reminds students that things that go bad often improve tomorrow. The song *Nothin' Gonna Bring Me Down*, another early suicide prevention effort, says we all have something to live for and to give, Biciunas said.

■ **Discourage cyberbullying.** A song called *Don't Send It* makes students aware of how cyber-messages impact others for good or bad, he said. It reminds students that their words can be very powerful, so they shouldn't send or relay hurtful messages, he said.

Visit Leonardo Biciunas at [leonardomusic.com](http://leonardomusic.com). Find out more about Target Corporations' Arts in Schools program and grants at <http://sites.target.com/site/en/company/page.jsp?contentId=WCMP04-031819>. ■