

Bullying Prevention

Recognizing bullying when it happens

- Power differential
- It's mean-spirited
- Often physical intimidation, even if it's unspoken
- The "victim" or "observers" sometimes don't challenge a bully because a positive relationship with the bully is desired, or sometimes because they are afraid of retaliation

Warning Signs

Teachers are often the first people to detect changes in behavior or relational dynamics between students because of their regular daily contact with them. Acts of violence or bullying are often accompanied by warning signs, such as, changes in academic performance, changes in school attendance, increased aggression, and diminished interest.

Identifying Roles

Although, it may be helpful for learning about bullying to label students as **bully, victim, bystander**—the majority of students occupy more than one role and labeling students outwardly can leave little room for change.

Approach Students Individually

Bullying is often addressed in the same ways in which normal conflicts are managed—by sitting with both parties and discussing the situation. This approach is inappropriate because of the complex dynamics of bullying which are similar to the dynamics of an abusive relationship. It is important to protect the students being bullied by providing a safe and secure environment for them to discuss their feelings. Feelings of safety are compromised when the person causing the harm is present. Working with each individual involved by offering support and redirection has been advocated by experts in bullying intervention.

School Staff—Student Connectedness is Important

- Research has shown that when students are more engaged in school and feel connected rates of violence go down and school safety increases
- Increasing strength and the quality of classroom engagement by creating caring, supportive, culturally responsive learning environments is often effective in reducing acts of violence
- An effective strategy includes building staff—student connections so bystanders feel empowered to tell adults, support targets of bullying and discourage unacceptable behavior

What to do about bullying...

- Create a culture of respect in the classroom; establish expectations for interactions at the beginning of the school year, before bullying occurs
- Consistently model behaviors that are respectful and preserve all students' dignity and self-respect; try not to shame students
- Intervene immediately if you observe bullying or suspect it
- Pull the "victim" out of the situation and help him to feel safe before he returns to the situation
- Talk to the bully separately; notify administrators if student persists in bullying or if it is severe; employ classroom consequences, but know that bigger consequences may be needed
- Educators need to develop and consistently enforce effective consequences for bullying. Effective consequences are small (so they can be used consistently), escalate with repeated aggression, and often involve loss of unstructured times like recess, lunch with peers, or extracurricular activities.