



TEACHING TOLERANCE

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

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Bullying: Guidelines for Teachers

Some anti-bullying policies actually do more harm than good. Educators can use the following tips to intervene appropriately when bullying occurs.

THE DO's:

Stop the bullying immediately.

Stand between the bullied student and the bully(ies), blocking eye contact. Don't send any bystanders away. To avoid escalating the tension, wait until later to sort out the facts. Talk to the parties involved separately once they are calm.

Refer to school rules regarding bullying.

Speak in a matter-of-fact tone of voice to describe what you heard or saw. Let all students know bullying is always unacceptable.

Support the bullied child.

Do this in a way that allows him or her dignity and to feel safe from retaliation. Make a point to see the child later in private if he or she is upset. Increase supervision to assure bullying is not repeated.

Offer guidance to bystanders.

Let them know how they might appropriately intervene or get help next time. Tell them you noticed their inaction or that you're pleased with the way they tried to help.

Impose immediate consequences.

Wait until all parties have calmed down. Do not require that students apologize or make amends that may be insincere. The consequences should be logical and connected to the offense. A first step could be taking away social privileges i.e. recess or lunch in the cafeteria.

Notify colleagues and parents.

Let the bully know he or she is being watched.

Follow up and intervene as necessary.

Support the bullied child and the bully, enabling them to vent feelings and recognize

their own behavior. The bully may need to learn new methods of using his or her power and influence in the classroom.

THE DON'Ts:

Do not confuse bullying with conflict. Bullying is a form of victimization, and addressing it as a "conflict" downplays the negative behavior and the seriousness of the effects. Educators should strive to send the message that "no one deserves to be bullied," and to let the bully know the behavior is wholly inappropriate.

Do not use peer mediation. It can be very upsetting for a child who has been bullied to face his or her tormentor in mediation. Giving both parties an equal voice can empower the bully and make the bullied student feel worse. In addition, there is no evidence that peer mediation is effective in stopping bullying.

Do not use group treatment for bullies. Some schools use therapeutic strategies such as anger management, skill-building, empathy-building and self-esteem building to reach the bully. In practice, group members can actually reinforce each others' bullying and antisocial behavior.

Adapted from "Misdirections in Bullying Prevention and Intervention," and other tip sheets by Stop Bullying Now! [1], a website dedicated to helping youth "take a stand" and "lend a hand."

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