

Bullying

The Bullying Task Force

Bullying Task Force

- Representative from A&P
- Principal from each level
- Assistant Principal from each level
- Social Worker from each level
- Dean from the high school
- Parents and students will be added as appropriate

Task Force Agenda

- Provide background & current research
- Gather existing data on bullying in the schools
- Identify current intervention
- Presentation on legal aspects of bullying and cyber-bullying
- Develop a survey to collect information on incidents of bullying
- Develop a reporting format for parents and students
- Develop effective intervention
- Develop a method of evaluation

The Law

- In Illinois the school board, in consultation with parent-teacher advisory committee and other community-based organizations, must include provisions in the student discipline policy to address students who have demonstrated behaviors that put them at risk for aggressive behavior, including without limitation, bullying, as defined in the policy.
- School district cannot be held responsible for the actions of a student. However, it is responsible for its own response.

OCR Evaluation Criteria

- Student harassed based on disability
- Conduct was serious, pervasive & persistent
- The district has actual or constructive notice
- The district failed to respond adequately & promptly

Off Campus Bullying

- Board policy addresses off campus bullying
- Sufficient nexus between actions & educational environment
- The speech is unprotected or substantially disrupts or creates a foreseeable risk

Discipline of Off-Campus Bullying

- If the district decides to discipline students for off-campus bullying, this “long arm of the law” potentially increases a school district’s liability for peer-on-peer harassment that occurs off campus, specifically in situations where action is NOT taken against the aggressor.

Unprotected Speech

- Fighting words
- Speech that incites other to imminent lawless action
- Obscenity
- Certain types of defamatory speech
- True threats
- Speech that causes a substantial disruption

How to Protect the District

- Prohibit ALL harassment
- Make your position clear
- Show you care / conduct in-services
- Pay attention / train staff to listen and respond
- Make reporting painless
- Don't wait - investigate

How to Protect the District cont.

- Conduct thorough investigations
 - Interview the victim
 - Interview the harasser
 - Interview the witnesses
- Leave a paper trail
- Report the findings
- Take action

Bullying Data

- Some statistics estimate 1 in 3 children are effected by bullying
- It is estimated that 10% of students experience extreme victimization
- Long term relationship between bullying and victimization and anxiety, depression, substance use, & conduct disorders

Definition of Bullying

- Bullying is usually defined as a form of aggression in which one or more children intend to harm or disturb another child who is perceived as being unable to defend him/herself.
- Typically, a power imbalance exists between the bully and the victim, with the bully being either physically or psychologically more powerful.

Victims

- Physically, victims tend to be small in stature
- Unsuccessful at sports or physical activity
- When attacked, may cry or withdraw
- Often have poor communication & problem solving skills
- Poor self-esteem
- Little social support
- Uninvolved in activities
- Low achievers in academics
- Not popular / tend to focus on adults
- Less developed social skills
- Withdrawn / not assertive

Victims

- Victims are ashamed of being bullied
- Victims are afraid of retaliation
- Victims don't think anyone can or will help
- Victims often do not report instances of bullying

Effects on Victims

- Victims may avoid school
- Victims may avoid specific areas of the school
- Victims may experience physical injury
- Victims may experience loneliness & depression
- Victims may experience academic difficulties
- Victims are more likely to bring a weapon to school
- Victims consider suicide as a means of escape

Support for Victims

- Intervention for victims should focus on providing counseling, building friendships with supportive peers

Intervention for the Victim

- Identify students that are isolated or have poor social skill development and provide social work to develop social skills
- Facilitate development of friends/assign a buddy
- Facilitate involvement in activities
- Develop skills so if bullied the response does not invite further incidents

Bystanders

- Bystanders may become active in bullying
- Bystanders may be supportive of the bully
- Bystanders may observe but say nothing
- Bystanders may defend the victim

- There are no innocent bystanders

Interventions for Bystanders

- Bystanders need to be taught they are responsible if not intervening
- Students need to understand the difference between tattling and reporting
- Provide a means of reporting
- Recognize the caring behavior
- Expectation is to take action when observing bullying
- Encourage the peer group to take a stand

The Bully

- Imbalance of power
- Intent to harm
- Threat of further aggression

Types of Bullies

- Verbal bully
- Physical bully (seen more in boys)
- Relational bully (seen more in girls)

Bully Behavior

- Bully behavior includes
 - Name calling
 - Physically assaulting
 - Threatening
 - Stealing
 - Vandalizing
 - Slandering
 - Excluding
 - Taunting

Intervention for Bullies

- Teach social skills/empathy
- Provide pro-social consequences
- Require restitution
- Severe consequences tend to be ineffective
- Bullying behavior is generally part of more general antisocial and rule-breaking behavior

Definition of Cyber-bullying

- Definition – When the Internet, cell phones or other devices are used to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.
 - Spread rumors
 - Threaten to harm
 - Post embarrassing information
 - Encouraging you to hurt yourself

Cyber-bullying – District Responsibility

- District may be held liable if:
 - The district has notice
 - The district has been indifferent
 - The harassment is severe, pervasive and objectively offensive

How Students Address Cyber-bullying

- Don't respond
- Make copies of all messages & pictures
- Block or filter communications
- Tell a trusted adult

Social Networking Websites

- First Amendment – Right to Free Speech does not protect
 - Threatening / intended to intimidate
 - Obscene
 - Defamatory
 - Inciting lawlessness

Definition of Sexting

- The practice by which individuals forward sexually explicit images of themselves or their peers via text messaging.

Sexting - Legal Issues

- Searching Cell Phones – A search must be reasonable
 - At its inception (the fact that inappropriate content was discovered will not justify a search there must be a suspicion that the student violated district policy or law)
 - In scope (must be related to the objective and not excessively intrusive)
 - Seizure is permitted

Sexting & The Law

- In Illinois delivery or possession of nude photos of individuals under 17 is a crime (child pornography). Convicted individuals must register as sex offenders.
- Legislation has passed providing that a minor who disseminates indecent images of another minor would get juvenile court supervision and could result in mandatory counseling or community service.

Schools Should

- Gather information about bullying at school directly from students
- Establish clear school wide and classroom rules about bullying
- Train all adults in the school to respond sensitively and consistently to bullying
- Provide adequate adult supervision, particularly in less structured areas, such as on the playground and in the lunchroom
- Improve parental awareness of and involvement in working on the problem

Cliques

- To tackle bullying, we must tackle its root causes – and a rigid social system of cliques is one of those causes
- The more adults in the school as well as in the community refuse to elevate one group over all the others – with all the accompanying privileges – the less likely it will be that these groups will have the notion that they can bully someone who is not a part of their elite group