

INTRODUCTION Repeatedly, we hear concerns expressed that children experience bullying in our schools. Unfortunately, in the United States, bullying among children and teenagers has often been dismissed as a normal part of growing up. As a result, too little attention has been given to the devastating effects of bullying, or to the connection between bullying and other forms of violence.

In recent years, however, students and adults around the country have begun to make a commitment to stop bullying, in their schools and communities, an effort our school district would like to jointly support. This pamphlet has common understanding about bullying, and advises parents about our district's policies and regulations.

WHAT IS BULLYING? Bullying includes a wide variety of behaviors, but all involve a person or a group repeatedly trying to harm someone who they perceive as being weaker or more vulnerable. It can involve direct attacks, such as hitting, threatening or intimidating, maliciously teasing and taunting, name-calling, making sexual remarks, and stealing or damaging belongings; or more subtle, indirect attacks, such as spreading rumors or encouraging others to reject or exclude someone.

HOW COMMON IS BULLYING? Recent data indicates that almost 30 percent of teens in the United States (or over 5.7 million) are estimated to be involved in bullying as either a bully, a target of bullying, or both. In a

recent national survey of students in grades 6 to 10, 13 percent reported bullying others, 11 percent reported being the target of bullies, and another 6 percent said they bullied others and were bullied themselves. Limited available data suggest that bullying is much more common among younger teens than older teens. As teens grow older, however, experience suggests that they are less likely to bully others and to be the targets of bullies.

Bullying occurs more frequently among boys than girls. Teenage boys are much more likely to bully others and to be the targets of bullies. While both boys and girls say others bully them by making fun of the way they look or talk, boys are more likely to report being hit, slapped, or pushed. Teenage girls are more often the targets of rumors and sexual comments. While teenage boys target both boys and girls, teenage girls most often bully other girls, using more subtle and indirect forms of aggression than boys. For example, instead of physically harming others, they are more likely to spread gossip or encourage others to reject or exclude another girl. In addition, many young people now use technology to bully, using websites, internet blogs, text messaging, and taking pictures with cell phones, as a means of bullying, harassing and intimidating others.

WHAT CAN OUR SCHOOLS DO TO STOP BULLYING? Effective programs have been developed to reduce bullying in schools. Research has found that bullying is

most likely to occur in schools where there is a lack of adult supervision during breaks, where teachers and students are indifferent to or accept bullying behaviors, and where rules against bullying are not consistently enforced.

While approaches that simply crack down on individual bullies have not proven to be effective, when there is a school-wide commitment to end bullying, experience demonstrates that bullying can be reduced by up to 50 percent. One effective approach focuses on changing school and classroom climates by: raising awareness about bullying, increasing teacher and parent involvement and supervision, forming clear rules and strong social norms against bullying, and providing support and protection for all students. This approach involves teachers, principals, students, and everyone associated with the school, including custodians, and cafeteria workers. Adults must become aware of the extent of bullying at school, and they must involve themselves in changing the situation, rather than looking the other way. Students must pledge not to bully other students, to help students who are bullied, and to make a point to include students who are left out.

Although our school district has been involved in many efforts, in the past, beginning in September 2007, our school district has made an all-out effort to reduce bullying and its impact on school life. In addition, administrative staff members will provide school-wide awareness activities.

In the meantime, please be aware that school district policy prohibits hazing, harassment and bullying (Policies & Regulations #5512 and #5512.01), and that the student handbooks provide more information regarding the consequences for students who exhibit these anti-social behaviors.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? Talk to your child about bullying. Contact your child's teacher or principal if you believe that your child has experienced bullying. Together we can largely reduce the presence of bullying in our schools, which will help our children emotionally and academically. So I invite you to get involved in this campaign, to eliminate bullying in our schools.....(perhaps mentor a child, volunteer in the schools, be a guest speaker, etc.).

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