



## **ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH, INC**

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### **COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM TO ELIMINATE BULLYING/HARASSMENT,**

### **PROMOTE RESPECT AND BUILD COMMUNITY WITHIN SCHOOLS**

Provided by Nate Terrell, LCSW and Anita Foeman, Ph.D.

#### **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

We believe deeply that every student deserves to learn and grow in a safe, caring and peaceful school environment free of bullying, harassment and cultural insensitivity. Experience has taught us that this is achievable if every adult within the school community commits to making it happen and student peer pressure is mobilized in a positive direction.

Our major training objective is to teach administrators, students, teachers, student support staff and parents strategies they can use to create a community within which every student is treated with respect, conflicts are resolved effectively and bullies and the bullied receive the help they need. We also provide participants with an opportunity to practice the skills they have learned through activities such as role-play.

This program provides additional benefits for schools as well. As incidents of bullying, conflict, etc. are reduced/eliminated, students are able to devote greater energy to their academic development and consequently improve their grades and test scores (22% of students nationwide report that their academic performance is hindered by bullying).

School attendance also increases as students no longer are forced to find excuses to stay home out of fear of being bullied. Finally, teachers can devote their time to doing what they were trained to do rather than resolving student conflicts. As a result, they have improved morale, creativity, etc. and are much less likely to “burn out.”

We define bullying as severe and/or persistent negative behaviors and/or actions that are experienced as humiliating, threatening, etc. If a student is not comfortable with how he/she is treated, it doesn't matter whether the perpetrator was “just joking around” (as is usually claimed). We not only focus on eliminating overt acts of bullying such as teasing, fighting, etc., but on “indirect aggression” such as rumors and malicious gossip which often fall beneath the radar of adults.

We also focus on the importance of promoting diversity within schools since differences in culture, race, religion, ability, class, appearance, sexual orientation, etc. often serve as lightning rods for tension, conflict, etc. We teach participants strategies they can use to increase cross-cultural understanding and draw on the lessons we have learned as partners in a multi-racial family. Finally, we provide opportunities for

students to engage in honest dialogue about differences as well as the negative impact of prejudices, stereotypes, etc.

Although we often provide “one shot” training for schools, our ideal is to develop and implement a multi-faceted and comprehensive program that creates permanent change in the school culture through the following variety of program components:

### **Training for Administrators, Teachers and Student Support Staff**

We teach administrators, teachers and student support staff specific strategies to effectively intervene when a student is being bullied, harassed, etc. and to use every “teachable moment” to help students develop empathy, fairness and responsibility. We also encourage them to collaboratively develop norms for student behavior with the students themselves. Finally, we discuss how they can develop and enforce clear policies and consequences regarding student behavior.

### **Training for All Students**

We provide training to students within their classrooms or during assemblies which is designed to:

- Teach them what bullying/sexual harassment is, that they have a right to be treated with respect at all times and the steps they should take if they are bullied/harassed (such as telling an adult they trust);
- Encourage the bystanders who laugh along with bullies or do not speak out against it out of fear to join together as a group to intervene on behalf of bullying victims. Since this is generally a large group, they have a great deal of power if they mobilize peer pressure in a positive direction to eliminate bullying;
- Provide them with an opportunity to develop and practice their conflict resolution skills through activities such as role-play;
- Teach them to respect differences among themselves concerning culture, race, ability, religion, class and appearance.

We also “raise the bar” of expectations by telling students that they have a responsibility to do everything they can to eliminate bullying, promote respect for diversity and build a peaceful school community. Although students are initially often resistant to the idea that they need to take better care of each other, they generally develop the necessary “buy in” as a result of persistent adult and peer pressure. It is also effective to appeal to their underlying sense of fairness. Clearly, students can learn how to be gallant and caring just they learn how to become insensitive and mean.

### **Anti-Bullying and Peacemaking Patrol**

We help organize and train a group of appropriate students to serve as an “anti-bullying and peacemaking” patrol. Their responsibilities include engaging bullies in

dialogue about why their behavior is inappropriate, protecting victims of bullying, serving as mentors for younger students who need guidance, helping provide training to students concerning bullying, harassment, etc. They could be identified by wearing white arm bands, special tee shirts, etc.

Following the initial training, we continue to meet with this group of students on a periodic basis to provide them with the input and support they need to be effective.

### **Help for Chronic Victims of Bullying**

We meet with chronic victims of bullying individually or as a group to provide them with support and teach them how to protect themselves and effectively disarm bullies through detachment, Socratic questions, meta-communication, unpredictable behavior, offering to be helpful, humor, etc. We also help them learn how to develop friendships since being with others significantly decreases their chances of being bullied.

### **Help for Bullies**

In most of the school we work with, a relatively small group of students are responsible for most of the bullying, harassment, etc. which occurs. We therefore meet with bullies individually or as a group to enable them to develop the empathy, self-control, etc. they need to stop their bullying/harassing behavior.

We also help schools develop effective and creative ways to help bullies such as assigning them to a specific room for part or all of the day where they can receive the help they need from a qualified adult or peer (perhaps a member of the “anti-bullying and peacemaking patrol”) to become more responsible and caring members of the school community. Possible activities could include discussing the impact of bullying, watching and discussing a movie which portrays how bullying is experienced by victims, writing letters to apologize to the students they have bullied, etc.

We have learned that bullies usually only change after they have developed the ability to understand how their behavior is hurtful to others and/or learned better ways to meet their needs for attention, power, control, etc.

### **Training for a Select Group of Highly Interested Teachers**

We meet with a select group of teachers and student support staff who are highly committed to eliminating bullying, building community, etc. to provide them with more intensive training designed to enable them to effectively counsel both bullies and victims, develop “safe zones” within their classrooms where students know they can be free from mistreatment, effectively promote respect for diversity, etc.

This group of teachers could also eventually be used as staff and student trainers, supervisors of the “anti-bullying and peacemaking patrol,” etc. so that there is no longer the need for outside consultants.

### **Involvement of Parents**

We meet with groups of interested parents to teach them how to effectively respond if their child is bullied or identified as a bully, mobilize their children to utilize peer pressure to eliminate bullying or become involved in their school’s anti-bullying program. “Buy in” from a large group of parents is a key to the program’s success since they have so much impact on the behavior, attitudes, etc. of their children.

