



## **ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH, INC**

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### **STRATEGIES TO ELIMINATE BULLYING, INCREASE RESPECT**

#### **AND BUILD COMMUNITY WITHIN SCHOOLS**

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

- 1) Develop and maintain a school culture within which all students are treated with sensitivity and respect through clear policies and guidelines regarding student behavior and quick and decisive intervention from **all** staff regarding inappropriate behavior. When students know the adults are in charge, they are free to focus on learning, building positive relationships, etc. rather than the kind of toxic peer dynamics demonstrated in “Lord of the Flies.”
- 2) Make sure that every student understands what bullying/harassment are, that they have a right to be treated with respect at all times and that these behaviors are identified by what is experienced rather than what was intended. If a student doesn’t like how she/he is treated, it doesn’t matter whether the perpetrator was “joking” or not.
- 3) Whenever possible, collaboratively develop norms for student behavior with the students themselves and hold them accountable for following them.
- 4) Respond effectively **every time** a student reports that she/he was mistreated (research indicates that assault victims go to an average of five adults before they receive the help they need).
- 5) Use every possible “teachable moment” to help students develop empathy, learn how to act fairly and recognize that they always have choices concerning how they respond to any given situation.
- 6) Create a school culture within which differences concerning culture, race, body type, ability etc. are recognized and respected rather than serving as a lightning rod for bullying, conflict, etc. Continually challenge the idea held by many students that differences are a negative thing.
- 7) Provide students with ample opportunities to engage in honest dialogue about issues of difference to enable them to get to know their classmates on a deeper level, eliminate stereotypes, etc.
- 8) “Raise the bar” of expectations by teaching **all** students that it is their responsibility to do everything that can to eliminate bullying, respect diversity and help build and maintain a peaceful and caring school community.

- 9) Enable the bystanders who laugh along with bullies or do not speak out against bullying due to their fear of becoming the next victim and/or hurting their own social status to develop the skills and courage to stand up as a group for what they know is right. Since this is generally a large group, they have power in numbers if they can work collectively to eliminate bullying. The power of bullies usually melts away without any peer support.
- 10) Encourage all students and staff to sign a pledge that they will do everything they can to eliminate bullying, protect victims, peacefully resolve conflicts, etc. and post it in a highly public place to constantly remind everyone what they have committed to.
- 11) Develop and train a group of students to serve as an “anti-bullying and peacemaking patrol” and enable them to be a resource for the entire school community. For instance, they could mobilize peer pressure to eliminate bullying, mentor bullies, protect victims or help provide training about bullying.
- 12) Use role-play to teach victims of bullying effective ways to respond such as disarming bullies through Socratic questions, meta-communication, unpredictable behavior, offering to be helpful, humor, etc. It is also important to enable them to improve their social skills since having friends significantly reduces the chances of being bullies.
- 13) Pair students who could benefit from peer guidance up with an older student who has the ability to provide them with the support, skills, etc. they need.
- 14) Set up an “intervention room” where an appropriate adult can help bullies learn how their behavior is hurtful to others, develop more positive ways to get the attention and social connection they crave and change the underlying beliefs which cause their inappropriate behavior.
- 15) Use creative and natural consequences with bullies such as having them call their parents and explain what they did, apologize to the students they victimized or write an essay concerning why their behavior was unfair.
- 16) It is very important that the adults within a school never abuse their authority or treat students with disrespect since such behaviors are mimicked by students and are highly toxic to the entire school community.
- 17) Do everything to build student confidence and esteem since students who feel good about themselves are much more likely to intervene to stop bullying, ignore peer pressure and develop their own individual interests, ideas, etc.
- 18) Develop support groups to teach girls that it is ok to honestly express what they are feeling and thinking even if it causes conflict since they often resort to spreading rumors, talking about others behind their backs, etc. because they have been socialized to “always act nice” and avoid outward conflict.

19) Develop support groups to teach boys that “real men” express empathy, vulnerability, etc. and that they do not have to bully others to prove that they are sufficiently masculine. Induce them to protect victims of bullying by appealing to their desire to be “gallant.

20) Provide conflict resolution training to administrators, teachers, students and student support staff.

21) Involve parents in the discussion of how they could work collaboratively with the school to help develop and maintain a school community within which every student is treated fairly and with respect.

22) Although students can be unbelievably cruel to each other, they also have the capacity to be very caring, protective, etc. Therefore, a major key to creating a respectful school community is to inspire students to bring out their best sides and demonstrate their courage, heroism, etc. We sell students short if we expect anything less!

