
HARASSMENT & BULLYING

*H*arassment may include, but is not limited to: verbal abuse, such as name-calling, epithets, or slurs; graphic or written statements; threats; physical assault; or conduct that is physically threatening, harmful, or humiliating. Students are legally protected from harassment that occurs based on their membership in any of the following federally “protected classes”: race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and religion. States and local districts may also include protections under the class of sexual orientation. If a school does not respond adequately to a report of harassment based on any protected class, it may be violating the student’s civil rights under a variety of laws [i.e., Title IV and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act; and/or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)] (OJJDP, 2011).

Harassment and bullying have similar deleterious effects on youth, but they are not the same thing. While harassment is certainly a type of victimization, it is considered a separate category from bullying, which involves the persistent victimization of one student by another student or group of students, who are perceived to have more power in terms of social capital, access to resources, physical characteristics, and/or abilities and skills. A child can be harassed and/or bullied about topics beyond those protected under civil rights laws. For more information on responses to bullying, please see the following *What Works Briefs: Physical & Emotional Violence Perpetration (#5) and Physical & Emotional Violence Victimization (#6)*.

Regardless of type, school communities must make sustained efforts to ensure that their environments are free from all forms of aggression and victimization, including harassment, violence, and bullying. In their efforts to provide harassment-free environments, school personnel may consider the following suggestions.

What Works Briefs summarize state-of-the-art practices, strategies, and programs for improving school climate. Based on current scholarship in education, school psychology, and other related disciplines, each *What Works Brief* provides a number of practical recommendations for school staff, parents, and community members. *What Works Briefs* can be used separately to target specific issues, or together to address more complex, system-wide issues. All *What Works Briefs* are organized into three sections: Quick Wins: What Teachers & Adults Can Do Right Now; Universal Supports: School-wide Policies, Practices, & Programs; and, finally, Targeted Supports: Intensive Supports for At-Risk Youth.

QUICK WINS: WHAT TEACHERS & OTHER ADULTS CAN DO RIGHT NOW

Be visible, active, and interested

- » Volunteer to act as an advisor to a student action group, such as one implementing the Safe Space campaign glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/news/record/1641.html
- » Counteract stereotypes by placing nonconforming images on your walls (e.g., a female engineer or scientist).
- » Use relationship-building strategies outlined in other *What Works Briefs*, including: *School Connectedness (#4)* and *Caring Relationships and High Expectations (#1)*.
- » Take action when you see harassment occur. Model the kind of defending behavior that students should provide for each other.
- » Volunteer to provide a physical presence during typically unstructured (and non-supervised) times, such as during passing periods, lunch breaks, and in parking lots. Advocate for recruiting neighborhood volunteers to be present during these times, including parents and grandparents.
- » Notice positive actions taken by students. Provide praise and encouragement for responsible choices, such as informing an adult about harassment occurring between students.
- » Take special interest in students who appear socially isolated or marginalized. Build relationships with these students; suggest avenues where they might find similar peers; and also refer them to appropriate school-based student support personnel.
- » Watch the webinar, *Bullying and Civil Rights: An Overview of Districts' Federal Obligation to Respond to Harassment*, at: nttac.org/index.cfm?event=webinarBullyingJUNE2011

Implement and advocate for clear, consistent, and fair behavior management policies, practices, and programs

- » Provide clear, consistent, and fair classroom rules and expectations.
 - Students must have a voice in the selection of the norms and expectations for themselves and their peers. Have all students in the class sign their names to the agreed-upon rules and expectations, as a representation of the classroom community's norms.
 - Rules and expectations should focus on what the student SHOULD DO, rather than what they should not do.
 - Enforce these rules consistently, uniformly, and without negotiation. Any deviation from standardized enforcement of classroom and schoolwide rules and expectations by an adult will communicate preference among students, a process that undermines the sense of community.
 - Avoid threats. Threats are coercive and undermine the climate of the classroom. The need for threats is eliminated when rules, expectations, and related consequences are transparent, fair, and distributed consistently.
- » Be an advocate for clear, consistent, and fair schoolwide discipline policies and practices that:
 - Are rooted in a shared mission among school community members (staff, families, and students).
 - Involve parents in discipline decisions.
 - Reconsider the use of zero tolerance policies, especially for nonviolent infractions. Begin with a review of your suspension and expulsion data. Look specifically for disproportionate suspensions and expulsions of minority youth. Review CDE's Zero Tolerance brief at: cde.ca.gov/lss/se/zerotolerance.asp

UNIVERSAL SUPPORTS: SCHOOL-WIDE POLICIES, PRACTICES & PROGRAMS

Universal supports to prevent harassment and bullying target the whole student population, rather than any single at-risk group. Because they gen-

erally require more planning across people, programs, or communities, universal supports may take longer to implement than “quick wins.”

Plan thoughtfully

- » Develop and publicize policies prohibiting harassment and discrimination.
- » Develop and publicize procedures for students to file harassment complaints.
- » Obtain contact information for your Title IX, Section 504, and Title VI coordinators.
- » Create a continuum of sanctions that have meaningful implications for students who harass others, rather than serving to merely isolate them from the school community. For example, provide restorative opportunities, such as opportunities to provide community service.

Encourage student and community involvement

- » Encourage students to lead awareness campaigns to improve knowledge and attitudes.
 - Safe Space is an example of an awareness campaign for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (GLBTQ) youth. glsen.org/cgj-bin/iowa/all/news/record/1641.html
- » Increase supervision of hallways and shared spaces. Think creatively about people who might be able to volunteer to do this, such as community volunteers.
- » Improve collaboration and communication between schools, parents, law enforcement, juvenile justice, and mental health professionals to target both building social and coping skills in youth who perpetrate violence (or have threatened to do so), and to build an array of sanctions.

Increase knowledge and awareness

- » Request that the US Department of Justice’s Office of Community Relations provide an in-service to staff and/or students.
 - Visit their website to view a number of harassment-related program offerings: justice.gov/crs
- » Increase training for teachers in culturally responsive classroom behavior management and instruction.
- » Provide professional development opportunities for staff on identifying and addressing harassment.


Conflict resolution education

- » To prevent harassment from becoming chronic, consider implementing a conflict resolution education program, such as a peer mediation program and/or curriculum. Conflict resolution programs take many forms, from training a core group of students as peer mediators to training all students in the school. The goal of conflict resolution programs is to build students’ ability to apply learned self-awareness and communication skills to prevent and resolve interpersonal conflicts as they naturally arise within their peer groups. Conflict resolution education programs have strong positive effects for reducing disciplinary infractions and suspensions in high-school aged children, with more comprehensive programs showing greater results (Garrard & Lipsey, 2007).
- » View the Association for Conflict Resolution’s *Recommended Standards for School-Based Peer Mediation Programs 2007* at: mediate.com/acreducation/pg18.cfm

Institute the use of positive, restorative discipline practices

- » Institute one or more of the following school-wide positive classroom management practices:
 - Transformative Classroom Management. Based on evidence-based principles of motivation and engagement, Transformative Classroom Management practices help schools increase students' interest in learning and willingness to follow school and classroom behavioral norms. transformativeclassroom.com
 - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. PBIS is an organizing framework for helping school personnel organize and deliver evidence-based discipline practices. While secondary schools face a variety of challenges in implementing PBIS (Flannery, Sugai, & Anderson, 2009), reductions in disruptive behavior in middle school samples have been noted (e.g., Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006). pbis.org
 - Restorative Justice. Restorative justice programs are based on the premise that individuals and/or groups in conflict must work together to resolve the problem and repair the resultant damage caused to their relationship. Restorative justice programs applied in school settings focus on the relationship between the perpetrator of the crime (i.e., incident requiring disciplinary strategy) and members of the school community, including potential victims, bystanders, and their families. According to McClusky and colleagues (2008), the practice of restorative justice contributes to school conflict resolution in a variety of ways, including: involvement of all parties in conflict resolution through a fair process; a focus on repairing relationships and trust, rather than on retribution or punishment; a focus on sharing views and experiences and developing empathy for others in the school community. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime recently published a *Handbook on Restorative Justice Programs*. It is available for download at: unodc.org/pdf/criminal_justice/06-56290_Ebook.pdf

Educate and train students

- » Train youths to intervene in situations that involve harassment and discrimination to prevent or stop the mistreatment they see at school.
 - The Safe School Ambassadors® (SSA) (community-matters.org/safe-school-ambassadors).  This program empowers leaders from the diverse groups and cliques on campus and equips them with nonviolent communication and intervention skills to stop bullying and violence among their peers. Check out Safe School Ambassadors: Harnessing Student Power to Stop Bullying and Violence (#4620) from the California Healthy Kids Resource Center: californiahealthykids.org/Pages/product.html?record@R4620.

TARGETED SUPPORTS: INTENSIVE SUPPORTS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Targeted supports include those resources that are provided to meet the specific needs of students who have been the targets of harassment at school. Many of the interventions for targets of harassment focus on repairing damage and rebuilding a personal sense of safety. Often times, this work occurs in the one-to-one setting with a trained psychologist, counselor, or therapist. Therefore, the first line of action is that schools *identify referral resources in the community* where youth can obtain the therapeutic interventions they need. Community agencies often employ the types of skilled staff and evidence-based therapeutic interventions that may not be available in the school setting.

Establish Learning Support Teams (LSTs)

Learning Support Teams (LST) are established to locate school and local resources, including agencies that provide family and youth health and mental health services; identify school needs and existing resources; and coordinate service delivery across programs and settings. LSTs are used to reduce fragmentation in service availability and ensure that resources are delivered to appropriate students.

For more information on LSTs, visit the UCLA Center for Mental Health in the Schools and search for “Learning Supports Team”: smhp.psych.ucla.edu

Establish Student Assistance Programs

Student Assistance Programs (a.k.a., Student Assistance Teams, Child Study Teams, Student Study Teams) are established to perform a number of important duties, including: (1) providing a process within which teachers can refer students that appear to be at-risk; (2) providing a process within which administration can refer students who appear to have behavioral and/or emotional difficulties stemming from challenging life situations; and (3) connecting students to appropriate resources, both at school and within the community. SAPs usually include teachers, administrators, and student assistance staff (counselors, psychologists, speech therapists).

For more information on SAPs, visit:

- » The California SAP Resource Center casapresources.org/home.php
- » The UCLA Center for Mental Health in the Schools smhp.psych.ucla.edu

CITATIONS

- Flannery, K., & Sugai, G., & Anderson, C. (2009). School-wide positive behavior support in high school: Early lessons learned. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 11, 177-185. doi: 10.1177/1098300708316257
- Garrard, W., & Lipsey, M. (2007). Conflict resolution education and antisocial behavior in U.S. schools: A meta-analysis. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 25: 9–38. doi: 10.1002/crq.188
- Lassen, S., Steele, M., & Sailor, W. (2006). The relationships of school-wide Positive Behavior Support to academic achievement in an urban middle school. *Psychology in the Schools*, 43, 701-712. doi: 10.1002/pits.20177
- McClusky, G., Lloyd, G., Kane, J., Riddell, S., Stead, J., & Weedon, E. (2008). Can restorative practices in school make a difference? *Educational Review*, 60, 405-417.
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2011). *Bullying and civil rights: An overview of school districts' federal obligation to respond to harassment*. Powerpoint presentation available for download at: nttac.org/index.cfm?event=webinarBullyingJUNE2011_ppts

SUGGESTED CITATION: O'Malley, M.D. & Amarillas, A. (2011). *What Works Brief #7: Harassment and Bullying*. San Francisco: WestEd. Available for download at: <http://californias3.wested.org/tools/7>