

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!



ANTI-BULLYING STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, THEIR FAMILIES, AND THEIR SCHOOLS



August 2013

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*This publication was made possible with federal funding received
from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities
of the Department of Health and Human Services.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Bullying Basics – For Everyone	5
<i>Definitions</i>	5
<i>Types of Bullying</i>	5
<i>Signs of Bullying</i>	6
<i>Anti-Bullying Laws</i>	7
The #1 Strategy for Everyone – Training Bystanders How to Help.....	9
Strategies for All Students with Disabilities to Deal with Bullying	12
<i>A Few Words About Cyber-bullying</i>	14
<i>Extra Strategies for Students Who Need Help with Social Skills</i>	15
<i>Extra Strategies for Students Who Have Physical Disabilities or Visual Impairment</i>	16
<i>Extra Strategies for Students Who Have Communication Difficulties or Hearing Impairment</i>	17
Strategies for Parents (Including Sample IEP Goals).....	18
Strategies for School Staff	24
Final Thoughts	27
Resources on Bullying	28

INTRODUCTION

The mere mention of “bullying” conjures up ugly images, painful feelings, and frightening scenarios, and it jumpstarts our protective instincts. Bullying is a widespread problem throughout our schools and communities and its effects can have lifelong repercussions. Making matters worse, students with disabilities are two to three times as likely to be bullied as their peers (source: Pacer’s National Bullying Prevention Center, www.pacer.org). They are often perceived as “different” (unpopular, weak, or unable to defend themselves) due to difficulties with social, motor, communication, intellectual, emotional, or physical skills.

The intent of this booklet is to summarize into one document the best anti-bullying practices and strategies as they pertain to students with developmental disabilities, compiled from dozens of articles, manuals, and curricula. The booklet starts with a section for *everyone*: students, parents, and school staff. It includes bullying basics (definitions, symptoms, and laws) and a must-read section on Bystander Training/Peer Advocacy models. This concept, perhaps more than any other, has proven to be a key ingredient in reducing, and even in some cases, ending bullying.

The next section is designed for students, including some information about cyber-bullying. After some general anti-bullying strategies for *all* students, there are brief subsections for people who have difficulty with social skills, for people with physical disabilities, and for people with communication challenges. Some students will find more than one section to be useful. These strategies are targeted to middle and high school age students, but many are appropriate, with some modifications, for younger grades.

There is also a section for parents (which includes some IEP and legal strategies), and one for school teachers and administrators. We think everyone benefits by understanding and helping each other with their roles in eliminating bullying. The booklet concludes with a listing of resources.

Please note that this document does not focus on people with disabilities who are doing the bullying, although it is known that dynamic certainly exists.

Clearly, there is no “one size fits all” approach to stopping bullying. While each instance of bullying is heart-wrenching, we hope this booklet will help to facilitate discussions and create plans to systematically rid schools of these cruel and tormenting acts. Enough is enough.

BULLYING BASICS – FOR EVERYONE

DEFINITION OF BULLYING:

Bullying is:

1. unwanted aggressive behavior among school-aged children;
2. intentional;
- 3 repeated actions over and over by the same person or group; and
4. characterized as an imbalance of power. (The “powers” may be physical strength, access to embarrassing information, popularity, etc.)

Basic guideline: if the behavior of one student hurts or harms another student, either emotionally or physically, it’s bullying!!

TYPES OF BULLYING:

Verbal – teasing, insults, calling names, using embarrassing information, making fun of someone, making threatening remarks – spoken or written

Physical - slamming into lockers; knocking a book from the victim’s hands, hitting, pushing, punching, pinching, or spitting; damaging or taking money or other possessions; threatening or forcing to do things

Social – often involves bullying by more than one person, such as purposely excluding a person from a group; making racist, anti-gay, or anti-disability comments; or two or more people setting up one person to look foolish

Cyber-bullying – using the internet, social networks, cell phones, or other technologies to hurt others



SIGNS OF BULLYING:

Some or all of the following may be signs of bullying. It is everyone's job to pay close attention to the children in our care, to ask, to listen, to consult others, and to determine if the patterns observed fit the profile of a bullied child. It is surely not always clear cut, and some observations could be signs of other issues or illnesses that require different types of intervention.

Difficulty eating or sleeping which were not previously present (including nightmares)

Change in personality, behavior, or mood – sad, angry, anxious, depressed, withdrawn, fearful, lonely, bullying others, crying

Suicidal thoughts or actions

Reluctance or refusal to go to school

Torn clothing

Bruises or unexplained injuries

Items taken to school that are now missing – books, electronics, clothing, jewelry, cash

Asking you to replace “lost” lunch money often

Decline in academic performance (loss of interest)

Blaming themselves for their problems. Feeling helpless. Lack of self-esteem.

Sudden aggressive behavior or displays of temper; conflicts with siblings or playmates

Hurting themselves

Complaints of headaches, stomach aches, or feeling sick (or pretending to be sick)

Hungry after school from not eating lunch

Wanting to take a different route to school

Unable to concentrate

ANTI-BULLYING LAWS:

STATE LAWS

Some of California's most pertinent state laws in the California Education Code that cover bullying are excerpted here from http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/.html/edc_table_of_contents.html:

§ 234 -

- (a) This article shall be known...as the Safe Place to Learn Act.
- (b) It is the policy of the State of California to ensure that all local educational agencies continue to work to reduce discrimination, harassment, violence, intimidation, and bullying. It is further the policy of the state to improve pupil safety at school...

§234.1 – ...The department shall assess whether local educational agencies have done all of the following:

- (a) Adopted a policy that prohibits discrimination, harassment, intimidation and bullying based on the actual or perceived characteristics..., and disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics. The policy shall include a statement that the policy applies to all acts related to school activity or school attendance occurring within a school...
- (b) Adopted a process for receiving and investigating complaints of discrimination, harassment, intimidation and bullying...
- (c) Publicized...anti-bullying policies...
- (d) Posted the policy...
- (e) Maintained documentation of complaints...
- (f) Ensured that complainants are protected from retaliation and that the identity of a complainant...remains confidential as appropriate.
- (g) Identified a responsible...officer for ensuring...compliance...

Additional relevant laws pertaining to bullying can be found in §234.2, §234.3, §234.5, and §32261, among others.

§32261(d) speaks about training programs:

It is the intent of the Legislature in enacting this chapter to encourage school districts, county offices of education, law enforcement agencies, and agencies serving youth **to develop and implement interagency strategies, in-service training programs, and activities that will improve school attendance and reduce school crime and violence,**

including vandalism, drug and alcohol abuse, gang membership, gang violence, hate crimes, **bullying, including bullying committed personally or by means of an electronic act**, teen relationship violence, and discrimination and harassment, including, but not limited to, sexual harassment.

Bottom line: Every school should have an anti-bullying policy and a complaint procedure in place. Further, schools are encouraged to implement strategies such as trainings and other activities that will reduce bullying.

FEDERAL LAWS:

Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, discrimination on the basis of disability by school districts receiving federal funds, is prohibited. The U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights has stated that disability harassment is a form of discrimination which violates these federal laws. Disability harassment is “intimidation or abusive behavior toward a student based on disability that creates a hostile environment by interfering with or denying a student participation in or receipt of benefits, services, or opportunities in the institution’s program” (stopbullying.gov). (While the term “bullying” is not specifically mentioned, clearly it is included in disability harassment.) More recently, the Department of Education's 2010 "Dear Colleague" letter included disability in a list of protected classes (including race, gender, etc.) for which schools must take action to respond to bullying and harassment. The August 2013 “Dear Colleague” letter (p.32) provides additional reminders and resources to schools about preventing and addressing bullying of students with disabilities.

Furthermore, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was enacted to ensure that students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) that enables them to access and benefit from public education as set forth in their individualized education program (IEP). Harassment of a student based on disability may decrease the student’s ability to benefit from his or her education and may be a denial of FAPE, as it is difficult to learn in an atmosphere of fear, intimidation, and ridicule.

Bottom line: Bullying and disability harassment are a form of discrimination. A hostile learning environment might be a denial of FAPE.

THE #1 STRATEGY – FOR EVERYONE: TRAINING BYSTANDERS HOW TO HELP



Call it what you want: Bystander Training, Upstanders, Peer Advocacy, or Buddy Systems. It has many names and variations, but one thing is for sure: research shows that **MORE THAN 50% OF BULLYING SITUATIONS STOP WHEN A PEER INTERVENES!** (Source: www.pacer.org)

There are two reasons for this:

1. Students are more likely to see what is happening than adults. (Bullying almost never happens when adults are watching.)
2. A student telling someone to stop is much more powerful than an adult.

Bystanders represent the majority of the student body and there is power in numbers. Bystanders often witness bullying because a bully likes to have an audience. If the audience shows disapproval, bullies are discouraged from continuing. One report states that when bystanders intervene, bullying stops within 10 seconds more than half (57%) of the time. (Source: Eyes on Bullying, <http://www.eyesonbullying.org/bystander.html>)

There are two types of bystanders. Hurtful bystanders encourage the bully by laughing or making comments to cheer him on. Our focus is on developing the opposite type: helpful bystanders who discourage the bully, defend the victim, and get help.

Many, many student bystanders express concern for victims, but are simply unsure how to help. At the back of this booklet are some excellent Bystander Training curricula. Although each is a bit different, all of them focus on teaching the bystander:

1. to tell the bully to stop (unless there is risk to his/her own personal safety), to distract the bully (i.e. change the subject), or to defend the victim;
2. to get the victim away from the bully;
3. to comfort/support/be a friend to the person being bullied (sit with him at lunch or in class); and,
4. to get help and report the incident to an adult.

There are many understandable reasons why more bystanders don't intervene when they witness bullying (feeling powerless, afraid of retribution, don't know what to do, not sure what their friends might think, etc.). Through bystander education, students learn that most of their peers also feel bullying is wrong, which makes it more likely that they will feel empowered to intervene if necessary.

Furthermore, the beauty of these programs is that they enable students to think ahead about what they will do when they see bullying, practicing with many examples and role-plays. Feeling prepared and armed with possible solutions can make all the difference in a bystander passively watching and doing nothing versus playing a key role in stopping the bullying.

These trainings can at the very least teach empathy, so that even bystanders who are not inclined to confront the bully might at least go over and invite the victim to hang out with their friends.

Many go further and create buddy pairings or peer groups in advance, so that the student being bullied is not alone and has someone he/she knows will look out for him. In the best cases, it creates a community of friends around the student.

After learning more about such programs and curricula, schools should seriously consider adopting whichever variation of a bystander training model that would work best, taking into consideration the unique social environment and needs of each campus. If the school doesn't provide it and you are concerned that your child may be bullied, parents should insist that your child's IEP includes at least some type of buddy pairing.

If implemented properly and consistently throughout the school years, Bystander Intervention programs in schools can create maturing citizens who are more likely to assume responsibility for taking action and preventing violence in their own communities as they become adults.

It is also important to point out that Bystander Training programs are not the same as “conflict resolution,” “peer mediation,” “diversity,” or “tolerance” programs already in place in many schools. Conflict resolution and similar training focuses on basic communication and problem-solving skills and promotes opportunities for understanding and respect. Peer mediation teaches a select group of students more advanced problem-solving skills in resolving minor arguments, rumors, or misunderstandings. These are excellent programs that can impact a lifetime of attitudes. But, as explained on www.stopbullying.gov, these programs target students of equal power sharing equal blame which is not the case in bullying. So, unless they are expanded to include a Bystander Training component that specifically targets bullying, these programs are not a substitute for it.



STRATEGIES FOR ALL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES TO DEAL WITH BULLYING

Here are some ideas that many kids who have disabilities or typical kids can practice and learn. Figure out which ones work for you and are the most comfortable for you.

1. A student who is not alone is less likely to be bullied. Hanging out with or near a group helps. Go to a place where an adult is present if needed.
2. Talk to an adult. It's not tattling. It's asking for help from people you trust. The bully wants you NOT to tell. Keep asking until you get help. A school teacher, counselor, or principal must try to keep your name private if you want them to.
3. Avoid unsupervised areas of the school such as hallways or bathrooms where bullies might hang out.
4. Don't bring money or expensive things to school.
5. Don't show you are upset. Bullies want you to be upset, so don't give them what they want. Try not to look sad or angry. Look as confident as you can. Sometimes even smiling tells the bully your feelings aren't hurt and might discourage further comments.
6. Do not fight back. You might be the one that gets in trouble or you could get badly hurt. Some kids find it useful to practice "cool down" strategies to calm their anger, such as counting to 10 or taking deep breaths.
7. Tell a friend about the bullying. It can help to know someone cares and supports you.
8. If you're in danger, walk, wheel, or run away as fast as you can.
9. Practice possible responses to bullying ahead of time and often.

Here are just a few examples of some lines to rehearse:

Strong messages such as "stop it." Or "leave me alone." Or "I don't like to be treated this way." If you completely ignore the bully, they are likely to keep bothering you.

Humor: For example, if the bully says, "You sure do have a big nose," you could say, "I know, just like Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer." Or if you

wear glasses and kids call you “four eyes,” you could say “The better to see you with” like the wolf in Little Red Riding Hood. Sometimes by gently making fun of yourself, you take away the bully’s chance to do it.

Not caring: “Whatever” is a good neutral comment that gives the bully little satisfaction and shows that the student was not bothered or upset. Other ideas could be “big deal” or “who cares” or “is that supposed to be funny?” Or “so?”

Slightly sarcastic: Statements that are a little stronger, such as: in response to “stupid outfit,” you might say “Thanks, I’m glad you noticed.” Or if someone says, “you smell,” you could answer, “Wow, you could tell I showered.”

Easy to remember: “I don’t like that” gets attention and if you can, say what you didn’t like, such as a rude name or bad words.

10. Use a journal to record things that bother you, rather than show the bully that you are upset.
11. Sit near the bus driver on the school bus or walk with a teacher to classes.
12. If a classmate is bothering or teasing you, ask to be seated near students who are tolerant and understanding.
13. Ask to be paired with a buddy during classroom time as needed, and during playground, bathroom, locker room, and hallway times.
14. If you feel comfortable, educate students about your disability and explain what kinds of help you do and don’t want. Ask your parents to help with this.
15. Be a self-advocate. That means speaking up for yourself, telling people what you need, and taking action. Make a plan of what you will do if someone bullies you. Practice with a friend or parent.
16. Attend and actively participate in your IEP beginning at least at age 16.
17. Imagine a wall or a fence or a door to keep teasing, hurtful words out.
18. Treat others the way you want to be treated.
19. Know that bullying is not your fault!

A FEW WORDS ABOUT CYBER-BULLYING:



What is cyber bullying? It is harming someone on purpose, over and over, through computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices. It can be emails or texts, insulting, embarrassing, sexual or obscene messages or photos on sites like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. Sexual photos are sometimes called “sexting.” Because of the technology, you might not know who is doing the bullying and you often won’t know how many other people see the messages or photos.

Here’s some things you can do:

1. Never give out your password (unless it is to a parent). Don’t use passwords with obvious things like your name, birth date, or pet’s name.
2. Talk to someone you trust about it – parent, teacher, or friend.
3. Don’t respond to the cyber-bully’s message, whether on your phone or computer. It doesn’t matter if you know the person or not.
4. Save the evidence. Print out messages and emails, save text messages, and give them to an adult.
5. Block cyber-bullies from contacting you. Most websites have a way to do this by the privacy settings you select. Ask for help from someone who knows how.
6. Report cyber-bullying to the website (like Facebook or Google) even if you don’t know who is doing it.
7. Remind yourself of your skills and strengths with positive thoughts.

EXTRA STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WHO NEED HELP WITH SOCIAL SKILLS

If you have difficulties with social skills you might be shy, feel lonely, or find it hard to form friendships. Some people find it hard to read social cues, process information, make sense of what others communicate, and know how to respond and react to others. Here are some things to work on that might keep bullies from bothering you. These ideas take practice with someone you trust. Be proud of yourself as you begin to master some of these at your own pace.

1. Practice group skills. Learn to stand near a group, listen to the conversation, wait for a pause, and then comment on the topic being discussed.



2. Play near a large group even if you're not going to join in.

3. Practice some of the statements in #9 on pages 12-13.

4. Practice "think it, don't say it" instead of talking to yourself.

5. So that repetitive actions (such as rocking, pacing, or hand-flapping) do not cause a distraction for other students, instead try fiddling with a pencil, squeezing a stress ball, twirling your hair around your finger, or twirling a bracelet around your arm. (Of course, other people should accept your mannerisms, but if some of these ideas will make it so that you don't get teased or made fun of, it might be worth trying. Some people can't change these movements, so this won't work for everyone.)

6. Social situations can be easier if you keep yourself clean and neat by washing, shampooing, and using deodorant regularly. Some people find it

helpful to have a chart in the bathroom that gives you a visual reminder of how often to do these types of things.

7. Let minor misbehavior of other students be the teacher's responsibility. Rules provide structure and help people know what is expected. But if another student "breaks" a rule, such as reading a comic book during class or eating lunch at the older kids' table, and if you know that it is really not something that is hurting someone else, then let the teacher or another adult handle it. That way, other students won't think of you as the "police."

***EXTRA STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WHO HAVE PHYSICAL DISABILITIES
OR VISUAL IMPAIRMENT***



1. If you use a wheelchair, walker, or crutches, ask the teacher for enough room to move around the classroom easily, including being able to get away from people who may be bullies.
2. It can really help to give other students an explanation about your disability and any equipment that you use. Most kids are curious, and they will be less likely to tease or bother you once they understand. A parent or school nurse may be able to help you with this.
3. Ask the teacher about having a disability awareness day, when other students can sit in a real wheelchair and experience what it is like, or when students close their eyes and try to assemble a puzzle by feel.

***EXTRA STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WHO HAVE COMMUNICATION
DIFFICULTIES OR HEARING IMPAIRMENT***



1. If you use a communication device, always have it with you, in the classroom, playground, or other places.
2. Identify a buddy or buddies who can learn your communication method, take turns being with you, and who can help explain what you want to say if others don't understand you. It helps to have someone besides the teacher with whom you can interact.
3. If you stutter or have another type of communication impairment, figure out a gesture or movement or one or two word phrase or code word that you can use, that a buddy will recognize as a sign that you need help with bullying. For example, put the palm of your hand up as if to say "stop," or say "help" or a silly code word like "bullwinkle."
4. If people are having difficulty understanding you, move to a quieter place where there are fewer distractions and less noise.
5. If you have a hearing impairment, ask to be seated in the best location to help you learn in the classroom, but not near anyone who is a bully. In other areas, like the schoolyard or the hallway, position yourself to make it easiest to hear and participate.

STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS

If you think or know that bullying is *currently* happening to your child:

1. Believe your child and be supportive and patient. Your child wouldn't tell you if it weren't true. Don't blame him or her. Give him hope that a solution can be found.
2. Telling your child to ignore the bully rarely works. The bully can see that he is upsetting your child and will likely continue to bully and possibly even elevate the level of harassment. If ignoring worked, they wouldn't be asking you for help!
3. Meet with the school to discuss incidents. Ask for a copy of the school's anti-bullying policy. It is the school's responsibility to provide a safe environment where your child can learn. Demand that the school conduct its own investigation.
4. Document everything, including dates of incidents, information about what occurred, with whom you spoke about it, action taken, etc. Although it helps to know the names of those who are bullying your child, it is not required to take action.
5. Be prepared to take your concern up the "chain of command" from teacher to counselor to principal to district level supervisor if needed. Be persistent.
6. Do not contact the parents of the bully. The parents will often defend the bully. Let school officials and police handle things.
7. Have frequent conversations with your child about what happens each day at school. (With whom did you have lunch today? With whom did you play today? What was the best part of your day? What was the worst part of your day? Do your friends have special names for you? Are there groups of kids at school who stick together and keep everyone else from taking part?)
8. Don't encourage your child to stand up to the bully. Have your child brainstorm some solutions and offer suggestions if they get stuck

(such as those on pages 12-17). This creates independence and empowers a child who already feels disempowered by the bullying.

9. Help your child understand this is not his fault and they are not alone.
10. Use the IEP to list goals related to bullying. You do not have to wait for the annual IEP. You can request that another one be done at any time. Emphasize that your child cannot make educational progress on their existing IEP goals if there is bullying.

Here is just a sampling of ideas and examples of goals that can be written in your child's IEP. Not all of these will be appropriate for every student, and there are many others that will more specifically address the unique situation of each child:

- a. Identify an adult in the school to whom the child can report or go to for assistance when being bullied, or for informal daily or weekly check-ins. This might be a teacher, guidance counselor, psychologist, or principal.
- b. The child will be allowed to leave class early to avoid hallway incidents. Or, accommodations will be made to allow the student to dress for PE in an alternate setting. Or, the student will be seated in class away from student(s) who bully.
- c. Agree on a school staff member who will "shadow" the student in hallways, classrooms, or playgrounds. (Be careful not to "punish" your child by placing them in an overly restrictive environment or deprive them of opportunities for positive peer interaction.)
- d. Obtain reassurance from the school staff to the student that he or she has a right to be safe and that the bullying is not his or her fault. School staff should be educated about the school's bullying policy, including complaint and reporting procedures. A staff member should be identified who will document and report incidents of bullying.

- e. Develop a social skills training plan to learn appropriate social interaction, to identify inappropriate social interactions and bullying behavior, and to develop positive relationships. Ask for peer support to be written into the IEP (see “g” below).
- f. Develop self-advocacy skills – such as saying “stop” or “no” or other rehearsed lines, walking away, or avoiding stressful situations. Also, increase self-awareness about the student’s own disability.
- g. A peer support system will be created. Four or five students will be educated and encouraged to take action if they see the child being bullied. These students (some may already be his allies) will be given information about his disability, taught how to identify bullying, and trained in how to safely intervene in a bullying situation. A staff mentor for this process will be identified. These students can also take turns being the child’s “buddy” at rotating times throughout the day (or week).
- h. Focus on speech and language skills that will aid in interacting with classmates, and responding appropriately to bullying.
- i. Parent counseling and training will help parents understand the special needs of their child, and also to help them acquire the skills that would allow them to support the implementation of the child’s IEP.

*Adapted from <http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/pubs/551201.html>
and <http://www.pacer.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-4.pdf>*

11. When appropriate, seek professional counseling for your child. Inform the regional center about the bullying and ask for their help.
12. If there is not adequate response to the bullying, insist that the bully be transferred to another school. Because your child has done nothing wrong, he/she should not have to transfer, but sometimes it is a last resort and can end up being a welcome fresh start with very positive outcomes.

13. When all else fails, parents can file:
 - a. Assault charges against the bully with your local police department.
 - b. A request for a due process hearing against the school district over disagreement about what should go into the IEP.
 - c. A compliance complaint with the California Department of Education, if you believe the school has not implemented what was in your child's IEP (must be filed within one year of the alleged violation).
 - d. A civil rights complaint with the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, alleging discrimination in education on the basis of disability (must be filed within 180 calendar days of the alleged discrimination).
 - e. A complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, alleging disability discrimination in education (no time limit to file).

The link to instructions for these legal processes is included in the Resources section of this booklet.

Things to keep in mind to *prevent* bullying:

The list that follows seems to put a daunting responsibility on parents to prevent or mitigate bullying. Most parents, however, will find they already do many of these as an intuitive part of raising healthy, safe kids. They should take comfort in knowing that there is no secret, magic solution beyond common sense, preparing and practicing with your kids, and keeping an eye out for unusual signs and symptoms that your child is being bullied.

1. Visit the school with your child prior to his first day, perhaps even more than once, to increase familiarization and comfort.
2. Become familiar with California's anti-bullying laws as excerpted on pages 7-8 of this booklet, and remind the school of their obligations if needed. Ask for a copy of the school's anti-bullying policies.
3. Teach your child that he does have a difference, but that doesn't give anyone the right to be nasty. There are mean people in the world, and it's not really about your child.

4. Assist in friendship development. One approach is arranging play dates after school with friendly students in your child's class and providing support necessary for the play date to be successful.
5. Teach the child simple games so that he can join with others when they are playing.
6. Teach the child how real friends behave, and that friendship does not need to be paid for (i.e. a child offering to be friends if given money is not a real friend).
7. Involve your child in age-appropriate activities where he can have success (e.g. music, art, rock-climbing).
8. Try to teach your child a sense of humor and that it's OK to laugh at themselves and with others, as long as it's not being cruel.
9. Role-play teasing with your child and practice back and forth replies to negative comments.
10. Teach specific and concrete examples that do and do not depict bullying (what actions are simply accidental vs. bullying). Create scenarios based on an activity your child enjoys, for example, swimming (when splashing another child for fun vs. being annoying), or basketball (throwing the ball in the basket vs. throwing the ball at a person).
11. Teach avoidance skills. Young children can be taught to stick near an adult on the playground or behind the driver on the bus. Older kids can learn to avoid the locker room, multi-stall restrooms, etc., if they are alone.
12. Some kids might need your help creating a playground routine, (e.g. swing for 5 minutes, then climb on play gym for 5 minutes, then jump rope for 5 minutes), so that they have a plan that will keep them occupied and less self-conscious.
13. If you have concerns, explain your observations and ask the teacher if s/he has seen anything unusual with your child. Keep lines of

communication open with teachers, coaches, counselors, etc. Generally, ask if the child's disability is affecting her progress or relationships at school in any way.

14. With your child's cooperation, consider educating his/her classroom peers to help them understand your child's disability and/or how he/she communicates.
15. Explain to your child that some habits irritate others and work with him on alternatives (e.g., twirling a pencil instead of hand-flapping, wearing deodorant to avoid ridicule).
16. Teach school yard language that may otherwise be misinterpreted, such as "dawg" doesn't mean they are an animal, and "how's it hanging" doesn't mean they are droopy.
17. To prevent cyber-bullying, monitor your child's online activities informally (preferable) or with software, especially in younger years. Create an atmosphere of open communication so they will come to you if they experience this. Don't ban your child's access to computers or cell phones. It does not address the problem. If needed, contact the internet service provider, website, or cell phone provider. Notify the school or police in extreme or persistent cases.
18. Build confidence and resilience in your child. Confidence repels bullies. Kids who believe they are essentially OK don't view themselves as victims, so they can more easily shrug off meanness from others.



STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL STAFF

As bullying is becoming fertile ground for legal action against school districts, it is imperative for every school to have school-wide anti-bullying programs and policies in place.

1. Become very familiar with federal and state school anti-bullying laws as excerpted on pages 7-8 and the U.S. Department of Education “Dear Colleague” letter of August 2013 (see page 32).
2. Respond immediately and consistently to bullying. Apply negative consequences, but also use positive reinforcement for desired behavior. Implement evidence-based behavioral intervention. Make it clear that you will be keeping a better eye on the bully and his friends to be sure they do not further target the victim or others.
3. Don’t force the bully and bullied to “make up” or apologize. Some students with disabilities don’t have the social understanding or perspective to do this. “Working things out” will generally not improve the situation. Have the bully meet with an adult about how to meaningfully show his remorse.
4. Get police or medical help immediately if a weapon is involved, if there is serious bodily harm or sexual abuse, if anyone is accused of an illegal act such as robbery or extortion, or even if there are threats of injury or hate-motivated violence.
5. Maintain a school committee in charge of establishing, promoting, and enforcing your school’s anti-bullying policies and programs, including addressing bullying of students with disabilities. Enlist the school principal’s commitment and involvement.

Consider a multifaceted, comprehensive plan at the school, class, and individual levels, such as the following “Whole-School” approach:

- a. Establishing a school-wide policy that addresses all types of bullying (making it available in accessible formats (e.g. Braille)).

- b. Providing guidelines for teachers, other staff and students (including witnesses) on specific actions to take if bullying occurs.
- c. Educating and involving parents so they understand the problem, recognize its signs, and intervene appropriately.
- d. Adopting specific strategies to deal with individual bullies and victims, including meeting with their parents.
- e. Encouraging students to report known bullying.
- f. Developing a comprehensive reporting system to track bullying and the interventions used in specific situations.
- g. Encouraging students to be helpful to classmates who may be bullied (see #6 below).
- h. Developing tailored strategies to counter bullying in specific school hot spots (such as cafeteria, hallways, playground, or bathrooms) using environmental redesign, increased supervision (by teachers, staff, parents, or volunteers) or technological monitoring equipment.
- i. Making bullying prevention a regular part of classroom and school activities.
- j. Conducting post-intervention surveys to assess the strategies' impact on school bullying.
- k. Understanding that it can take a full year or more to see positive results.

Adapted from <http://www.popcenter.org/problems/bullying/3>.



6. Implement a Bystander Training/Peer Advocacy program as described on pages 9-11. Several excellent ones are included in the Resources section of this booklet. There are plenty of others as well. The key is teaching students to distract a bully, advocate on behalf of the victim, and to seek help. With widespread training, it can become “uncool” to bully and “cool” to help students who are bullied or left out.

7. Highlight and show approval to students who have been kind, caring, inclusive, and respectful to classmates, as a model of how to treat others. Take extra care to make sure it is not patronizing to students with disabilities.
8. Provide more staffing during unstructured times of day and in areas where bullies might be expected (e.g., bathrooms). Beefing up supervision goes a long way towards preventing bullying.
9. Provide equipment for familiar games at recess so the child knows what to play and how to join others.
10. Provide a safe place inside to go if needed (e.g., supervised indoor activity or library).
11. Post classroom signs prohibiting bullying and listing the consequences for it.
12. To prevent cyber-bullying, educate all students about responsible and acceptable internet use. The school is legally obligated to intervene if cyber-bullying by a student creates a disrupted learning environment or harassment to another. Develop a plan of disciplinary actions..
13. For students who use assistive technology or communication boards, teach classmates how to use and respond to their communication system, so that the teacher is not the only person with whom the student with impairment can interact.
14. Teach the building blocks of bullying prevention, such as being able to name feelings accurately, to understand and describe healthy interpersonal boundaries, and to identify things that contribute to feeling safe and happy.
15. When teaching about bullying, use the best methods that consider the needs of students with intellectual disabilities, such as using simple words, breaking tasks into small steps, using concrete examples, giving immediate feedback, and providing many opportunities for repetition.

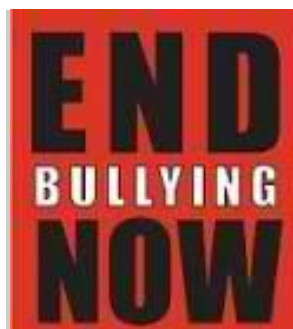
FINAL THOUGHTS

The truth about bullying is that we will never get rid of it entirely. We live in a world of competition, differences, hierarchies, power structures, class struggles, peer pressure, complex emotions, and countless individual backgrounds and situations. Bullying is one by-product of that reality.

The effectiveness of the “zero tolerance” or “three strikes” policies of the last two decades has been less than expected. These types of policies have not addressed lasting intervention, they have resulted in required suspensions for many more students than anticipated, they sometimes result in the bully staying at home unsupervised, and ironically, they may deter reporting (source: www.stopbullying.gov).

As our schools are becoming more inclusive, kids with disabilities are growing up alongside typical kids, often in the same classrooms. A perfect educational environment for all students is still a goal, not a reality, but we are continuing to make progress. With inclusion, there are more opportunities for social relationships and natural friendships. General and special education staff are collaborating more. Also promising are anti-bullying models that are having success, such as Bystander Intervention programs, especially when they are a component of a Whole-School approach.

Even so, all the lists of strategies in the world cannot eliminate the hurt and stress caused by bullying. It is hoped that perhaps some of these ideas will at least be the first steps in minimizing or preventing bullying of students with disabilities in our schools.



RESOURCES ON BULLYING

(There are thousands of internet resources on bullying. Here is a selection, many of which were used in the development of this booklet.)

Some Excellent Websites to Begin Your Search about Bullying and Students with Special Needs:

- Pacer National Bullying Prevention Center
<http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/students-with-disabilities/>
- Department of Developmental Services
<http://www.ddssafety.net/>
- Matrix Parent Network – Bullying: Taking it Seriously (article)
<http://www.matrixparents.org/pdf/matrixpackets/Bullying.pdf>
- Walk a Mile in Their Shoes
<http://www.abilitypath.org/areas-of-development/learning--schools/bullying/articles/walk-a-mile-in-their-shoes.pdf>

More Bullying Information and Prevention Strategies

For children with any type of disability:

- Disability.gov
<https://www.disability.gov> Click on “Education” in the left column. Click on “Both National and State.” Then click California on the map. Under the Subtopics scroll-down menu on the left, click “Bullying Prevention”.
- “Bully” – 2010 movie, the basis for The Bully Project and toolkits
<http://specialneeds.thebullyproject.com/about>

Specific Developmental Disabilities:

Autism

- Bullying and Autism Spectrum Disorders (Australia)
<http://www.amaze.org.au/uploads/2011/08/Fact-Sheet-Bullying-and-Autism-Spectrum-Disorder-Aug-2011.pdf>
- Strategies to Address Bullying of Children with Autism (Oregon)
<http://nwresd.k12.or.us/autism/StrategiestoAddressBullyingofChildrenwithAutism.html>

Cerebral Palsy

- <http://cerebralpalsy.org/inspiration/breaking-barriers/bully-abuse/>

Epilepsy

- <http://mandykrzywonski.blogspot.com/p/end-epilepsy-bullying.html>

Intellectual Disabilities

- <http://psychcentral.com/lib/2011/help-your-intellectually-disabled-child-handle-bullying>

Physical Disabilities

- Physical Disabilities - general discussion
<http://inclusiveeducationnz.blogspot.com/>

Not specific to disabilities:

- Bully Free (fees for some materials)
<http://www.bullyfree.com/lesson-plan-samples>
- Bullystoppers
http://www.bullystoppers.com/101_great_comeback_lines.html
- Psychology Today – Big Bad Bully
<http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200910/big-bad-bully>
- Stop Bullying
<http://www.stopbullying.gov/>

Anti-Bullying Laws and Complaint Procedures:

- California Education Code
http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayexpandedbranch.xhtml
- Stopbullying.gov
<http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/california.html>
- Disability Rights California (1st link-Bullying; 2nd link-Sp. Ed. (Chap 6))
<http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/pubs/551201.pdf>
<http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/pubs/PublicationsSERREnglish.htm>
- Federal laws explained
<http://www.autismnews.net/harass.html>
- Filing Compliance Complaints with California Department of Education
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/qa/cmplntproc.asp>

- Filing Discrimination Complaints with U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/howto.html>
- Filing Discrimination in Education Complaints with the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division
<http://www.justice.gov/crt/complaint/#three>

Bystander Training/Peer Advocacy/Upstander Programs – free except where indicated

- Assertiveness Skills for Empowered Bystanders
<http://www.bullyfree.com/free-resources/assertiveness-strategies-for-bystanders>
- Intervention Central
<http://www.interventioncentral.org/behavioral-interventions/bully-prevention/bystanders-turning-onlookers-bully-prevention-agents>
- Teach Safe Schools
http://www.teachsafeschools.org/bully_menu5-2.html Then scroll to Bystander Intervention Programs.
- Peer Advocacy Training
<http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/activities/toolkits/pdf/PeerAdvocacyGuide.pdf>
- Ohio Center for Autism (webcast, facilitator guide, strategy list)
http://www.ocali.org/project/bullying_and_individuals_with_special_needs/ (Click on Anti-Bullying webcasts)
- Bully Bust – 10 Ways to Be an Upstander
<http://www.schoolclimate.org/bullybust/students/upstander>
- Breaking the Bully-Victim-Bystander Cycle Toolkit (Cost: \$90)
http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/documents/toolkit_info.pdf
- Eyes on Bullying Toolkit – What Can You Do?
<http://www.eyesonbullying.org/pdfs/toolkit.pdf>
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
<http://www.pbis.org>

Cyber-bullying

- Cyber-bullying Research Center
<http://cyberbullying.us/>
- Delete Cyber-bullying
<http://www.deletecyberbullying.org/preventing-cyberbullying/>
- Stand Up to Cyber-bullying
<http://www.commonsemmedia.org/cyberbullying>
- Stop Cyber-bullying
www.stopcyberbullying.org

IEP Sample Goals

- Disability Rights California
<http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/pubs/551201.pdf>
- Pacer Center
<http://www.pacer.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-4.pdf>

Self-Advocacy Training

- Advocating Change Together (fees for materials)
<http://www.selfadvocacy.org/index.htm>
- Developmental Disabilities Area Board 10
www.areaboard10.org

Suicide Prevention

- Suicide Prevention Center – 24 hour crisis line, 365 days a year for Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Imperial Counties
1-877-727-4747
<http://www.didihirsch.org/spc>
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for outside of southern California
1-800-273-TALK or 1-800-273-8255

Whole School Approach

- Center for Problem-Oriented Policing
<http://www.popcenter.org/problems/bullying/3>
- Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (free information, but fee for the training package)
<http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/faqs.page>
- U.S. Department of Education Dear Colleague letter of August 20, 2013 and Enclosure entitled “Effective Evidence-based Practices for Preventing and Addressing Bullying”
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcitrs/bullyingdcl-8-20-13.pdf> (letter)
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcitrs/bullyingdcl-enclosure-8-20-13.pdf> (enclosure)

