

Creating a

Principled

community of learners.

As part of our learning community we commit to:

**act with integrity and honesty,
with a strong sense of fairness and justice,
and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere.
We will take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.**

To prevent and manage potential bullying in the learning community it is important to follow the steps outlined in this document:

1. Review the suggested definition of bullying below. Discuss what bullying could look like in your community. Engage in open and honest dialogue regarding peoples' feelings regarding these points. Remind participants that bullies are not 'bad' people and that everyone can be a bully at some point. Discuss empathy and the role of empathy in education. Co-construct a definition of bullying for your learning community; inclusive of students, faculty, parents, and staff.

Bullying is repeated unreasonable behavior that could reasonably be considered to be humiliating, intimidating, threatening or demeaning to a person, or group of persons, and which creates a risk to health and safety.

Bullying is repeated behavior and may include:

- unwarranted criticism or insults
- spreading malicious rumors
- deliberately withholding information or resources
- influencing others to exclude or isolate the targeted person or group
- unreasonable behavior (victimizing, humiliating, undermining or threatening)
- a risk to health and safety

Bullying can happen in any learning community. Under certain conditions, **anyone** can be capable of bullying behavior. It can have an impact on an individual's health and affect their ability to do their job, learn, and contribute to the community. It can also contribute to loss of productivity, staff turnover, absenteeism, low morale and financial costs.

2. Using your co-constructed definition of bullying, draft a school-wide Essential Agreement for the expectations regarding Principled behavior within your learning community. Construct the agreement in positives rather than negatives. “Don’t shout”, becomes, “We agree to use respectful voices”. Include all stakeholders in the agreement, students, faculty, parents and staff.
3. Promote the school-wide Essential Agreement. Post the document in classrooms, breezeways, libraries, cafeterias, lounges, offices. Invite parents to coffee-mornings and discuss the essential agreement, review it at staff meetings, reference it when creating new policies and procedures. Be clear it is for ALL members of the learning community, not just students.
4. Encourage reporting of bully behaviors. Always remind students, faculty, parents and staff that bullying should be reported. Invest in a school counsellor or another neutral party to discuss the bullying with.
5. Have a clear procedure for how to deal with bullying in the school and reinforce this procedure with consistency and non-negotiable expectations (no physical violence).

A clear procedure could be:

Early intervention (conduct coffee-mornings, open-discussions, staff meetings, assemblies)
Self management (initiate a conversation with the person or seek help from a neutral party)
Principal (report the behaviors to the Principal)
Director (if the behaviors continue, the Principal will raise the issue to the Director or Head)
Board (if the behaviors continue, the Director will take the issue to the Board)
Investigation (the school will engage in a non-biased, professional investigation of the conflict)
Response (the school will have firm and clear expectations that are transparent for all stakeholders, moreover they will stick to those expectations when negotiating conflict to maintain equity, balance and to create a principled learning community.)

Take time to promote, celebrate and give thanks for awesome behaviors in the learning community. This will aid in the prevention of bullying and builds a positive community of learners!

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Our Essential Agreement

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