

Creating an Anti-bullying Environment for Young Children

This brochure is a short, easy-to-read information packet consisting of a variety of evidence-based practices, strategies, and intervention procedures. It is designed to help teachers support young children from being bullied or victimized in early child care and school settings. It includes examples of practical strategies that might be used by early childhood educators.

Jeremy was quiet all the way home from daycare. When his father asked what was wrong, he refused to answer. That evening at the dinner table, Jeremy burst out in tears and said, "the kids at daycare call me elephant ears and they pinch and pull on my ears."

"None of the kids at school likes Amy," 6-year old Kara told her mom and dad. "We make fun of her because she's stupid. Christi is having a birthday party and she's inviting everyone but Amy."



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What is Bullying?

Bullying is the continuous and damaging actions of one child or children towards another. These acts are not provoked by the victim. There are two types of bullying—direct and indirect. Direct bullying includes pushing, kicking, hitting, and taking away things from others. Indirect bullying includes teasing, threatening to do harm, name calling and making faces (Crick, 1997; Olweus; 1993, 1994).

Childhood aggression starts as early as one year of age when, in interaction with peers, infants sometimes use force to take something away from another child. After the first year, children begin to acquire some social skills and are able to have good relationships with their peers. The way children connect with other children is determined by their ability and disposition and by the family and other primary environments (Crick, 1997; Olweus; 1993, 1994).

Developmental differences must be made as to what are considered normal and abnormal behaviors. Normal acts of childhood aggression range from conflicts over various items to disputes over play activities. These conflicts are normal and are not considered bullying (Hay, Payne, & Chadwick, 2004).

What Do We Know About Bullies?

(Banks, 1997; Crick, Casas, & Mosher 1997)

- Bullying occurs in children as young as 3 years of age.
- Children's behavior is greatly determined by the way they are treated.
- Bullying in early childhood may be an early indicator of later delinquency.
- Bullies have little regard for those in authority and for victims.
- Bullies enjoy the pain they cause their victims.
- Bullies can have a high sense of self-esteem, contrary to former beliefs.
- Bullying has a negative effect on our children and our society.

What We Know About Victims

Students who are victimized by peers have no way to escape from bullying other than pretending to be sick in order to stay at home, which provides only short-term relief. When a child is victimized in school, the teasing often increases. Bullying is not unusual in day-care and preschool environments. (Banks, 1997; Crick, 1997; Gropper & Froschl, 1999; Olweus, 1993).

- When children face continued threats, they have problems focusing and learning.
- Victims are often timid, look weak, and do not think highly of themselves.
- They generally do not protect themselves.
- Victims may be isolated socially from their peers.



- Victims need to know that adults will intervene.

What is an Anti-bullying Environment?

An anti-bullying environment has been created when all staff, parents and children participate in intervention and children are able to learn in a safe and friendly environment (Banks, 1997).

Why Should I Create an Anti-bullying Environment?

Bullying has an effect on children's ability to learn and enjoy their school or child care experience. Teachers can address the problems in their classrooms or child care settings (Curwin & Mendler 1997; Olweus, 1993). There is strong connection between bullying in the early years and having criminal behaviors in adulthood. Victims of bullying can become afraid of school and believe it to be an unsafe and unhappy place. If steps toward intervention are not taken in the early years, it can lead to anti-social behavior later in life (Banks, 1997).

- They help prevent or reduce victimization by peers.
- They provide safe, learning conducive environments for children.
- They prevent or reduce emotional problems.
- They increase awareness of administrators, teachers, students and parents.
- They foster respect for students and teachers.
- They can reduce later delinquency.
- They increase child satisfaction of school life.

What I Can Do to Create an Anti-bullying Environment?

(Morris, 2000; Olweus, 1993, 1994)

- Assist students to make rules to help prevent unsafe feelings.
- Identify the basic values of the school or classroom.
- Help students understand the consequences of breaking the rules.
- Periodic class meetings should be conducted to review or revise rules.
- Refer to counselors or administrators if bullying behavior continues.
- Consider using a curriculum that includes cooperative play.
- Provide activities that encourage their interests and abilities.
- Use story telling and emphasize caring behaviors.
- Let children know that hurting others is not acceptable.
- Model and teach caring behaviors.
- Welcome each and every child, even those that exhibit poor behavior.
- Treat all students with dignity.
- Initiate parent and teacher communication.
- Solicit and educate parents in emphasizing peaceful values to their children.
- Supervise free time activities such as lunch time and outside play.

Ways to Talk With Children to Help Them Feel Better

(Curwin & Mendler, 1997; Olweus, 1993)

- Schedule times for children to talk about any concern or problem.
- Discuss what makes them feel safe and unsafe.
- Discuss ways to make friends.
- Discuss what they can do to help themselves and others.
- Discuss ways to report bullying incidents.
- Let them know adults will intervene.
- Discuss the role of the bystander.



How to Involve Parents in Creating an Anti-bullying Environment

Child care facilities and schools cannot create peaceful environments for children without involving parents and the community. Anti-social behaviors in many cases begin in the home environment; therefore, educating parents could be an important component of your program. There are various ways of soliciting support and educating parents (Banks, 1997; Olweus, 1993, 1994).

- Provide parents with information on anger management, violence prevention and recognition of emotional triggers.
- Send home tip sheets or include tips in family newsletters that deal with topics related to violence prevention
- Provide a list of parenting resources with hotline numbers and Web site addresses.
- Provide parents with information to be shared with their children about feelings.
- Provide information for positive parental role modeling.
- Provide information as to what is appropriate television viewing for children, when to turn it off and how to set limits for viewing.
- Encourage parents to take an active role in their children's education.
- Encourage parents to listen to and talk with their children.
- Encourage parents to set limits and rules for appropriate behavior.
- Keep parents informed about what is taught in the classroom or child care setting.
- Help parents to understand the negative effects of bullying and other aggressive behaviors.



Ways to Use Children's Books

The role of the parent and teacher in the child's social development is very important and the use of books and storytelling can be very beneficial in the creation of peaceful and caring environments. Teachers must possess a caring attitude and it does not require much training. Teachers should encourage the involvement of parents in order to reinforce the book reading practices that brings out empathy and caring (Morris, Taylor, & Wilson, 2000).



Children's Books

Bernstein, S. (1991). *A Family That Fights*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman. Caring adults can share this book with children about family fights. It tells children how to understand adult behavior as well as to help children express their feelings.

Bottner, B. (1980). *Mean Maxine*. New York: Pantheon Books. When Mean Maxine starts calling people names, she can really get to them. She got to Ralph who realizes that he has to stand up to her.

Caseley, J. (2001). *Bully*. New York: Greenwillow Books. Mickey's ex-friend turns into a big bully. Everyone in Mickey's family tries to offer helpful advice, but Mickey solves the problem on his own.

Chapman, C. (1981). *Herbie's Troubles*. New York: Dutton. Herbie's troubles all began the day he met Jimmy John. Jimmy John destroyed Herbie's tunnel and continued to make things worse for him. Jimmy John finally did something to stop the bullying.

Coleman, E. (1996). *White Socks Only*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman. A story about how black people dealt with discrimination by pulling together as community.

Dr. Seuss. (1984). *The Butter Battle Book*. New York: Random House. The story provokes children to think about the next step to take in order to solve a life-threatening conflict.

Henkes, K. (1995). *Julius, The Baby Of The World*. New York: Mulberry. A story of a small mouse named Lilly and her struggle to accept her baby brother.

Hoffman, M. (1991). *Amazing Grace*. New York: Scholastic. This is a story about family support and encouragement for a young African American girl.

Lester, H. (1999). *Hooway For Wodney Wat*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin. Rodney Rat can't

pronounce his r's, and the other rodents tease him mercilessly. When Camilla Capybera joins Rodney's class and claims to be bigger, meaner, and smarter than any of the other rodents, everyone is afraid.

Meddaugh, S. (1998). *Martha Walks The Dog*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Martha the talking dog finally figures out the way to stop the huge dog from bullying is to say nice things to him.

McMullan, K. (1995). *Hey, Pipsqueak!* New York: HarperCollins Publishers. A troll has taken over a bridge that Jack has to cross to deliver his present to the party. The troll tries to bully Jack into giving him something in order to cross.

Naylor, P. (1994). *King Of The Playground*. New York: Macmillan. The story tells children a warm, comforting solution to a problem with a child who is a bully.

Nickle, J. (1999). *The Ant Bully*. New York: Scholastic Press. Sid is a big bully that Lucas wishes he could squash like a bug. Since Sid is too little to do that, he bullies the ants.

Wells, R. (1985). *Hazel's Amazing Mother*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers. Hazel's amazing mother rescues Hazel and her doll from a group of bullies.

Teacher Resources

Fine, E., Lacey, Alk & Baer, J. (1995). *Children As Peacemakers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemaann.

This book is about one school's journey to peace. Children as young as 3 learn to solve their problems and to resolve their conflicts peacefully.

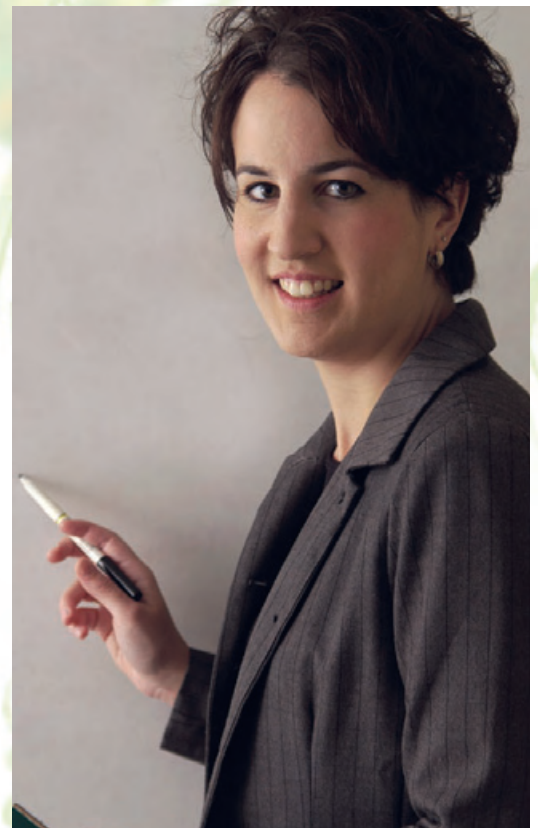
Fry-Miller, K., & Myers-Walls, J. (1989). *Peace Works: Young Peacemakers Project Book II*. Elgin, IL: Brethren Press.

This second book of the Young Peacemakers project book series continues to introduce early childhood-through elementary-age children to learning activities related to peacemaking.

Levin, D. (1994). *Teaching Young Children In Violent Times*. Cambridge, MA: Educators for

Social Responsibility. This book is a practical guide for helping early childhood professionals create peaceful classrooms and for providing ways to integrate literacy and numerary when working with issues of peace, problem solving, and nonviolence.

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Notes





OKDHS Pub. No. 05-29

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Revised 08/2006