

# Controlling New Age Bullying in Schools

Reference Guide and Test

## Introduction

Bullying can take on many forms. Today's bullying has a totally different meaning. The bullying that takes place on school campuses today is harmful. This includes cyber-bullying. Keep in mind that cyber-bullying opens up the bullied student to wide spread condemnation by hundreds of students. Its impact is devastating. It has lead to students being cyber bullied embarrassed, harassed and in extreme cases **this form of bullying has resulted in suicide.**

### **Part 1: Identification and Observation**

1) At the beginning of the video, we introduced a male and female student arguing in a school bus loading zone. The female student breaks up with her boyfriend. This unwelcome news infuriates the boy friend. He finds a nude picture of her on his cell phone and sends it out as a blast picture text to his friends. This demonstrates how fast news, gossip rumor and innuendo can travel through cyberspace.

2) Two of the male students friends, who just happen to be on the school bus with his ex girl friend, receive the picture and immediately shares it with other students. Don't forget, once the deed has been done, in this case a damaging viral message, the information can't be retrieved.

3) The two female students who received the blast text from the male student, now begin to harass and bully the female student who has now become the victim. The bullying continues unabated on the ride home.

3a )During the course of the video, we point out the importance of identifying and observing bullying behaviors. We also show that by planning ahead - observing and identifying potential bullying - the driver can start the intervention process. The driver is careful not to call out the bullies, this could increase the likelihood of additional bullying at another location.

Instead, the driver **critically observes** the situation and makes sure it doesn't get out of hand.

4) The bullying continues even after the student gets off the bus. The lead bully writes a nasty message that she hangs out the window of the bus. The driver can not ignore this and carefully confronts the girl. Next the bus driver demands the note, the girl complies. The bus driver has taken the initiative by addressing the situation.

5) The driver takes things a step further and contacts the principal of the school and lets him know about what has taken place on the bus. She supplies the principal with all the information and actions that she has observed on her bus. The driver also describes the sequence of events that just occurred on the bus. The principal is aware that a serious bullying situation has gone down and this will require him to investigate it.

6) The principal calls the **lead bully** to his office for a conference. The student refuses to supply the name of the student who sent her the picture of the nude girl. The principal calmly explains that without the name of the student who sent the original picture, he will have to assume it was her and she will be held responsible. She gives up the name of the student. Remember this: patience and assertiveness in tandem is a very effective way to get to the bottom of an issue.

7) Next, the video shows the principal engaging in a conversation with the accused **male student** who sent out the nude picture. The principal immediately has the student place his cell phone on the table and in his view. The principal then carefully and fairly listens to the male student's version of the incident. In the course of the interview the student admits to his bullying behavior. The principal gives him a chance to recant his bullying behavior but he refuses. He doesn't regard bullying as a serious issue.

**8)** Once the male student acknowledges that he cyber bullied the girl, the ball is in the principals court: Here are the actions he takes.

**a)** The principal explains to the student that what he did was wrong and he has disrupted the atmosphere of the school.

**b)** The principal then requires the student to delete the picture and text messages associated with the incident.

**c)** The principal explains that the incident is a form of sexual harassment and that this type of cyber-bullying means serious consequences are in order.

**d)** The principal lets the student know that he will have a five day suspension as well as a disciplinary hearing for expulsion.

**9)** The safety of the bullied student should be the highest priority. Additionally, the use of the school team concept is essential. The principal meets with one of his counsellors and fills her in on the details of the cyber bullying incident. They come to the conclusion that the bullied student should immediately be brought into the counselors office to be counseled and helped so she can deal with the issue. This may help the bullied student confront her own feelings and prevent her from blaming herself for the incident.

**10)** Bullied students are often hesitant, unsure of themselves, insecure and in the case portrayed in the video the bullied student is embarrassed over the “naked picture.”

All school employees should do everything they can to be supportive and to let the student know that she’s the victim, not the bully. Sensitivity and letting the student know that you are there to help, may gain the student’s confidence.

**11)** As a school employee, dealing with the parents of bullies or bullied students can be a significant challenge. The parents of a student who has been identified as a bully, may become defensive when told of their son’s or daughter’s actions. Parents and students must

be told ahead of time the consequences of bullying. Here are some generic guidelines.

- a) Before the school year starts, an anti bullying program should be in place.
- b) Send a handbook home with students stating the school's anti bullying policies, as well as consequences for bullying behavior.
- c) The handbook should be signed by both the parents and the student.

**12) When talking to the parents of the bullied student: (Generic guidelines)**

- a) Make sure to be sympathetic to their son's or daughter's needs:
- b) Let them know that the school is doing everything in their power to diffuse the situation.
- c) Make the parents understand that the goal is to allow their child to be in a supportive and safe atmosphere.
- d) Let parents know that a plan will be in place to support the bullied student, should the bullying reoccur.

**13)** The video demonstrates that there are a series of steps that can be taken when a cyber-bullying situation takes place. One of the most important of these is the **use of the school team**. Here's why. The driver contacted the principal who was then able to gather the facts surrounding the bullying incident. The principal then turned to the school counselor who in turn talked to the bullied student. **The result was that different members of the school team worked together to effectively prevent the bullying incident from spinning out of control.** If only a single member of the school team was involved in the bullying incident, the outcome would not have been as successful.

## **Part 2: Bullies, Victims and Bystanders**

### **THE BULLIES**

1) In the video, we show two male students sitting at a computer in a school library.

One of the students calls the other over to let him know that he logged onto his Facebook profile. He posts on Facebook that today is "slap day." Slap day is designed to slap a specific student throughout the school day. This is clearly designed to bully another student.

2) Here are some characteristics of bullying worth considering:

a) Bullying is an intentional act. A student who bullies wants to hurt the victim; it's not an accident.

b) Bullying involves repeated occurrences, it is not a random act.

c) Bullies aren't loners. They travel in pairs or in small groups.

d) Children who bully tend to have average or above average self-esteem. They are often impulsive and many times a bully is a product of their environment, this usually means their home life may be dysfunctional.

e) Many bullies display a lack of empathy, have difficulty conforming to rules, are popular, enjoy high status - even from their peer and occasionally from their teachers.

3) In the video, we dramatize the confrontation with the student who has been designated as the student who will be slapped during the school day. The bully slaps him across the face and then proceeds to antagonize him. His goal is to try and get the student to slap him back. The bullied student is intimidated and his only defense is to walk away.

### **THE VICTIMS**

4) The pain and embarrassment of being bullied often causes the victims to hide what is going on. But, there are a variety of ways to tell if a student is being bullied. Some of these signs may include:

- a) signs of depression, anxiety, sadness, aggression or low self esteem.
- b) bullied students may start showing declining academics and a sharp fall off in peer relations.
- c) Bullied students often experience behavioral and emotional difficulties.

5) Always take note when a student suddenly appears upset or is acting outside their normal behavior. A noticeable change in body language, facial expression or a negative reaction after receiving a text message is a clear indication that cyber bullying may be taking place. Be observant and react accordingly.

6) During the video, the victim shows uncharacteristic behaviors and shows up early to class. He also gets a series of text messages from other students on campus. The teacher takes note of this and questions the student to no avail. She lets the student know that he can leave a note on her desk and that she can talk to his counselor. The reluctant student agrees.

7) The video then shows the bullied student in his counselor's office. The counselor lets the student know that he talked with his teacher who observed his uncharacteristic behavior. The counselor then asks for the name of the person who originally sent out the text. But the student does not want to give up any names.

It's important to remember, bullied students are afraid to "snitch" on students that are harassing or hurting them. They feel that doing so may worsen the situation. This is why all school employees should try and foster open and friendly relationships with students.

Trust is the key that can often can open up channels of communication that are ordinarily closed. Remember, snitching is despised by most students. It's an unwritten code. However, realize that by letting students know that their knowledge can often avert a tragedy, this may influence their decision to share information with you. Also keep in mind that this will only

occur if students trust you.

8) The counselor or any school employee must assure a bullied student that their conversation will be strictly confidential. This means the counsellor must gain enough of the student's trust for him to open up and provide the critical information.

### **BYSTANDERS**

9) A bystander is a student who is present at an event without participating in it. Bystanders often believe that doing nothing will prevent them from being bullied. Bystanders often conclude that it isn't in their self interest to intervene. They believe they are powerless to stop the bullying because they think the school won't back them up. Student bystanders are the x factor when it comes to bullying. Bystanders have choices. They can:

a) Ignore the situation at hand, go along and participate with the bully

or

b) take a stand to disrupt the bullies behaviors.

10) We make the role of the bystander a pivotal factor in the video. Notice that when the primary bully of the slap game is confronted by a female bystander, the bullying stops. This brings up a critical point. Don't forget that it's important to tell students, that if they reject the bullies behavior, they may change the outcome of the bullying event. Sometimes a little encouragement in the right direction is all that's needed.

11) It is important for school employees to understand the characteristics of the roles that we have described. You need to be able to identify them so you can intervene appropriately.

### **Part 3: Preventative Measures and Creating an Anti-Bullying Climate**

1) We open the third part of the video with a student who is walking to class, and before

entering the classroom, he pulls a gun from his backpack with the intention of using it. This is intended as a warning because violence from bullying has become far too common in and around school campuses. Teen suicides, a frightening reminder of school bullying, leaves behind a permanent hole in the lives of parents, family and friends.

2) Close observation and a structured anti bullying climate can reduce many of these horrific incidences. These are signs that school members should watch for and observe so they can take necessary action.

### **IMPORTANCE OF INTERVENTION**

3) We have demonstrated during the video a single student who is constantly being bullied. School team members either did not pick up on his change in behavior or simply did not care enough to address what was going on. That's why school employees, when they witness bullying behavior, must act. The school employee, regardless of their position, has the means to alert the school team to bullying.

4) In the first example, the school monitor does nothing as he witnesses the bullying. And of course, the bullying continues. Next, we show what happens when the monitor identifies the bullying taking place and intervenes. And of course, the bullying stops. Kids learn more from what adults do rather than what they say. When adults do not intervene, bullies feel there are no consequences for their actions. Even more insidious, targets of bullies may feel they deserve the bullying they are getting.

5) When the monitor intervenes, it let's the bully know that there will be consequences to their actions and that the school is proactive in reducing bullying on campus. This also gives the bullied student peace of mind. He does not have to snitch on the bully and put himself in a compromising situation. Also, bystanders will feel safer once they realize the school staff will not hesitate to step in and take action to stop bullying.

## **ADDRESS ALL TYPES OF BULLYING**

6) Bullying takes on many forms. Sometimes it can be violent other times it can be subtle. But even subtle bullying over time has psychological effects. So don't forget, all forms of bullying should be watched for and addressed.

## **CREATING AN ANTI-BULLYING CLIMATE**

7) 95% of the time that a student bullies, it is because they are doing it for attention or to better their social status amongst their peers. Their friends think it's cool to do, so why stop? That is a bullies thought process. So, what if it was uncool to bully? Where would their audience be? What would be the purpose to continue? We make this clear again in the video when a student stands up to a bully who is constantly pestering another student.

8) Bullying sometimes becomes misconstrued as the type of behavior that should be emulated. Students need to be encouraged that it is "uncool" to bully, and conversely it's "cool" to help out students who are bullied. This requires the effort and participation of all school employees.

9) Don't forget, school employees that overlook bullying are allowing bullying to continue. Ignorance is not bliss. The bullied student can recognize a school employee who hesitates to intervene and they will not trust that person. The bully can also see when an authority figure will not enforce anti-bullying rules and they will take advantage of it.

9a) By not enforcing and actively maintaining an anti-bullying climate, the school will run the risk that students will not believe that the school will enforce their own anti bullying policies. Schools must be willing to back up their polices with real consequences for any student who engages in bullying.

## **PREVENTATIVE MEASURES**

**10)** Cyber bullying and the use of social media aren't going to disappear. However, here are some additional preventative measures that can be applied:

- a)** Your school can implement web site blockers or filters on school computers to reduce visits to social networks such as Face book, twitter, or myspace.
- b)** Establish clear cut rules that students can understand and are required to follow. Post these rules and encourage students to read them.
- c)** Cell phones run as fast as a standard p.c. and have access to the internet. Minimize the use of cell phones on campus except in cases of extreme emergencies. Many school districts have imposed restrictions on cell phone usage during the school day.
- d)** Establish clear consequences for the misuse of cell phones or the internet, to bully another student.
- e)** Let students know that cyber-bullying is not going to be taken lightly. Emphasize that your school has a zero tolerance policy for any type of cyber-bullying.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**11)** In the final analysis, educating students, working closely with parents, and exchanging ideas will open new intervention techniques to combat cyber bullying in this new age. And, take the time to familiarize yourself with the social networks being used by students. It can be useful when investigating cyber-bullying acts.

**12)** Also, remember that communication, a positive support system and working together as a school team is the best approach. If everyone is on the same page, the chance for success and a safe learning environment will increase.

**13)** In the video, we use the word "TOAST" as an acronym to make the key points easy to remember when faced with a bullying situation. It is as follows:

**Train** students and staff about what bullying is, how to identify it and its consequences.

**Observe** student behavior, notice changes in behavior and be aware of when bullying occurs.

**Assist** victims of bullying by connecting with them and referring them to professionals for help.

**Speak** to all school team members and keep a watch eye out to make sure that the victimization doesn't continue.

**Take action** on the bullies for two reasons. First, to stop the bullies from continuing their poor conduct and second, to demonstrate that such behavior will not be tolerated.

## **CLOSING**

It is up to you, the school member, to apply anti-bullying techniques and strategies to address both traditional and cyber-bullying issues. Remain pro active. Are you going to come up with the next great idea to help reduce cyber-bullying? Remember to rely on members of the school team. Staying vigilant and making sure that you are part of the solution to prevent bullying will make your campus safer and a better place for every student and faculty member.

## **TEST QUESTIONS**

1) There is only one way to intervene and combat cyber-bullying in schools.

**TRUE or FALSE**

2) An anti-bullying material should be sent home and put in place at the \_\_\_\_\_

- a.) beginning of each school year
- b.) when a bullying incident takes place
- c.) after students have adjusted to school for a few weeks
- d.) none of the above

3) It is not important to intervene if it looks as if students are just horsing around.

**TRUE or FALSE**

4) Many bullies tend to \_\_\_\_\_

- a.) Have average or above average self esteem.
- b.) Are often impulsive.
- c.) lack of empathy.
- d.) be quite popular.
- e.) all of the above

5) A bullied student will feel free to "snitch" on their attacker without hesitation.

**TRUE or FALSE**

6) Bystanders do not play a role in bullying because they are simply spectators.

**TRUE or FALSE**

7) Close observation is critical when a bullying situation comes up.

**TRUE or FALSE**

8) Cell phones run as fast as a standard p.c. and have access to the internet.

**TRUE or FALSE**

9) When talking to the parents of the bullied student, you should \_\_\_\_\_

a) Make sure to be sympathetic to their sons or daughters needs.

b) Let them know that the school is doing everything in there power to diffuse the situation.

c) Make the parents understand that the goal is to allow their child to be in a supportive and safe atmosphere.

d) Let parents know that a plan will be in place to support the bullied student, should the bullying reoccur.

e) all of the above

10) One of the most effective ways to minimize bullying is to communicate and work positively together as a school team.

**TRUE or FALSE**

## **ANSWER KEY**

**1) FALSE**

**2) a**

**3) FALSE**

**4) e**

**5) FALSE**

**6) FALSE**

**7) TRUE**

**8) TRUE**

**9) e**

**10) TRUE**