Sustaining a Positive Peer Climate

IT TAKES EVERYONE
Positive Peer Climate is...

A positive school climate exists when all students feel comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted, and secure in an environment where they can interact with caring people they trust. A positive school climate affects everyone associated with the school – students, staff, parents, and the community. It is the belief system or culture that underlies the day-to-day operation of a school.
Current Positive Peer Culture supports include:

- Classroom Teaching
- Classroom Counseling
- Administration
- Assemblies
- Specialists
- Parents
- Student Leadership Team
- Student Service Supports (OLC, ESL, Counseling)
- Medical/doctor/nurse
- Community Service
- PTA, Coffee’s and workshops
- Anti-Bullying curriculum
Student Leadership Team

Student Leadership Team is made up of sixteen 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} graders who focus on and bring leadership skills to the lower school student body. It is divided into 4 components;

1. Friend Factory
2. Assembly Support
3. Learning Leadership
4. Peer Mediators
Life Skills Teaching

- Empathy – Sept.
- Cooperation – Oct.
- Respect – Nov.
- Friendship – Feb.
- Trustworthy – March
- Acceptance – April
- Problem Solving – May
- Patience – June
**Empathy** – A person is able to try and understand how the other person is feeling. They put themselves into that other person's shoes. It is feeling bad *with* someone.

**Sympathy** focuses on sharing (experiencing) a person's bad news or feelings by *feeling sorry* for the person's feelings. It is feeling bad *for* someone.
Characteristics of bullying...

- Bullying happens when individuals or group of people continues to hurt, frighten, threaten, or exclude another person on purpose. It’s often a repeated activity, with a particular child singled out over and over again.

- Bullying involves an imbalance of power, where the child who bullies has more power (due to factors like age, size, or higher social status) than the targeted child. The bully’s weapons are threat and fear.

- There’s not just one profile of a child who is bullied—any child can be singled out for any reason.
Bullying vs. mean behavior

- Bullying is when there is an *imbalance of power*. It happens when someone threatens, frightens hurts, or leaves someone out on purpose. Bullying tends to be a repetitive behavior.

- Mean behavior is when two people say or do things to hurt another. The main difference is that there is *equal power* in the interaction.

ALL bullying is mean behavior but not all mean behavior is bullying.
Bullying is an action verb, not a noun.

It is something people do, not what they are.

Bullying... not... A Bully
Types of bullying...

- **Behind the Back:** This is when it happens behind the person’s back. As in gossiping, rumors, notes, cyber bullying
  - Harder to detect because you can’t always see it.
  - The target does not always know who is targeting them.

- **Face to Face:** This is when it happens in front of the person. As in threats, intimidation, taunting, physical aggression, etc...
  - Easier to detect because you can see it happen
  - The target knows who is targeting them
Relational Aggression

Relational aggression is described as any behavior that is intended to harm someone by damaging or manipulating relationships with others (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Unlike other types of bullying, relational aggression is not as overt, or noticeable as physical aggression. However, the effects can be long lasting.
Cyber and media bullying

Cyber bullying is using technology to threaten, insult, or harass. Technologies like cell phones and the Internet allow for aggressive expression toward others that doesn’t rely on physical strength or even physical contact. A person who cyber bullies can quickly and aggressively spread rumors, threats, hate mail, or embarrassing photos through text messages, emails, Web pages, or instant messages.

Anonymity can be a critical factor; it’s much easier for those who cyber bully to harass when they are able to hide their identities with false screen names or temporary email addresses.

Humiliating messages can be posted online for hundreds or thousands to see on Web sites, blogs, or social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter.
Activity with your table group...

Table discussion of 3 questions;

1. Name one incident where someone either bullied or was mean to you. How did it feel? What did you do about it?

2. How have you reflected on this over the years?

3. How do you respond to these types of challenges (mean, bullying and/or manipulative behavior) when you encounter them in your adult world?
Why kids don’t report it

- Students fear retaliation and a reputation as a “rat“.
- They don’t want to lose power with their peers.
- They don’t recognize subtle bullying.
- They feel ashamed, afraid, or powerless.
## Warning signs of bullies and being bullied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signs of being bullied;</th>
<th>Signs you child is bullying;</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Fear of riding the school bus.</td>
<td>• Frequent name – calling (for example describing others as “wimps”, “dummies” or “jerks”)</td>
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<td>• Cuts or bruises</td>
<td>• Regular bragging</td>
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<td>• Damaged clothes or belongings</td>
<td>• A constant need to get their own way</td>
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<td>• Frequently “lost” lunch money</td>
<td>• Spending time with younger or less powerful children</td>
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<td>• Frequent requests to stay home</td>
<td>• A lack of empathy for others</td>
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<td>• Frequent unexplained minor illnesses</td>
<td>• A defiant, hostile attitude; easily takes offense.</td>
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<td>• Sleeplessness or nightmares</td>
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<td>• Depression or lack of enthusiasm for hobbies/friends</td>
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<td>• Declining school performance</td>
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What can I do if my child is being bullied?

- Assure your child they are not to blame
- Instruct your child NOT to fight back. Bullying lasts longer and becomes more severe when children fight back. Physical injuries are often the result.
- Advise your child to report all bullying incidents to an adult at the school or a parent
- Role-playing friendship-developing social skills with your child. i.e. – help them practice making conversations, joining a group activity, being respectful, being assertive. Friendships often buffer a child from being bullied.
Promote respectful behavior by:

- Spend time with your child
- Know your child’s friends
- Be consistent with discipline
- Eliminate toys, games and TV shows that reward aggression
- Encourage your child to be slow to take offense
- Make sure your child knows what other children expect
- Help your child see other points of view
An effective program takes a whole-school approach to bullying, bringing staff, students, and families into the picture. A school-wide approach sends a message to students that it's safe to come forward when there is a problem and that adults will take steps to help them.
Steps to Respect continued...

The Steps to Respect program focuses on building friendships, respect, recognizing bullying, being assertive and how bystanders can be part of the solution.

The research-based STEPS TO RESPECT program teaches elementary students to recognize, refuse, and report bullying, be assertive, and build friendships. In fact, a recent study found that the program led to a 31 percent decline in bullying and a 70 percent cut in destructive bystander behavior.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>3rd Grade</th>
<th>4th Grade</th>
<th>5th Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 1</td>
<td>Friendship begins with respect</td>
<td>Friendship begins with respect</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 2</td>
<td>Making conversation and finding things in common</td>
<td>Finding and making friends</td>
<td>Conflict between friends</td>
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<td>Lesson 3</td>
<td>Joining in</td>
<td>Joining a group</td>
<td>Are you mad at me?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 4</td>
<td>What is bullying?</td>
<td>Recognizing bullying</td>
<td>Recognizing conflict and bullying</td>
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<td>Lesson 5</td>
<td>Standing up for yourself by being assertive</td>
<td>Put-downs hurt</td>
<td>Bodies and bullying</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 6</td>
<td>Refusing to be bullied</td>
<td>Refusing bullying</td>
<td>Refusing and reporting bullying</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 7</td>
<td>Reporting bullying</td>
<td>Controlling rumors</td>
<td>Bystanders can help</td>
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<td>Lesson 8</td>
<td>What is a bystander?</td>
<td>Reporting bullying</td>
<td>Taking responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 9</td>
<td>Bystanders can be part of the solution</td>
<td>Bystanders are the key</td>
<td>Making it happen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 10</td>
<td>A class bullying pledge</td>
<td>The next step</td>
<td>Maintaining a safe, caring, respectful school community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 11</td>
<td>Putting it together</td>
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Kid Power is the answer

- Building assertiveness skills.
- Bystander power – you can be either part of the problem or part of the solution.
- Learning the difference between reporting and tattling
- Anti-Bullying policy and reporting procedure
“It makes other people feel a lot safer in school when people stand up for them.”

Third-Grader Kyara on being a responsible bystander
Anti-Bullying Policy

NO BLAME APPROACH

Step 1 – Talk with the target
Step 2 – Convene a meeting with the people involved.
Step 3 – Explain the problem
Step 4 – Shared Responsibility
Step 5 – Asking the group members for their ideas
Step 6 – Leave it up to them
Step 7 – Meet them again
Step 8 – Disciplinary action
Discipline is the set of actions to bring about this order. It is often seen as the last step in a process that includes consequences for misbehavior. Discipline that is effective seeks to make change that brings about order in the system.

- Intervention begins in the classroom.
- Teachers follow guidelines of respect when there is a need for disciplinary intervention.
- Intervention must be age-appropriate and situation-appropriate.
- When proactive intervention has failed, natural consequences are the most appropriate response. i.e. inappropriate social choices, loss of social opportunities.
Re-teaching of values and expectations is part of the process, inclusion of family to support this teaching is part of the process.

When consequences have been in place and not proving effective, alternative strategies are sought with specialists and family.
Putting it all together

Sustaining a positive peer culture takes;

Prevention:
• Teaching and reinforcing life skills throughout the school.
• Community outreach activities.
• Developing programs where students voices are heard and encouraged.
• Parents and PTA involvement and support.
• Academic, behavioral and social/emotional support in-school.
• Teaching how to recognize, report and respond to bullying.

Intervention:
• Responding to reports of bullying. (anti-bullying policy)
• Discipline Policy (intervention).
Coming together is a beginning.

Keeping together is progress.

Working together is success.

~Henry Ford

Resources

www.cfchildren.org
www.spsk12.net
www.eqi.org
www.empathy-and-listening-skills.info