



Upward and Onward!

A Bully-Reducing Handbook



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AGREEMENTS MADE TO GUIDE THIS EFFORT:

1. When it comes to reducing bullying, schools **must** have a plan;
2. Schools need voice, choice and flexibility, based on their needs and resources, to reduce bullying with guidance from this Handbook;
3. Reducing bullying in schools is multifaceted, not singularly focused on any one particular bully-prevention program;
4. Educators emphasize positive, proactive language that encourages the behavior we *want* to see, not what we *don't want* to see; and
5. Grassroots efforts are encouraged from students, staff and/or parents.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY ABOUT REDUCING SCHOOL BULLYING?

The conventional wisdom with regard to reducing bully-behavior in schools lends one to believe that the implementation of *bully-prevention programs* show the best results in addressing bullying. However, the research doesn't fully support that which may seem logical at face value; rather, it shows that this issue is more complicated than simply starting a bully-prevention program in isolation of other practices. According to a meta-analysis from Ferguson et al. (2007), schools that implement bully-prevention programs specifically targeting at-risk youth were only *slightly effective* in reducing violent behaviors on campus, and generally had a *minimal* effect on actual bullying and victimization. Further, in another large-scale study (Jeone and Lee, 2013), surprisingly, bully prevention had a negative effect on peer victimization. Contrary to their hypothesis, "students attending schools with bully prevention programs were more likely to have experienced peer victimization, compared to those attending schools without bully prevention programs." More recently, Yeager et al. (2015) have found in their meta-analyses that the strength of bully-prevention programs in schools loses its effectiveness as students become older (starting around 7th grade).

So what should schools consider to reduce bullying? According to *Prevention at School* (2017), schools will see best results when they develop a strong three-pronged process: (a) build safe environments for all students through culture and climate, (b) assess the extent of bully-behavior at school, and (c) implement practices, policies and rules intended to seriously address bullying.

WHAT IS "BULLYING?"

There are several definitions of *bullying* as well as countless perceptions of what bullying is and what it is not. For our purposes here, we have adopted the www.stopbullying.gov definition from our Federal guidelines: *Bullying is unwanted*,

(targeted) aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated over time that may have long-lasting effects. Bullying can occur face-to-face or through other means, such as as hand-written notes, computers and other digital instruments (i.e., cyberbullying - see more below).

Bullying may include actions such as “making threats, intimidation through coercion, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.” Technically speaking, however, **bullying does not include:** tattling, “being mean,” “dirty looks,” friendship breaks, spats/disagreements, mutually-based conflict, and so on, *unless* these issues become aggressive, imbalanced in power and repeated that can result in serious or long-lasting consequences.

CYBERBULLYING

According to stopbullying.gov, *cyberbullying* “takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets and can occur through text messages, social media, forums or gaming where people can view, participate in or share content.” Cyberbullying includes “sending, posting or sharing negative, cruel or harmful personal content about someone else, which can cause embarrassment or humiliation.” Some cyberbullying can lead to criminal behavior and even litigation. Our [CO Revised Statutes](#) describe the powers and duties of school boards to ensure that schools have a plan to address student safety and bullying.

The [Common Sense Media](#) webpage to assist staff and parents to help their students become responsible digital citizens in our current age of technology. Specifically, parents can help empower their children with strategies on how best to address *cyberbullying, haters and trolls* in this [section](#) of the Common Sense Media website, which includes helpful “how to” videos, tips and articles.

HOW DO WE AS WPS EDUCATORS SUPPORT A SAFE AND POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE?

First, **look inward**. Self reflect on how you as an individual are contributing toward a culture that is conducive to helping and supporting one another. Are you engaging in behavior that shows positivity and respect toward your fellow colleagues and students? Are you demonstrating effective and productive ways for addressing distress and conflict when it occurs? Are you serving as a model for others to emulate, especially when things don’t always turn out as expected?

Next, **look outward**. Recognize others who are demonstrating the values set by your school and district (such as our WPS *We Agree* statements). Conversely, address inappropriate behavior directly and steadfastly. Acknowledging “good” behavior while addressing “bad” behaviors shows that you take your school’s values seriously. Promote a culture of kindness and decency among your students and ensure that the standard is universal and unambiguous (e.g., say “be kind, no exceptions”).

Finally, **keep an open dialogue** with your colleagues, students and parents the importance of maintaining a positive culture that is conducive to the overall safety and well-being of others, not only from a physical standpoint but from an social-emotional one as well. Intentionally reach out to students! Most students *want* to contribute to their school’s safe and positive culture if included in these discussions. The same goes with parents.

HOW CAN I PROMOTE A CONNECTED COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS IN MY CLASSROOM?

At WPS, teachers are exposed and trained in a wide variety of initiatives intended to improve social-emotional learning and student engagement. Our [WPS Habits for a Successful Personalized Learner](#), for example, allow students to learn skills necessary to manage their emotions, get organized and serve as effective team members. In addition, our district’s initiative to improve student interaction and engagement in the classroom through Kagan Structures is a powerful way to build a positive and cohesive classroom environment.

Teachers are the most integral adults in the school for helping students learn skills that help them to resolve conflict, deal effectively with bullies, cope with stress and problem solve difficult circumstances. As alluded, teachers that expect and teach students to treat each other decently with one another (and tolerate nothing less) have classrooms of students that treat each other more decently (e.g., happy, engaging, forgiving, fair, etc.) when compared to classrooms that do not have the same expectations.

Also, since we enroll a diverse community of learners at WPS, it is important that all staff become *culturally competent* in working with all students. For example, Gary Howard’s *The Seven Principles for Culturally Responsive Teaching*, he describes the following:

1. Students are affirmed in their cultural connections (“kids get it that we understand them or *want* to”);

2. Teachers are personally and culturally inviting (“kids get that we like them”);
3. Learning environment is culturally and personally inviting (“diversity lives here and is seen as a strength”);
4. Students are reinforced for academic development (“catching kids being smart”);
5. Adjust instructional strategies to accommodate kids (“be flexible, agile to student needs”);
6. Classroom is managed with firm, consistent and loving controls (“respect begins with the teacher”); and
7. Interactions stress community *and* individuality (“both are important for growth”).

WHAT PRO-ACTIVE RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE FOR WPS SCHOOLS?

Like any Competency Based System, there is no *one-size-fits-all* approach that can meet the unique needs of every building. Each school has its unique set of resources, needs and community priorities. Therefore, it’s important that school practices are tailored accordingly. To achieve this end, a **menu of options** has been created below for schools to select for enhancing culture and reducing bullying. The committee recommends that each school review and choose strong Tier I, II and III hyperlinked options below with the intent of enhancing your initiative over time.

Elementary

Positive & Safe Schools (Tier I)	Targeted Support (Tier II)	Remediation (Tier III)
WPS Habits for a Successful Personalized Learner	Assess Extent of Bullying in Your School	Set Strong Policies and Rules
The Leader in Me (\$)	Bully Prevention in Positive Behavioral Support	Refer to school-based Mental Health Interventionist for skill-based support
Rachel's Challenge	Peer Mediation Program	Refer to community-based MH services
Restorative Practices	Kelso's Choice (\$)	Refer to school-based MH for possible BCBA support
Peacemakers - Levels 3-6	Mindfulness	
Caring School Community (\$)	Kagan Win-Win Discipline (\$)	
Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports	Small-group counseling	

(PBIS)		
Ripple Kindness Project		
The Ophelia Project		
Random Acts of Kindness		
The Boys Town Model (\$)		
No Place for Hate (\$)		
You Matter Campaign		

Middle School

Positive & Safe Schools (Tier I)	Targeted Support (Tier II)	Remediation (Tier III)
WPS Habits for a Successful Personalized Learner	Assess Extent of Bullying in Your School	Set Strong Policies and Rules
Rachel's Challenge	Peer Mediation Program	Refer to school-based Mental Health Interventionist for skill-based support
No Place for Hate (\$)	BASE Education Software Program (\$)	Refer to community-based MH services
Random Acts of Kindness	The Boomerang Project (\$)	Refer to school-based MH for possible BCBA support
The Boys Town Model (\$)	Bully Prevention in Positive Behavioral Support	
Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS)	Kagan Win-Win Discipline (\$)	
Second-Step Middle School (\$)	Mindfulness	
BASE Education (Tier I/II)	Small-group counseling	

High School

Positive & Safe Schools (Tier I)	Targeted Support (Tier II)	Remediation (Tier III)
WPS Habits for a Successful Personalized Learner	Assess Extent of Bullying in Your School	Set Strong Policies and Rules
Rachel's Challenge	Peer Mediation Program	Refer to school-based Mental Health Interventionist for skill-based support
No Place for Hate (\$)	BASE Education Software Program (\$)	Refer to community-based MH services
Breaking Down the Walls (\$)	The Boomerang Project (\$)	Refer to school-based MH for possible BCBA support
Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS)	The Discovery Program	
Random Acts of Kindness	Bully Prevention in Positive Behavioral Support	
The Boys Town Model (\$)	Mindfulness	
Sources of Strength (\$)	Small-group counseling	
BASE Education (Tier I/II)		

A WPS EXEMPLAR PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS WORK

1. Convene a group of educators (e.g., BLT) and parent representative(s) to review this Handbook and discuss your approach for reducing bullying.
Tip: For middle- and high-school levels, consider student representative.
2. Consider [assessing the extent of bullying in your school](#) to determine how best to approach bully-behavior and decide from whom the data will be derived (i.e., parents, students, and/or staff).
Tip: Select your strong data educators to initiate. Also, keep assessment tool brief, easy to use and relevant (e.g., via Google Form).
3. Review the data and hyperlinked resources in each of the 3 tiers that pertain to your school level and discuss the most promising options based on needs.
Tip: Divide and conquer and perhaps utilize Kagan Structures.

4. From the options chosen, begin fleshing out the details for implementation (e.g., messaging and buy-in, training, processes and procedures).
Tip: Start small (perhaps 1-2 options per tier), then expand as needed.
5. Review your school's current policy, rules and procedures for addressing bullying and compare them to best practices [Setting Strong Policies and Rules](#) from the www.stopbullying.gov site. Align as necessary.
Tip: Ensure all have a role for addressing bullying in your building.
6. If staff training is needed, determine how and when this will be accomplished.
Tip: Your Mental Health Interventionists are great resources.
7. When rolling out this initiative, ensure the presentations with students are fun, engaging and generate student excitement. Invite parents to be involved!
Tip: Select your most well-liked and excitable educators to present to students (i.e., who are your school's best cheerleaders?).
8. Determine your measurables in how progress will be shown over time (e.g., reduction in disciplinary referrals resulting from bullying, school climate and culture questionnaires, parent satisfaction surveys, etc.).
Tip: Consider easy-to-create pre-post approaches and share your success with others!
9. Adjust initiative based on wisdom gained from the data and input from staff, parents and students over time.
Tip: Initiatives like this one are always a work in progress, so seek to *improve*, not to *fix*.

SAMPLE SCHOOL PLAN FOR REDUCING BULLYING

Item	Description	Lead	Timeline
1a	Develop and send a Google survey to parents, students and staff that helps establish the unique school needs related to bullying	Social Worker	May 15
1b	Hold retreat with BLT members to review anti-bullying practices and hone new ones from updated guidance.	Principal	July 26-27
1c	At retreat (day 1), BLT selected the following: Tier I (Rachel's Challenge and Acts of Random Kindness), Tier II (BASE Ed., and Peer Mediation) and Tier III (intensive MH support)	Principal	July 26
1d	At retreat (day 2), BLT began to flesh out details including (communicating with staff and establishing buy-in, training needs, update practices, policies and procedures, update tools,	Assistant Principal	July 27

	establish measurables for success)		
1e	Modify school policies, rules and procedures aligned with best practices from stopbullying.gov website.	Principal	August 1
2a	Present draft plan to all staff, including licensed and ESP. Establish buy-in with 80% support. If not established, discuss what tweaks need to be made to reach criterion.	BLT members/ Principal	August 10 (day 1 for staff)
2b	Train staff on school new procedures and practices related to the bully-reducing initiative (e.g., use of common language, referral process, working with “bystanders,” etc.).	Assistant Principal	August 10
3a	Roll-out new initiative to students and families, to generate interest, excitement and commitment to creating a “positive community of learners” that supports one another (see SCMS <i>Bulldog Basics</i> program).	Co-present by two teachers	August 16 (day 1 for students)
4a	For program evaluation, conduct a <i>pre-test</i> with students on skills (e.g., anger management) and perceptions of school safety and positive culture (e.g., “I feel safe at my school.”) Consider for staff and/or parents too.	Social Worker	August 16 (BOY)
4b	For program evaluation, conduct a <i>post-test</i> with students on skills and perceptions of school safety and positive culture.	Social Worker	May 15 (EOY)
5a	At next summer retreat, tweak school-based bullying initiative based on wisdom gained from data and teacher input. In other words, what worked/did not work? What changes are needed?	BLT members/ Principal	July 28

TOP ONLINE RESOURCES ON BULLYING

- The definitive [website](#) on bullying and cessation resources federal office. This site includes information on: bullying and cyberbullying; prevention and several resources on the topic.
- Topics of bullying are addressed comprehensively from this [website](#) from the American Psychological Association (APA). This site includes information on: strategies for addressing bullying at school; prevention; and several readings on the topic.
- This [website](#) from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is resource heavy for school-wide bully prevention activities and strategies for educators.

REFERENCES

C. J. Ferguson, C. S. Miguel, J. C. Kilburn, and P. Sanchez (2007). The effectiveness of school-based anti-bullying programs: A meta-analytic review. *Criminal Justice Review*, vol. 32 (4), pp. 401-414.

Jeone, S. & Lee, B. H. (2013). A multilevel examination of peer victimization and bullying preventions in schools. *Journal of Criminology*, vol. 2013, Art. ID 735397 (10 pages).

Yeager, D. S., Fong, C. J., Lee, H. Y., and Espelage, D. L. (2015). Declines in efficacy of anti-bullying programs among older adolescents: Theory and a three-level meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*. Vol. 37, pp. 36-51.

LINKED APPENDICES

1. Please click to see the Westminster Public Schools [Student Inclusivity Resolution](#) signed by the Board of Education on February 28, 2017.
2. WPS Policy [JICDA](#) - Student Discipline Code
3. WPS Policy [GBAA](#) and Procedure [GBAA](#) - Sexual Harassment (personnel)
4. WPS Policy [GBGB](#) - Staff Protection
5. WPS Policy [JBB](#) - Sexual Harassment (students)
6. WPS Policy [Safe School](#) - Foundations and Basic Commitments