

12 ANTI-BULLYING THOUGHTS TO KEEP IN MIND

- A secure school environment is a functional prerequisite to academic achievement. Bullying is a serious issue. Its effects range from absenteeism to suicide in the most severe instances. In every form - physical, psychological, sexual - indelible scars endure.
- Bullying is *not by accident*. Bullies are not interested in a fair fight. They prey on vulnerability
- Many children become bullies through an acculturation process that begins before they enter school. When parents bully, a new generation of bullies is being created.
- The media is rife with glorified bullies who use counter-aggression packaged as “justifiable violence.” These powerful negative models must be addressed through education.
- The worst advice to a victim is to “sort it out for yourself.” Adult involvement and support must not be denied. Victims were chosen as victims on the basis of their vulnerability!
- Peer influence is powerful. Students must share a role in bullying prevention and intervention. The silent majority of non-bullied students must be enlisted.
- Don’t “bully the bully” – it licenses such behavior. The antecedent to changing a bully’s behavior is the cultivation of empathetic thinking, not punishment. Punishment does not empower. Rather, have bullies “own their behavior.” Evaluate bullying events within a framework of just consequences.
- With great clarity, principals must send out an unyielding message of intolerance for bullying. A line in the sand – a message of “Respect and Protect.” If a child discloses that he/she has been bullied, it must be taken seriously and acted upon immediately. As important, it must **appear to all** that it is taken seriously and acted upon!
- An atmosphere which permits no tolerance for bullying must replace case-by-case crisis management as the major intervention. Prevention is linked to a whole-school approach with a clearly defined behavior code. In the long-term struggle, it is the most crucial anti-bullying element.
- The welfare of bullied children is the responsibility of all adults – from bus driver to principal. Turning a blind eye to bullying is *in itself* an endorsement. To walk by is to condone it.
- Sometimes teachers serve as negative role models for potential bullies through their attitudes and behavior toward students. Our behavior must not endorse bullying.
- It is all about sensitizing the less sensitive and desensitizing the overly sensitive.

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