

Bullying Prevention Parent Workshop 4/30/09

Presenter Holly Priebe-Diaz has over 18 years of experience in social work and crisis intervention. She works for the LAUSD Office of Human Relations, Diversity & Equity, trying to end racism, discrimination and violence in schools.

Bullying is an evolution. It builds on something subtle and escalates. Perception is key – if the target feels bullied, then it is bullying, even if the accused claims, “I was just playing.”

Suicide rates are linked to bullying. The numbers are going up and the ages of those attempting suicide are getting younger. It’s important to talk to kids about how serious this issue is. More counseling is needed. More character education is needed. Kids need to know how they can ask for help.

Here are some tools and strategies presented at the Workshop:

School procedure:

- 1) Stop the Bullying
- 2) Counsel the kids
- 3) Document the event
- 4) Parent conference -- parents or kids may be referred for counseling

Reconciliation

If the parties involved are “equal,” a Mediator can help the kids understand the problem. However, if there is a power **IMBALANCE** between the parties, **DO NOT** bring the kids together, but resolve the conflict separately. Provide a written Behavior Contract for the student(s), with *clear rules and consequences* if the problem behavior happens again, or if the kid seeks any retaliation, intimidation, etc. Have them sign the contract.

In elementary school, some adults will have the kids write apology notes to each other, but this is not necessary, or even recommended as the children get older. Adults should not (and cannot) force the kids to be best friends, you just want the problem behavior to **STOP**. Resolve the conflict, first and foremost.

Parents:

- 1) Your best role is to gather information – LISTEN – be open. Get the **FACTS**.
- 2) Document every step. If there is an injury, take a picture.
- 3) Work with the administration (not recommended for parents to approach the other parent – it can escalate rather quickly)
- 4) You have the right to report the incident to the school, the district and board members.

Teach your children to stand up for themselves... without violence.

- Teach your kids to be confident. To carry themselves with a positive posture. Positive reinforcement, getting them involved in clubs/classes or sports to build self-esteem, foster independence.
- Teach your children empathy. “How would you feel if..?”
- Help your child create a personal safety plan. “What would you do if..?”
- Make eye contact with the “bully.” Say, “Stop. That’s not okay.” – Use social skills, start sentences with “I.” For example, “I feel upset when you say that to me.”
- Walk away (if it’s safe)
- Report bullying to an adult

- If the 1st adult doesn't listen, keep telling adults until someone does listen.
- Advice for Bystanders: Stand up for each other. Be a friend. Do the right thing. "Be a hero." If you see someone being hurt, tell an adult. Anything other than that is tattling.

How can we be sure our kids are receiving anti-bullying education?

- What programs are being implemented in your school. Elementary Schools use "Second Step."
- How much class time is allotted for the teachers to teach Character education and Social Skills?
- How much supervision is on the playground at recess? Parents interested in learning the "politics of handball," and how kids relate on the playground are welcome to visit the school and observe the kids at recess.

Recommended book: How to Talk So Your Kids Will Listen & Listen So Your Kids Will Talk

Lanai Issues reported by parents during workshop

Some boys are not letting some 3rd grade girls play with them at recess. What to do?

Use words: "I'm entitled to play." "What you're doing is bullying." "These are the rules of the school." "I know my rights." "I deserve to play." "Can't we negotiate?" If this doesn't work, go to the teacher.

Kids may be wary of speaking up for fear of being singled out in front of the other kids, which happened earlier this year at Lanai, as reported by a few parents. The correct procedure for teachers to follow when there is a report of bullying is to take the kids aside SEPARATELY and investigate. The administration needs to make "reasonable efforts" to resolve the conflict.

On Campus Anti-Bullying Strategy

ATTENTION LANAI PARENTS – take the next step to help our kids! (approved by Mrs Melvin):

Parent VOLUNTEERS can lead "activity groups" during recess time – playing games that are not only fun, but foster the skills necessary for compassionate interaction. This is a great way to build up the confidence of some of our more vulnerable kids, who may not be comfortable joining competitive games. **Please contact eve.hill@lausd.net to get involved!**

More Strategies

Committee for Children – help students create a "Safe School Committee" – a group against bullying, with projects and student "ambassadors." Create a place where they can be heard, go over issues the kids are dealing with and get guidance from adult advisor(s) to formulate ways to help each other get along. "This is your school. Your community."

More Character Education for students – the teacher needs to take time to talk about fairness on the playground. Teach the kids how to recognize what bullying is.

More Supervision/Communication at Recess – often problems start on the yard, without the teacher's knowledge, and are brought back into the classroom where they can erupt.

Parents suggested volunteering to get trained for Yard Supervision, where they can help squelch the problems and/or communicate schoolyard conflicts to the teachers so he/she can be better informed when these dynamics are in the classroom. Mrs Melvin does not recommend involving parents in the discipline of other people's children. It has led to major problems in the past. Having Parents lead activity groups, however, is a great idea that could have a very positive effect.