

GUIDANCE



TMS Guidance Department Newsletter

February 2017

Bullies and Victims: A Parent Guide

Middle school is a time when peer bullying peaks. At Troy Middle School, we are committed to reducing incidents of bullying in order to create a safe learning environment. January's Second Step topic was bullying. Please ask your son or daughter what they learned in school about this important topic.

Bullying is defined as unwanted aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time and causes a hostile environment. Bullying can occur before or after school hours, in a school building or at locations such as on a playground or on a school bus while a student is traveling to or from school, or on the Internet. Victims of bullying have difficulty defending themselves. Bullying occurs across all ages, socioeconomic classes, races and cultures. Adults can make a difference by knowing what to look for and by taking action to help both bullies and victims. Youth can learn to identify, avoid, and discourage bullying behaviors.

Types of bullying

Direct bullying includes physical aggression (hitting, kicking), verbal aggression (teasing, racial or sexual comments), and non-verbal aggression (threatening gestures). *Indirect* bullying can be physical (getting someone to assault someone else), verbal (spreading rumors), and nonverbal (excluding someone from a group or activity; cyberbullying). Boys are more likely to use physical bullying. Girls are more likely to spread rumors and use social exclusion or isolation, a type of bullying also known as relational aggression.

Consequences of bullying

Bullies are more likely to drop out of school, engage in criminal behavior, and later have more difficulty keeping jobs. Victims are more likely to suffer from anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression. Bullies and victims are not the only ones who are affected by bullying. Bystanders may feel afraid, powerless to stop the bullying, and guilty that they don't help or lack empathy for the victim.



"Bullies and victims are not the only ones affected by bullying. Bystanders may feel afraid, powerless to stop the bullying, and guilty that they don't help, or lack empathy for the victim."

In This Issue

- Bullying
- Cyberbullying
- What is DASA?
- Upcoming Cybersafety Event

Parents are Partners in the Fight Against Bullying

Characteristics of Bullies and Victims

Although there are individual differences among bullies and victims, there are some consistent characteristics.

Children who bully tend to have a more positive attitude about violent behaviors, watch television programs where violence is endorsed as a way of gaining power, lack empathy for their victims, have difficulty following rules and often argue with adults, have at least average self-esteem, have more power, physically or socially, than their victims and may even be regarded as leaders among their peers.

Children who are bullied usually have poorly developed social skills and difficulty with their peer relationships, have few friends and may be socially isolated at school, and may be unassertive or have poor self-esteem. Additionally, students with disabilities, special needs and/or physical differences, and those who speak a first language other than English, are often targets of bullying.

Some children who are bullied also bully others. These children usually are anxious and insecure, have difficulty reading social cues, may have difficulty concentrating, and may behave aggressively.

Warning signs that your child may be a bully or a victim


Your child may be a bully if he or she is likely to argue and to get angry very quickly when confronted, takes control of situations quickly and confidently, angers easily and quickly shows anger toward others, is often very bossy toward peers, rarely shows empathy for others, is good at convincing others to follow, likes rough physical play, often refuses to cooperate, and/or is likely to deny his or her involvement with bullying.

Your child may be bullied if he or she comes home with damaged clothing, books or other belongings, or frequently "loses" or "forgets" belongings, has unexplained bruises, cuts, or scratches, has few friends with whom he or she spends time, seems afraid to go to school, ride the school bus, walk to school, or take part in community activities with peers, loses interest in school or suddenly does poorly in school, seems sad, moody, teary, or depressed when he/she comes home from school, complains of a variety of physical ailments (headaches, stomachaches), particularly on school days, can't sleep or complains of bad dreams, avoids using the telephone or Internet, seems anxious and has low self-esteem, and/or talks about suicide.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying involves the use of websites, e-mail, text messaging, and cell phones. Children who engage in cyberbullying use electronic forms of communication to spread false rumors, gossip, and make verbal attacks. Although it is important to respect your child's privacy, his or her safety is more important. To prevent cyberbullying:

- Keep your home computer in an area of the house where it is easily viewable.
- Talk to your children about online activities.
- Consider installing parental control software.
- Know your children's passwords and tell them not to give them out to others.
- In general, it is always wise to monitor your children's Internet activity. Let them know that you may review their online communications at any time.



EFFECTS OF BULLYING:

- Low self-confidence
- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts
- Abnormal fears and worries
- Sleep disorders
- Nervous habits
- Frequent crying
- Bed-wetting
- Poor appetite or digestive problems
- School problems
- Rage

Effects of Bullying



What is DASA?

DASA (the Dignity for All Students Act) is New York State's anti-bullying law which was designed to combat bullying, harassment, and discrimination in public schools. DASA says all students have a right to a harassment-free environment. We encourage and teach our students to report all incidents of bullying to a trusted adult. Once reported to a staff member at Troy Middle School, a DASA complaint is submitted, which is then investigated and addressed by administration. If you feel your child, or a student he/she knows is being bullied, please report it to a grade level administrator, or the Troy Middle School DASA Coordinator, Mrs. Sonya Shaw (shaws@troycsd.org).

Here at school, we are creating a safe learning environment. We would like to work with you to make this happen. Ask your son or daughter about bystander power. Tell your student about your experiences with bullying and/or harassment, either what you remember from your youth or what you have experienced in the workplace.

Together we can help our youth stay safe and develop confidence and empathy during the middle school years.

Interventions for Bullies and Victims

It is essential that parents intervene early when their child shows signs of bullying others or appears to be the victim of bullying.

If your child is bullying others, make it clear to your child that bullying is not okay. Hold your child accountable for his or her behavior.

Set up clear rules in your household and follow through with logical consequences, such as withdrawing privileges, when those rules are not followed. Limit your child's exposure to violent television programs and/or video games. Spend time with your child and pay attention to what he or she does with friends. Support your child's talents and skills by encouraging positive activities, such as involvement in sports and clubs.

Reward your child and offer frequent reinforcement for positive behavior. If your child has been reported as engaging in bullying behaviors, listen to your child, but check the facts. Children who bully are good at manipulating. If there is evidence that your child has bullied others, take it seriously. Talk to your child's teacher, counselor, or principal and create a clear, consistent message that the bullying must stop. If necessary, seek professional help from community mental health providers.



If your child is being bullied, make sure that your child knows that being bullied is not his or her fault. Encourage your child to talk about the bullying experience. Listen. Do not criticize your child for how he or she is responding to the bullying. Contact your child's teacher, school counselor, or principal immediately and tell them about your concerns. Teach your child ways to stay safe at school, such as telling an adult if he or she feels threatened. Conflict resolution strategies are not effective interventions for bullying. School personnel will likely use other means of resolving a bullying situation involving your child. Encourage your child to pursue friendships at school. Encourage your child to walk with an adult or an older child if he/she does not feel safe at school or in the neighborhood. Identify safe areas (neighbor's home, library, community center) and tell your child to go to one of these areas if he/she feels threatened. Make sure your child has a phone number of an adult who can help. Provide your child with a safe and positive home environment. If necessary, seek professional help from community mental health providers to support your child.

Upcoming Event: CyberSafety

In February and March, Rensselaer County Department of Probation will present a lesson on CyberSafety to seventh and eighth grade students. Among other things, this lesson will address the taking and sending of inappropriate photos, and the sending of inappropriate messages.

Upcoming CyberSafety Presentation

Remind Students to Think Before They Speak, Text, Post, or Tweet



Students Should Think Before Speaking, Texting, Posting or Tweeting!

We're on the Web! www.troycsd.org

Troy Middle School

1976 Burdett Avenue
Troy, NY 12180

TCSD

Troy Middle School **School Counselors**

grade 6
Cathy Boice 328-5366
boicec@troycsd.org

grade 7
Sonya Shaw 328-5361
shawson@troycsd.org

grade 8
Ann Capobianco 328-5360
capobiancoa@troycsd.org

School Psychologist
grades 6 to 8
Andrea Murray 328-5352
murraya@troycsd.org

School Social Worker
grades 6 to 8
Elizabeth Tamburello 328-5469
tamburelloe@troycsd.org

Guidance Typist
grades 6 to 8
Denise Walker 328-5365
walkerden@troycsd.org

