

# Bullying

## Overview of objectives

1. Teaching staff should work proactively to identify and stop bullying.
2. Information about specific incidents should be relayed quickly and accurately to administrative staff.
3. Support bullied students by considering the problem from their perspective.
4. Demonstrate to students that bullying is not acceptable under any circumstances.
5. All members of the teaching staff must understand that addressing the problem of bullying also requires teachers to question how they currently teach and deal with students.
6. Treat bullying as a problem for everyone in the school to address.
7. Collect detailed information and record it chronologically.

## Defining “bullying,” The Ministry of Education, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007.

- 1 “Bullying” occurs when a person is attacked by someone with whom he or she shares a specific relationship,
  - (for example, someone from the same school, grade, or after school activity)
- 2 physically or psychologically,
  - (this includes cases of indirect psychological pressure designed to cause the bullied student pain)
- 3 and experiences emotional distress.

When considering whether or not a student’s actions qualify as bullying, do not make the decision lightly based on superficial information. Neither should the decision be made by the book and strictly according to regulations. Instead, consider the situation from the point of view of the bullied student and make a decision from there. Take into account the student’s feelings and emotions (from the Ministry of Education’s “A Study of the Various Issues Involved in Educating Youth who Exhibit Problematic Behavior”).

We must recognize that bullying is a problem that also occurs among adults, cropping up in the office and even between teachers and students. Teachers must especially take care not to show students this kind of behavior, because students will immediately copy it. Teachers’ actions carry a lot of weight with students, and even things that are said or done offhand can have a large effect. For example, by scolding or making fun of a particular student, a teacher can inadvertently encourage other students to bully that student. Teachers must be aware of this situation and be careful to avoid it.

## **1. Take an active stance toward recognizing bullying.**

### Understanding the characteristics of bullying.

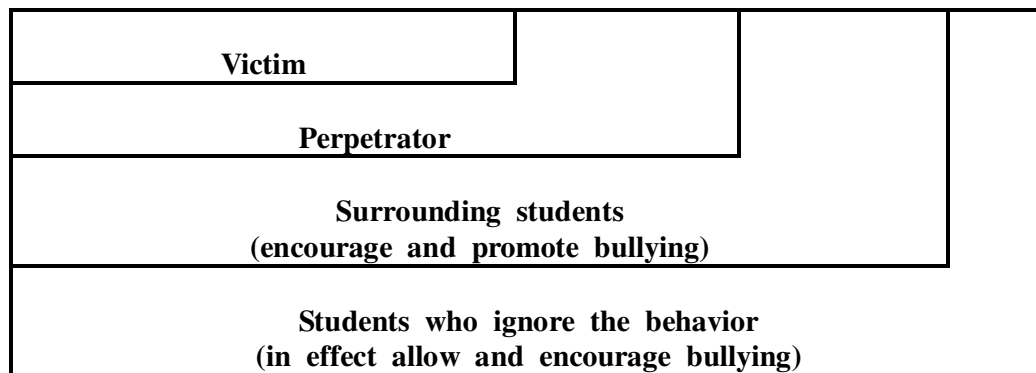
⇒ It’s difficult to be sure that “bullying” is what is taking place.

- Bullying often occurs between students in the same grade level who appear to be close.
- In many cases, there are several perpetrators of bullying and one victim.
- Bullying often occurs where there are few people, and so it can be difficult to see exactly what is happening. The perpetrators will act as though they are playing.

- It is common for victims of bullying to keep the problem hidden from others and attempt to simply put up with it by themselves.
- ⇒ The students who are perpetrating the bullying are sometimes unaware, or only superficially aware of what they are doing.
- Many times these students do not understand the emotional pain they are causing and think of the bullying as a kind of game.
  - There are also many cases of long term bullying which is malicious and persistent. This kind of bullying is often camouflaged and sometimes dormant.
- ⇒ The bullying and bullied sides are sometimes mixed.
- In some cases, the positions of victim and perpetrator are switched around.
- ⇒ Bullying can be considered to have four “layers.”
- It is important to understand more than the surface level of the situation, as the rest of the class’ students can affect the bullying as well.

**The Four Layers of Bullying.**

In a group of students among whom bullying is taking place, we can often find one student who leads or incites the bullying, many students who are quick to join in and participate in this behavior, and the bullied student who is often isolated. The victimized student often regards as bullies those surrounding students who encourage the harmful actions and those who act as if they are unaware as well.



In addition to this, we can also see students who intervene to stop the bullying. In this sense, they are distinctly different from the students who attempt to ignore it. These students are able to actively confront the situation and make appropriate judgements regarding right and wrong. How to foster and encourage this kind of student is the real question and solution to the debate centered around stopping bullying.

Be proactive in gathering information.

- ⇒ Periodically perform student surveys.
- The content of these surveys should be simple and not put pressure on students to take responsibility.
  - In order to elicit an open response, consider asking students to take the survey home and fill it out there.

- Provide more options than just “there is bullying happening” and “there is not.” By allowing such responses as “there is probably bullying happening,” or “no one thought it was bullying, but maybe he felt it was” students can provide more detailed and honest answers.
  - It is probably difficult for many students to respond to a survey dealing specifically with bullying. It may be possible to glean more information by asking questions about everyday classroom life.
  - When collecting surveys, be careful to keep the answers private and not allow students to see each other’s surveys.
- ⇒ Periodically hold meetings where teachers can exchange information.
- ⇒ If students elicit behavior such as that described, it is important to be careful and take steps to increase communication with that student.
- However, because approaching all student behavior as possible “bullying” can very easily damage a student’s self esteem, there are also times when quietly monitoring the students is more appropriate. In this case, exchange information and keep in close contact with the student’s parents/guardians.
- ⇒ Collecting information from the surrounding students.
- Do not make it obvious that information on bullying is being collected.
- ⇒ Obtain information from journals that students write for their teacher.
- ⇒ Ask questions of the parents/guardians by telephone.
- ⇒ Directly observe or inquire as to how students act on their way to and from school.
- Observe students as they leave school, in the hallway or at the gate.
  - Consult with parent/guardian volunteers who help students on their way home from school or nearby shops as to whether a student has been acting differently.
- ⇒ Handling information.
- Please take sufficient care in handling information obtained from students and parents/guardians. Especially in the event that such information will be used directly in dealing with students, first explain the situation and obtain the consent of the persons from whom the information originated.

Routine Observation 1 (signs to look for to recognize victims of bullying at school).

- ⇒ From the time students arrive until class begins. Look for students who:
- arrive earlier than other students or stay at school later,
  - always arrive alone, or seem downcast when with friends,
  - do not say hello to other students and are not greeted by others,
  - are not very active or look pale,
  - are often late or leave school early with no excuse, or are often absent.
- ⇒ During class. Look for students who:
- are late to class and alone,
  - often claim to feel ill and ask to go to the nurse’s office or bathroom,
  - are quieter than before, are often absent minded or “zoned out,”
  - often look down when speaking,
  - other students smirk or laugh at when their name is called,
  - other students scoff or make a face when they are praised by a teacher,
  - other students stare at and exchange looks about,
  - are laughed at or teased by other students when trying to speak in class,
  - no longer display an interest in learning or have a sudden drop in grades,
  - does not receive handouts from others when they are given to the class,
  - often work alone during group activities,

- are often chosen as a group presenter or speaker as a joke,
  - other students become angry or show disgust to if they touch their things,
  - often lose or find graffiti on their textbook or notebook, etc,
  - often find that things they have made are broken or thrown about.
- ⇒ During breaks. Look for students who:
- are alone in the classroom or library and separated from students who they were previously friendly with,
  - are often milling about in the hallway or near the staff room alone,
  - often spend time in the staff room without any real purpose,
  - follow around and talk to teachers,
  - often go the nurse's office and do not want to return to the classroom,
  - look unhappy when with friends or follow behind them hesitantly,
  - are often played tricks on, given orders, or teased during play,
  - are often forced to play an unwanted role in games,
  - are often forced to be the one to clean up after games,
  - display an unusual amount of worry and concern about others,
  - other students avoid standing near.
- ⇒ Leaving school. Look for students who:
- leave school early or remain at school indefinitely for no particular reason,
  - stay near the school's entrance looking uneasy or nervous,
  - are often made to carry their friends things,
  - lose their shoes or umbrella.
- ⇒ Miscellaneous. Look for students who:
- have his or her desk moved slightly away from others during lunch and eat quietly and alone,
  - depending on the lunch menu, might eat a great deal or very little,
  - are made to do tasks that other students dislike during cleaning time,
  - perform cleaning tasks separately from other students,
  - often skip after school activities, or suddenly decide to stop/quit,
  - are reluctant to join school or group activities,
  - have unexplained injuries or stains on his or her clothing and try to hide them,
  - show uneasiness and worry in his or her journal or notebook.

Routine Observation 2 (signs to look for to recognize "bullying" at home).

- ⇒ Changes in daily routine.
- The child seems to be acting "out of sorts,"
  - has low energy or looks down,
  - seems nervous or uneasy, as though he or she is afraid of something,
  - seems emotionally unstable or is often irritable,
  - does not reply when greeted,
  - is often cursing or muttering complaints,
  - comes home with dirty clothing,
  - has unexplained bruises or scratches,
  - has no appetite and does not sleep well,
  - dislikes going to school and/or tries to stay home by claiming to be sick,
  - often stays secluded in his or her room,
  - writes about his or her problems in a journal or diary,
  - hints at or alludes to suicide,
  - says that he or she would like to be born over again.
- ⇒ Changes in relationships with family members.

- The child becomes obstinant and resistant to family members, and has outbursts of anger,
  - stops talking to family members,
  - bullies a younger sister or brother, or a pet,
  - suddenly begins acting childishly or emotionally needy.
- ⇒ Changes in relationships with friends.
- Friends stop coming over to play.
  - The child no longer likes to go outside and play,
  - doesn't want to talk about school,
  - says that he or she wants to quit after school activities, quit school completely, or change schools,
  - doesn't want to answer the phone or read mail.
- ⇒ A change in the child's personal effects.
- The child's things look abused or broken,
  - have graffiti written on them.
  - The child carries a box cutter or other sharp object in his or her pocket,
  - asks parents for money for no reason or takes valuable things from the house.

Signs displayed by children who are bullying other children.

- The child begins to speak to his or her friends in a commanding way,
- carries unexplained items not purchased by his or her parents,
- carries more money than his or her parents have given.

Points for discussing this issue at home.

- ⇒ Create an atmosphere for easy discussion.
- Find a place and time where it would be easy for a child to talk about his or her problems. For example, talk to him or her while eating or watching television, taking a bath, on a relaxing drive, or on a fishing trip. Also, consider the child's sense of pride and make sure to have the discussion when his or her siblings are not present.
- ⇒ Having the conversation.
- Avoid skirting around the issue. Isolate the problems and deal with them upfront. Scolding the child, or saying "maybe it's partly your fault," will make it more difficult for he or she to speak about the problem, or only speak about it in a way that satisfies his or her parent/guardian.
  - Even if the conversation seems to loop around or repeat, it is important to listen until he or she is finished talking. He or she might remember other details to include as the discussion continues.
  - Always stand by him or her and try to understand their emotions. The child is the only one who can understand the pain he or she is feeling.
  - Do not forcefully continue to ask questions that he or she is having trouble answering. A barrage of questions will instead push the child further into a corner.
  - Do not jump to conclusions. First, listen closely to what he or she wants to do. Allow him or her time to think. Take some time to think on it together.
  - Generally, children do not divulge everything in the first discussion. They watch their parents reaction and decide whether to say more or stop.

## Initial Response

### **2. What to do when a bullying incident becomes apparent.**

#### Reporting of Incidents and Information Management.

- ⇒ Report any such incidents to the school's administrative staff (principal and vice-principal) and the guidance counselor.
- Explain only what you personally understand of what, where, who, when, why and how, on paper if possible.
  - The teacher should collect information thoroughly and record it in chronological order, as detailed and precisely as possible.

#### Confirm the particulars.

The details of what happened, when and how long, which students were involved, the reason or motive, background information, The Four Layers of Bullying, etc.

- ⇒ When interviewing a student about the incident, prepare for a wide range of contingencies. Absolutely do not allow the student to be alone.

#### Interviewing the victim.

- ⇒ A teacher that the student trusts should lead the discussion.
- Make the student feel safe, and encourage him or her to fully explain what happened without fear of a recurrence. (Also remember to follow through on any promises made to the student)
  - The student will likely be very emotional at this time. Be a good listener, and allow him or her to voice these emotions freely. Ask about concrete details such as who, when, and where.

#### Interviewing the perpetrator.

- ⇒ Along with several staff members, the guidance counselor should lead a discussion with the student.
- Confirm what the student did and whether he or she is aware that such actions constitute bullying. There are many situations where students do not feel that they were bullying anyone, and the teachers' view may be one sided. For example, a student might feel strongly that not speaking to someone they do not like does not qualify as bullying.
  - Even in such cases, make the student understand how the bullied student feels.
  - When the student explains their own feelings or how the bullying happened, do not interrupt to explain why he or she is wrong. Be a good listener here as well, and allow them to say everything before making a judgement.
  - Demonstrate to students that bullying is not acceptable under any circumstances.
  - Try not to spend an excessive amount of time listening to the student's explanation. However, remember to bring beverages and snacks as it will take some time.
- ⇒ If the student who perpetrated the bullying feels that the blame lies with the bullied student.
- Teachers should never express the opinion that "some students are just the type to be bullied." It is often the case that a student's misguided thinking is reflecting something he or she heard from a teacher.

- Reinforce the point that there is no such thing as people who deserve to be bullied. Teach students that bullying damages both the mind and body, and impress upon them that it is absolutely inexcusable.

Interviewing other students.

- ⇒ Along with several staff members, a teacher familiar with these students should lead the discussion.
  - If another student offers information about bullying, praise that student for speaking up and try to gather as much concrete information as possible.
  - If one of the friends of the victim or students offering up information has seen something relating to the incident, ask for concrete details such as when and how it happened. Also, warn him or her not to needlessly discuss the issue with other students.

### **3. Response Planning Meeting.**

Crisis response meeting with related parties.

- Compare and consolidate information.
- How to respond to and support the victim and victim's parents/guardians.
- How to respond to and support the assailant and assailant's parents/guardians.
- How to respond to other students.
- In high schools: consider ideas for disciplinary action.
- In elementary and middle schools: consider suspension from school.

Emergency staff meeting.

- ⇒ Make sure all members of the teaching staff understand the situation.
  - Prepare some materials summarizing the incident.
- ⇒ Discuss how the staff should respond to this sort of incident in the future and who should have what role.
  - Prepare some materials explaining the general direction of how the staff should respond to such incidents and use these to conduct the meeting.
- ⇒ In high schools: consider ideas for disciplinary action.
- ⇒ In elementary and middle schools: consider suspension from school.

Short to Mid-term Response.

### **4. Responding to Students and Parents/Guardians.**

How to approach the victim.

- ⇒ Support for the student should be based on empathy and understanding.
  - The student's homeroom teacher or other teacher that he or she trusts should lead the conversation.
  - The student may be feeling alienated or isolated, and teachers should work towards eliminating these feelings by promising to be there to support him or her. Once again, be sure to follow through on any promises made.
  - Further plans to deal with the situation should be based on the student's wishes.
  - Refrain from saying such things as "don't let them bully you!" as these statements often have the opposite effect of further weakening students' self esteem.

How to approach the victim's parents/guardians.

⇒ Briefly explain the incident over the phone.

- Explain the basic facts before the student speaks with his or her parents/guardians of the incident.
- Request permission to visit their home.

⇒ Visiting the student's home.

- Make the visit together with the student's home room teacher and administrative staff.
- The first priority should be apologizing for the fact that such an incident occurred at school.
- Explain the details of the incident and discuss the issue sincerely.
- Explain how the school plans to deal with the incident and request their understanding and cooperation.

How to approach the perpetrator.

⇒ Direct support and instruction towards preventing another incident.

- Determine which teachers will lead the discussion. They should be the student's homeroom teacher or teachers whom he or she trusts, etc.
- Use this time to do more than simply scold the student. As appropriate to the student's developmental level, try such things as having him or her read a book about bullying. Follow a specific, planned approach to bring the student's attention to his or her own personal faults. Patiently continue instruction until the student shows genuine remorse over his or her actions.
- While doing so, bear in mind the student's background and individual circumstance, their relationship with others at school, etc. and make an effort to understand the student as well.
- Discuss how the student should treat the victim in the future. Have him or her make some promises as to what they will do to improve their relationship.

⇒ Discussing how to apologize.

- This is not a formal apology. Rather, calmly and patiently guide the student towards feeling the need to apologize to the victim.
- School guidance staff and counselors should also provide emotional support.

How to approach the perpetrator's parents/guardians.

⇒ Explain the basic facts of the event either in a visit to the home or in a meeting at the school.

- Several teachers, such as the homeroom teacher, administrative staff, and the guidance counselor should meet personally with the parents/guardians.
- Staff should prepare beforehand some documents explaining the incident and decide such things as the purpose of the meeting, division of roles, and how to actually conduct the meeting.
- Greet the parents/guardians warmly and avoid overly criticizing their son or daughter.
- If there are several perpetrators, treat them all impartially.
- Set a time for the meeting and do not deviate from it.

⇒ Discussing future action.

- While bearing in mind the feelings of the parents/guardians, think about the support provided to the students in question.



- Explain the shape of the support given to students by the school. Make it clear what can be provided by the school and what cannot.
- Discuss how to treat the victim in the future, such as by apologizing.

## 5. Miscellaneous.

⇒ How to approach other students in the class.

- Demonstrate that bullying is not acceptable and that it is a problem which the entire school must deal with.
- Explain that condoning bullying is the same as actually bullying, whether by encouraging instigators or simply pretending not to see it.
- Explain what bullying is and the effects it has on the mind and body.
- Ask students to think about what they would do in a situation where they were bullied or bullying was taking place. Give them suggestions.
- Make students understand that stopping bullying or letting teachers know about bullying that is going on is a just, brave thing to do.
- Teach students that if they catch another student perpetrating bullying, they should not bully him or her in return.
- If there has been a problem on the side of the teachers or school policy, apologize for it sincerely.
- Work towards forming a relationship with the students such that they can consult with teachers whenever they have a problem like bullying.

⇒ Why don't most bullied students say anything to their teachers?

- Students watch teachers' daily routines and get a feel for how they think, and then use this to decide whether or not to come forward and talk.

⇒ Students may be wary of the possibility that a teacher will act rashly to solve the problem and instead make it much worse.

⇒ Students may not be confident that merely consulting with a teacher will lead to them receiving any assistance.

- By coming forward to the teacher, they might find themselves scolded for being weak, for example.

⇒ Teachers must admit that in some cases it is their own class management that is encouraging bullying.

- For example, by making sarcastic remarks to students, or
- by attempting to use only competition to encourage learning, etc.

⇒ What to do when the bullying in the classroom crosses a certain point.

- Stopping the problem behavior towards the victim is the first priority, for example by suspending the problem student(s). In this case, consult "Suspending Students."

⇒ Requesting support from other organizations.

- If information regarding a student's background from a previous school or facility is needed, contact the previous school or facility.
- If consultation with a specialist regarding psychology or physiology is needed, contact the relevant institution.
- If there has been an instance that qualifies as physical violence or extortion, contact the police.
- In the event that temporary custody for a student becomes necessary, contact a child guidance center.

- ⇒ Contacting the Board of Education.
  - Request emotional support.
  - If suspending a student at an elementary or middle school, refer to “Suspending Students.”

## **6. Confirming that the problem behavior has been eliminated.**

- ⇒ Keep a close watch on the victim and perpetrator and make sure that the bullying has stopped completely.
  - While the most important thing to do upon recognizing an instance of bullying is to immediately put a stop to the harmful behavior, it is equally important to remember that the problem cannot be solved so quickly. Making a child say “Okay, I won’t do it again” does not necessarily mean that the child has learned why bullying is wrong. Quickly scolding a child in such a way can instead cause the bullying to escalate and become secretive and possibly even more malicious. Teachers should recognize the distinction between stopping a single instance of bullying and eliminating the problem.

Improving school policies to prevent reoccurrences.

- ⇒ Make teaching staff more aware of the severity of the problem.
  - Place value on children’s everyday interactions and strive to recognize cases of bullying early on.
- ⇒ Do not ignore small incidents in the interest of being kind to the students. Make it clear that there is a zero tolerance policy in place.
  - Clarify standards of behavior.
  - Keeping students and parents/guardians informed of school policies and expectations will build a relationship of mutual trust.
  - Be firm and persistent (see “Destruction of Property”).
- ⇒ Improving relationships among the students through hands on activities.
  - At elementary, middle, and high schools, make use of the “Bonding Activities” project.
  - At high schools, make use of the “Making Friends, Making Leaders” program.
  - Hold teaching training workshops on preventing delinquency.
  - Hold teaching training workshops where previous examples of student violence and teacher responses can be shown and discussed.
- ⇒ Maintaining a positive school environment.
  - Graffiti and disorderly postings are precursors to classroom deterioration, and as such should be removed immediately upon discovery (see “Classroom Deterioration”).
- ⇒ Strengthen the school’s relationship with parents.

Four things that students should learn to do.

- Recognize and accept diversity in each other. Shy, energetic, or disabled children should learn to see and value each other for what they are.
- Understand the difference between right and wrong.
- Empathize with others. Be able to understand when someone else is in pain.
- Be able to say “stop it!” when they are bullied or see someone else bullied.

Mid to Long Term Response.



## With Developmental Disorders in Mind.

Many students with developmental disorders are enrolled in school. By being accepted there and receiving appropriate support, these students can make excellent progress.

However, difficulty with school material or other students can lead to a loss of self-confidence and a feeling of not being accepted. These students can easily become the target of bullying and quickly develop maladaptive behavioral patterns, which are pointed to as a major cause of school absenteeism.

A student's developmental disorder can produce a variety of serious problems, but they can be overcome if the other students understand it and are taught appropriate ways to treat it.

Yamaguchi Prefectural Board of Education

“Creating Supportive School Structures. Support for Students with Learning Disabilities.” 2006



## Bullying Q&A

Q. What do schools think about this problem?

(A) While bullying is something which can occur at any school, it is inhumane and absolutely inexcusable. Schools recognize that bullied students need support from someone who can understand the problem as they do. In fact, bullying poses a problem that questions the way in which teachers treat students. Lastly, schools view bullying as a violation of a student's rights.

Q. Why is it difficult to single out bullies and make them stop?

(A) There are many students who do not participate in bullying directly but pretend not to see it or quietly agree with the perpetrator. This causes the bullied student to feel helpless and think “no one will help me,” or “no one will even tell the teacher.” This is one of the reasons why bullying is difficult for teachers to notice. Because bullying is a product of so many students' actions and inactions, punishing only the student who actually perpetrated the problem behavior often does not solve the problem.

Q. Many parents and students claim that even when they go directly to the school for help, the school does not do everything it can to solve the problem. However, schools claim that they take the problem very seriously. What causes this discrepancy?

(A) To the person requesting help, “solving the problem” means that the humiliation and bullying are completely eliminated. However, it is rarely the case that bullies learn the error of their ways all at once. Of course this results in continued dissatisfaction for their victims.

Furthermore, teachers must take care of not only the bullied student, but also the bully, and the entire rest of the class. A good teacher must try to find all of the student's strong points and see into the troubles and stresses of their life at home.

Teachers must strive to treat all of their students equally and help them develop as a class. Unfortunately this often means that the ability of a teacher to sympathize with a bullied student may be somewhat less than ideal.

Q. What should teaching staff be aware of in order to avoid inadvertently encouraging bullying?

(A) Teachers should try to be sensitive to changes in the way their students behave. Simply being able to notice when a child is feeling down is important. Also, there is a tendency for bullying to spread quickly in classes where competition is often used to encourage learning. Some examples of this include recording the results of writing and math evaluations at the front of the room or doing the same through competitions over remembering school supplies or being seated before the bell rings.

These competitions actively promote students who are able to succeed to get angry or disgusted with students who cannot, thereby creating ideal conditions for bullying to appear. If teachers use these techniques in their classes, they should also take care to point out the good points of, or show understanding towards, the students who are having difficulty. It is important to make the children who are experiencing success understand the value of being polite and thoughtful.

Sometimes, teachers make sarcastic comments towards a student, such as “you don’t get this one either?” After class, other students may continue to tease the student just as the teacher did before them. This is nothing other than a case of a teacher bullying a student.

A summary of the qualities of classes where bullying can easily appear:

1. Students are often scolded but rarely praised or shown consideration.
2. Teachers use inappropriate language carelessly.
3. Only a select few students receive recognition.
4. What students should and should not do is unclear.
5. Classroom rules are very strict, and there is a tense, uneasy atmosphere.
6. There are many activities designed to generate competition.
7. The class is difficult and progresses too quickly.

This situation wears on students by increasing stress and ill-ease that are difficult to dispel, creates feelings of inferiority and defeat, and eventually serves as a trigger to create bullying.

Q. Parents often ask, “I tell my child that whatever they do to you, do it right back at them! But because [he or she] has a weak personality, they can’t do it. What should I do?” How should teachers respond to such questions?

(A) Bullied children have great difficulty in telling others what they are going through. It is important to understand their feelings and support them in little ways, helping to restore their confidence and make them feel safe. Saying things like “don’t let them push you around!” or “stand up to them!” can actually cause them to lose confidence and so should be avoided.

Q. Isn’t it true that getting bullied about your shortcomings will help you grow?

(A) It is often the case that bullies think the bullied student is to blame for the bullying. Teachers must make these students understand that there is no such thing as someone who “deserves” to be bullied. Bullying damages the victim’s mind and body, is inhumane and is absolutely inexcusable.

For example, bullies often target physical characteristics, like another student’s face or movements, but these are things that cannot be changed no matter how hard someone tries. Similarly, even if a student does stand out for being selfish, a liar, or someone who talks about others behind their back, this doesn’t make it okay to bully them. Calmly warn students and explain to them why.

Also, teachers must be sure never to say or act as though there is a type of student who is easily bullied. Teachers must be aware that their actions in class can in some cases inadvertently give students the mistaken idea that it is okay to be a bully.

Q. When working with bullied students, should teachers point out areas to improve?

(A) Everyone has both strong points and weak points. The bully and the bullied student both have shortcomings. At the same time that a bully hides his own weak points, he or she points out and brings the weak points of his victims under attack.

After having his or her weak points laid out and attacked, bullied students often feel that those weak points were the reason they suffered such an attack, and they must improve on those areas no matter what. If a student comes to a teacher specifically requesting help over some issue or dealing with a personal shortcoming, the teacher may assist, but excluding such a circumstance, teachers should avoid such situations.

This is because bullied students feel alone, uneasy, scared, powerless, and lose much of the energy that carries them through the day. Even if such a student is, as the bullies have told him or her, self centered, lazy, sneaky, a liar, etc., telling them so will reinforcing the attack and do nothing to resolve the bullying problem.

In the end, bullying is fundamentally a problem caused by the bully’s inability to deal maturely with other people. He or she has an insufficient grasp of other people’s feelings. Even if the bullied student has some problems as well, that does not make it okay to bully him or her.

If teachers wish to work with a bullied student on overcoming some weak point, they should do so gently, in a calm environment only after the problem with the bullying has been completely taken care of.

Q. How should teachers deal with bullies?

(A) Bullying often takes place in groups, and students feel little guilt over their actions because they see their peers acting the same way. For this reason, it is important to speak to the surrounding students as well as the leader and get a good grasp of what has happened. Ask the students to think about how their victim felt, and have them consider the situation from his or her perspective. Direct students into understanding that their actions were a mistake which they should not repeat.

Also, do not just scold the students, but give them time to explain what happened and why they took the actions that they did. Understanding their feelings is also important. Another key point is that the victim and perpetrator often have vastly

different ideas about what took place. When the teacher scolds students, the students often reply that they were not bullying anyone, just teasing or playing around. Teachers must help students understand that even if those actions were meant to be friendly, they made someone very unhappy. However we feel about what we are doing, if the person we do it to doesn't like it, we have to stop. Point out to the students some specific examples of this and ask their parents to explain these ideas as well.

Q. How should teachers deal with the students who engaged in bullying indirectly?

(A) It is extremely important to respond appropriately to the students who encouraged or pretended not to see the bullying. It is important to create an environment where students know that bullying won't be ignored. Explain to students that encouraging or pretending not to see bullying is just as bad as actually bullying. If a student sees bullying, they should either step in and stop it or find a teacher to help. If a student brings a teacher information in this way, the teacher should be aware that other students may retaliate and take care to protect that student's identity.



### **The difference between bullying and other disputes between students.**

Trouble between students who are generally equal can be considered arguments, or fights, etc. Almost everyone grows up experiencing some kind of difficulty with other people, and these commonplace problems are not necessarily bullying. However, there are many cases where parents/guardians appeal to the school for help resolving "bullying" when what is actually happening is nothing more than trivial scuffles between friends. Intervention here can instead make the problem worse.

In cases of trouble or fighting between friends, there is no easy distinction of victim and perpetrator as with bullying because both children actively participate in the fight. These fights usually work themselves out on their own or through the mediation of another friend. However, in today's world where children lack important communication skills, these fights sometimes do not reach any definite conclusion and the balance of power teeters, eventually escalating into bullying.

Tetsuo Midorikawa and Masao Hara, *Ready on the Scene! Case Studies in Student Guidance. Your Questions Answered.* 2005.



### **Making a positive impact on your students.**

Ten important points:

What are some of the qualities of teachers who make a powerful impression on students? Thinking back on the children, parents, and other teachers I have met and worked with, I made this list of ten important points.

1. Always being warm and kind to your students paves the way for communication. Good communication makes your words more meaningful.
2. Show students that you have something to offer them. When students come to expect you to provide valuable advice, it makes it easier to give.
3. Talk to students like a friend. Open your heart to them. Students who feel this

- kind of bond will open their heart in return.
4. Find many ways to praise your students. As you complement them, they will find new ways to appreciate themselves and give your words even more value.
  5. Make an effort to interact with students as often as possible. Lots of time spent interacting makes students feel comfortable.
  6. Take a serious interest in what your students take seriously. Show them that you are interested in what they are doing, and they will feel recognized and good about themselves.
  7. Let students know that you think about them and understand them, and in turn they will soak up everything you teach them.
  8. Act receptive and accepting rather than forceful and assertive. Students will copy your receptive stance and learn much more from you.
  9. Listen closely to your students, and strive to understand what they are feeling. Students will learn how to listen closely by watching you, and return the feeling in kind.
  10. Have a forward looking, positive attitude. Students will naturally catch your positive thinking and start looking forward as well.

A terrific explanation on its own will not teach children anything. A positive, warm relationship is necessary for your words to take effect. Before students will really listen to what you have to say, you must give and receive trust.

Akio Yamada. *Words to Open Students' minds*. 1997.

Things you absolutely must not say!

The following are examples of things that you should not say to students in any circumstance. These constitute verbal abuse, bullying by a teacher, and an attack on the student's personality. After a teacher makes this kind of statement, he or she stops being a teacher in the eyes of the students, destroys all of the trust and mutual respect he or she may have had, and makes it almost impossible to regain.

If only in our children's world, bullying is something we should not allow to exist. We must not forget that children will mirror the behavior and thoughts of the teachers around them.

Don't come back to school.  
You should just give up. Its not going to happen.  
What? You can't even do this?  
I'm sick of looking after you.  
Hey! Are you even trying?  
You're past help.  
You don't have what it takes to be at this school.  
Even if you try for ten years you still won't make it.  
You screw everything up, don't you?  
Whether you stay or leave it's the same to me.  
You're pretty stupid, aren't you?  
I don't want to see you again.  
Are your parents this stupid too?  
Oh, its just you.

Yamaguchi Prefectural Board of Education.