

# Bullying

The district prohibits bullying on school property, at school-sponsored or school-related activities, or in any vehicle operated by the district. Bullying may be verbal or written expression or expression through electronic means, or physical conduct. Bullying is not tolerated by the district and any student or parent of a student who believes that the student or another student has experienced bullying or that a student has engaged in bullying is encouraged to immediately report the incident. Retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process is a violation of district policy and is prohibited. Students or parents may report an alleged incident of bullying, orally or in writing, to a teacher, counselor, principal or other district employees. Any District employee who suspects or receives notice that a student or group of students has or may have experienced bullying will immediately notify the principal or designee. We encourage you to communicate with your designated campus administrator during this time.

## Definition of Bullying:

Bullying occurs when a student or group of students engages in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that occurs on school property, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity or in a vehicle operated by the district that:

- Physically harms a student/s
- Damages a student/'s property
- Places a student/s in reasonable fear of harm to themselves or their property
- Is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student/s.

One of the questions that often comes up is about how we handle bullying in the counseling office.

Bullying is an intentional act of aggression from one student or group of students to another. It is repeated over time and often involves an imbalance of power between the "Bully" and the "Target." Bullying can be physical (hitting, pushing, pulling hair), verbal (name calling, spreading rumors, threatening), sexual (making suggestive comments or creating an uncomfortable environment) or electronic (texting, social media).

When we have bullying types of behaviors reported to the counseling office, our counselors first talk to all of the students reported to be involved. There are some behaviors that we initially handle in the counseling office, such as name-calling or spreading rumors. Other behaviors will be referred

directly to the assistant principals for a disciplinary response, such as any time there is a physical interaction.

What we find is more often better categorized as peer conflict rather than bullying. Peer conflict often results in similar behaviors as bullying, however it typically does not involve an imbalance of power, it is often a one-time event, and/or it is not always an intentional act. Whether it meets the standard of bullying or not, our goal is always to raise awareness among our students, and to encourage kind behavior in the future.

When a bullying behavior is reported to the counseling office and we determine that it does meet the district's definition of bullying, we will complete the district's bullying procedure, which involves putting a plan in place to ensure that the behavior does not continue, informing the parents, and notifying the assistant principals. Documentation is kept in a central file so that if the bullying continues we will have documentation of the interventions put in place in order to pursue further disciplinary consequences.

When the bullying behavior is determined to be peer conflict, we will offer to do peer mediation with both students to help them work through the problem together. This helps to build our students' communication skills, conflict resolution skills, assertiveness and confidence. We also talk about what changes our students need to make in order to avoid problems with each other in the future. At the elementary level, we also utilize an approach called Restorative Practices, which enables student communities to identify issues, talk about them, and develop a consensus on how to resolve them. The injured party is able to express how and why they were hurt, and the offending party is given the opportunity to make amends and restore the community in a positive way. This approach has had a great positive effect on our elementary campuses, and we are excited to begin to bring the practices up to middle school.

Through our guidance time at the elementary and middle school levels, we teach lessons on bullying every year. We believe that it is important to continually set an expectation of kindness and respect for all of our students. We also encourage them to not just be bystanders and allow others to be treated poorly, but to be "up-standers" and intervene. We teach them how they can safely and responsibly intervene to make it clear that we are all part of the same community.

Students have multiple avenues to report bullying concerns. They can come into the counseling office and report them directly to us. However, we also know that many students are not comfortable reporting concerns and may not be willing to come in and talk to us. As such, we also have the option to report bullying anonymously through our partnership with the Friends for Life hotline. Students can report over the phone, through a website or even by text.

Friends for Life:

**Call: 817-469-TIPS (8477) Text: "TIP117 PLUS YOUR MESSAGE" to 274637 [www.469tips.com](http://www.469tips.com)**

If you, as a parent, ever have a concern about bullying or bullying behaviors in any GCISD school, please call your school counselor. We really want to intervene and make sure that the behaviors do not continue, that all of our students feel safe and secure at school, and that our students are treating everyone with kindness and respect. We appreciate any help you can give us in that endeavor!

However, there are also some things that parents should not do in this situation.

Please do NOT:

- Confront the child who is bullying and/or parents
- Tell your child to stand up to the bullying with physical force
- Blame your child for being bullied
- Keep the bullying a secret
- Tell them to just ignore it
- Tell them to bully the other child back

For more information on bullying, you can explore the following resources:

[Bullying Information for Parents Power Point](#)

[Tips for Parents](#)

[Http://www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)

<http://www.thebullyproject.com/>

<http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/bullying.page>

<http://cyberbullying.us/resources/parents/>

<http://www.ncpc.org/topics/bullying>