

# What is Bullying?

The American Psychological Association defines school bullying as **repeated** physical, verbal, or psychological abuse of victims by perpetrators who intend to cause them harm. The critical features that distinguish bullying from simple conflict between peers are: intentions to cause harm, repeated incidents of harm, and an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim.

According to the National Education Association, this bullying can occur through direct verbal (threatening, name calling), direct physical (hitting, kicking), and indirect (spreading rumors, influencing relationships, cyberbullying) means that typically occur when there is a power or status difference between students.

## Why focus on bullying?

TUSD wants all students to attend schools that are safe and conducive to learning. Studies have shown that children identified as bullies in grades 6-9 are more likely to have criminal records by early adulthood.

We need to address these children's behavioral problems at an early age, before they become even more serious. In addition, victims of bullies may have problems with depression, poor school attendance, and low self-esteem. It is important to help create a school environment where all students feel safe and can learn to the best of their abilities.

It is important that students learn social skills that address bullying.

*Victims* should be taught to:

- ◆ walk away from a situation
- ◆ rebuff in a firm manner
- ◆ tell the bully to stop
- ◆ report it to an adult

*Bullies* should be taught social skills such as respect for others, acting with empathy, and anger/impulse management. Bullies should be monitored to prevent further inappropriate acts and rewarded for appropriate behavior and improvements as well as given clear consequences for acts of bullying.

Bystanders should be taught to request that the bully stop, seek adult help, and speak up and/or offer support to the victim. Bystander support of bullying and harassment can encourage these behaviors, and **the District prohibits both active and passive support for acts of bullying and harassment.**

For as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. has said: *"It is not malicious acts that will do us in, but the appalling silence and indifference of good people."*

By involving the total effort of all school staff as well as students, parents and other community members, we can ensure a safe and positive learning environment for all students.

Resources: Safe Schools Center,  
U.S. Department of Justice  
National Education Association  
American Psychological Association

# Torrance Unified School District



## Parent Guide to Anti-Bullying

The Torrance Unified School district recognizes that a school that is physically and emotionally safe and secure for all students promotes good citizenship, increases student attendance and engagement, and supports academic achievement.

To protect the rights of all students and groups for a safe and secure learning environment, the Board of Education prohibits acts of bullying, harassment, and other forms of aggression and violence.

Bullying or harassment, like other forms of aggressive and violent behaviors, interferes with both a school's ability to educate its students and a student's ability to learn.

All administrators, faculty, staff, parents, volunteers, and students are expected to refuse to tolerate bullying and harassment and to demonstrate behavior that is respectful and civil.



### **How can I tell if my child is being bullied?**

Your child may be the victim of bullying if he or she:

- ◆ Comes home from school with torn or dirty clothing, or damaged books;
- ◆ Has inexplicable cuts, bruises or scratches
- ◆ Seems afraid to go to school, or complains of headaches or stomach pains
- ◆ Doesn't sleep well or has frequent nightmares
- ◆ Loses interest in schoolwork
- ◆ Is anxious or has poor self-esteem
- ◆ Shows changes in eating habits (coming home from school hungry as a result of not eating lunch)
- ◆ Exhibits self destructive behaviors

### **When Your Child is being Bullied**

- ◆ Find out in detail what happened
- ◆ Contact your child's teacher, counselor or administrator to alert them and to request their assistance
- ◆ Avoid blaming anyone
- ◆ Do not encourage your child to be aggressive or to strike back
- ◆ Discuss and role-play with your child assertive alternatives to responding to bullies (e.g., have your child practice not reacting, saying "You're right," walking away)
- ◆ Be patient. It often takes awhile to resolve the problem
- ◆ Contact local law enforcement officials if the problem persists or escalates. Acts of bullying should not be tolerated in the school or in the community

### **How can I tell if my child is bullying others?**

Your child may be bullying others if he or she:

- ◆ Is hot-tempered or impulsive, or has a hard time following rules
- ◆ Is increasingly verbally and physically aggressive
- ◆ Blames others for their problems or doesn't accept responsibility for their actions
- ◆ Has been involved in other antisocial behavior, such as vandalism or theft
- ◆ Is hyper-competitive and worries about their reputation or popularity

### **When Your Child is the Bully**

- ◆ Speak with school administrators regarding your child. Remember to listen and do not assign blame (to others or your child)
- ◆ Set clear rules for behavior and intervene to stop aggressive behavior when it occurs
- ◆ Point out that bullying is NOT acceptable in your family or in society
- ◆ Specify the consequences if the bullying continues
- ◆ Teach, including role playing, and reward appropriate behavior and improvement
- ◆ Teach your child to speak out on behalf of anyone he or she observes being bullied

### **What are schools doing to address bullying?**

Reducing bullying in our schools involves the total effort of all school staff (teachers, principals, counselors, etc.), as well as students, parents, and other community members.

*All TUSD schools will:*

- ◆ *Identify bullies and their victims, to address individual problems and needs*
- ◆ *Establish school-wide rules for positive behavior and apply consistent consequences against bullies*
- ◆ *Establish a confidential reporting system to report bullying on campus (Students can now utilize an online reporting system available on the homepage of the student's [www.etusd.org](http://www.etusd.org) account, or make a confidential report to a teacher, administrator or other staff member on campus)*
- ◆ *Provide close adult monitoring of areas where bullying is most likely to occur*
- ◆ *Establish a climate throughout the school that promotes understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of*

