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Train our Educators How to Identify and Modify Bullying Behaviors and Help Prevent School Violence

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It is the beginning of the school year and all too soon there has been a school shooting – a fatal incident in Knoxville, TN. And, once again, people across the country are stunned, heartbroken and committed to stopping the ongoing school violence.

Research indicates that in more than two-thirds of school shootings, the attackers felt bullied, persecuted or threatened, and that revenge was their motive. But the recent Knoxville shooting was unique. In the Tennessee shooting, the victim, Ryan McDonald, was the one who had been bullied. Ryan [had alopecia, a condition that left him bald since he was three years old, and the target of endless teasing.](#)

Clearly, bullying is a major factor in the escalating incidents of school violence, so it's critical that our educators take pro-active steps to address bullying behaviors. It's also important for educators to understand how bullying has changed in recent years. Increased technology, combined with tech-savvy children and teens, means bullying is no longer confined to face-to-face social situations, as cyber-bullying becomes increasingly dangerous.

Today, most states have laws that address bullying at school. While implementing these laws is a great first step, [schools](#) must also follow up with [training](#) for all school staff that includes practical strategies to keep all students safe - physically and emotionally, and maintain an effective academic environment.

Educators must understand the effects of bullying, which include depression, anxiety, eating and sleeping disorders, self-mutilation, alcohol and drug abuse, violence and suicide. Students who [exhibit](#) long-term bullying behavior are also at great risk for dangerous behaviors.

All school staff members – from the principal to the bus drivers – must understand how to identify, modify and prevent bullying behaviors in their classrooms, schools and towns. Our educators should be trained in bullying

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facts – and provided with conflict resolution tips – so they know how to stop bullying behaviors before they escalate to violence, as they did in Knoxville and an alarming number of other school shootings.

It is important to educate school staff about how to address student bullying through a carefully designed four-step response. This response takes between 10-30 seconds and is designed to "nip bullying in the bud." In other words, they [learn](#) how to stop bullying, social aggression and other hurtful behavior before the situation becomes chronic and a tragedy occurs.

All staff needs to know what specific behaviors they are required to address, i.e. examples of physical, verbal, cyber bullying and social aggression.

When staff see or hear bullying and other hurtful behavior, they need to:

1. Stop the bullying behavior
2. Identify the specific behavior that is hurtful and unacceptable
3. Remind the student of the school's expectation
4. Remind the student of the behavioral expectation (a replacement behavior, as appropriate).

For example, if a staff member heard a student belittling another student, the staff can state, in an authoritative yet respectful tone, the following:

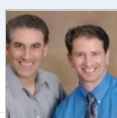
1. Stop talking right now.
2. The way you were talking was insulting.
3. In this school, we don't talk to people in a mean way.
4. When you talk to someone, say positive things. "Do you understand? Good, let's get to class."

Granted, this strategy won't solve every problem, and staff needs to know how to respond if a student continues to be hurtful. However, most students do respond to strong, responsible leadership by adults and will comply.

There is no one solution to stop all bullying, but a consistent response from staff members will create a school culture where all students know that hurtful behavior will not be tolerated.

By taking a pro-active stance on reducing bullying behaviors in schools, we can help prevent future incidents of school violence and keep our children safer.

Was this Helpful ?



Steve Breakstone And Michael Dreiblatt - About the Author:

Steve Breakstone and Michael Dreiblatt are the co-founders of Balance Educational Services, a company that promotes pro-social behavior and bullying solutions through interactive presentations for students, educators and parents. They are also the authors of *How to Stop Bullying & Social Aggression: Elementary Grade Lessons and Activities That Teach Empathy, Friendship, and Respect*, which will be released in August of 2008. For more information, visit them online at www.BalanceEducationalServices.com.

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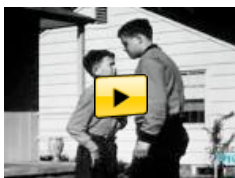
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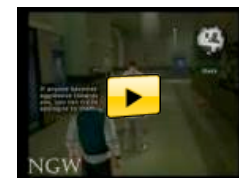
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