

# Trauma-Sensitive Teachers

## PARENT TEACHER PARTNERSHIP

### Bullying

Let's take a quick look at bullying & trends with those who engage in bully-like behavior and those that are being bullied.

According to their article *Bullying Behavior Among US Youth*, Tonja R. Nansel, PhD; Mary Overpeck, DrPH; Ramani S. Pilla, PhD; et al W. June Ruan, MA; Bruce Simons-Morton, EdD, MPH; Peter Scheidt, MD, MPH stated that the research examining characteristics of youth involved in bullying has consistently found that both bullies and those bullied demonstrate poorer psychosocial functioning than their noninvolved peers. Youth who bully others tend to demonstrate higher levels of conduct problems and dislike of school, whereas youth who are bullied generally show higher levels of insecurity, anxiety, depression, loneliness, unhappiness, physical and mental symptoms, and low self-esteem.

Of these characteristics, we see both sides showing up in children from insecure backgrounds. In order to heed to warnings signs on either side of this coin, we need to have a basic understanding of the warning signs, as well as utilize the help from parents to keep an eye out, watching for warning signs.

#### **1. Is the student/child being bullied?**

Often, children will not come straight out and say they are being bullied, but there are usually signs...if you know what to watch for!

Signs may include:

- Refusal to go to school
- Requests immediate change in a long time routine, such as walking home from school, riding a bus, etc...
- Avoids playing with friends at school or after school activities

- Signs of physical distress, such as stomach aches or headaches
- Extreme hunger after school that is new (someone could be taking their lunch)
- Shuts down when school is discussed
- Drastic change in grades
- Avoids certain classes. Example, asks to go to nurse's office often
- Asks for extra lunch money, without a reason or explanation
- Increased behaviors after phone calls or computer time

## **2. Is the student/child bullying?**

As much as we don't want to think our child may be the bully, we need to heed the warning signs.

Signs may include:

- Lacks empathy
- Overly concerned with their popularity
- Seems to get pleasure from pain
- Wants to be in control lots of the time
- Has been bullied
- Excludes certain kids
- Social or interpersonal skills below age level

## **WHAT TO DO:**

### **If you suspect a child is being bullied:**

1. Reassure the child that he or she is not alone, that you believe him or her, and that you will help.

2. Make sure the child knows that it is not his or her fault.
3. Communicate with the parents, as well as the principal.
4. Help the child come up with a plan of how to handle it. Coming up with a plan together with the teacher often works best.

Safety is top priority.

### **If you suspect a child is bullying someone:**

1. Find out what happened. Ask the child what happened in his or her own words. Stay calm and listen.
2. Encourage empathy. “If this happened to you, how would you feel?”
3. Help the child come up with a plan to fix it...with words AND actions.
4. Try to find out what is the cause of the bullying.  
Look behind the behavior. It is often something below the surface.
5. Communicate with parents and the principal.  
It’s important to communicate this information to the child’s parents, as well as the principal. Together you are a team, to help the child and to keep everyone safe (and feeling safe).
6. Keep on top of it.  
Regularly check in with the child, and with the parents. Also, continue with discussions and even role play with your students.

**Send the *Signs of Bullying* home to parents.**

**Keep the lines of communication open...with parents and students.**