
BullyfreeME News

Fall 2005

Volume 3, Issue 1

Loyal readers of this newsletter will notice a different look to the Newsletter this year. The reason for this is that Molly Murphy-Mercer is taking a sabbatical in order to pay more attention to her life at home and her four children. Therefore I will be on my own creating it and learning the technology end of things also in order to bring the best in bullying prevention to you and your schools. You'll notice that the format may change from time to time as I experiment with layout. As always I will welcome your input on any aspect of this newsletter including news about what is going on in bullying prevention at your school.

Improving the Quality of the Bus Ride

All over the USA school busses are a hot spot for bullying behavior. It is important to set a positive tone for students at the start of school and the bus is no exception. Bus drivers are key players in the campaign against bullying. They are responsible for protecting vulnerable children, maintaining order and safety while facing forward with only a mirror to glimpse the action behind them. In most cases they can only see students from their shoulders up. There are several things drivers can do to reduce the opportunity for bullying to occur on their bus.

- Prevent bullying before it starts:
- Let students know that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.
- Maintain a consistently respectful and professional attitude towards students, coworkers, parents and staff.
- Learn student names and try to develop a sense of trust. Students need to trust that drivers really care about their physical and emotional safety.
- Name calling and put-downs should be strictly forbidden on the bus. (Post your school's anti-bullying rules)
- Intervene early and report serious incidents immediately to staff in the building.

- It is extremely important that bus drivers communicate with the staff in the building and that building staff develop a feedback loop to the driver. The bullying prevention coordinating committee can be very helpful with this.
- The bus ride to school sets the tone of a child's day so it is important that each day begins well with a safe, comfortable, and pleasant bus ride. Make sure your bus drivers are trained in bullying prevention and know what to do in case of an incident on their bus!

Bus Driver Training

The importance of bus driver training should not be minimized. Training should include an overview of bullying prevention, focusing on dispelling myths and promoting the facts about bullying. The comprehensive approach that the school is using needs to be explained in detail so the drivers can understand how they fit into the big picture and how important their role is in bullying prevention. Skill training is an important part of the training for bus drivers. They need training and practice in how to recognize and address bullying and harassment should it occur on their bus. Practicing on the spot interventions is an important part of any training. They also need to be familiarized with any paperwork that may be necessary for them to utilize in communicating problems into the building. It can be very helpful to assign each bus driver a "building buddy", someone in the building for them to check in with each week about how their bus ride is going. This can help identify potential problems early and prevent them from becoming major incidents.

©Chuck Saufler 2005

For more information about bullying prevention or training for you're your school or community organization go to www.bullyfreeme.com or e-mail chuck@bullyfreemaine.com



Pathways to Bullying

The Surgeon General's report on Youth Violence 2001 cites two developmental pathways for violent behavior. The first is called "early onset life persistent". This is a pattern of anti-social behavior that is identifiable by age 3 and without intervention persists into adulthood. The second pathway is called "adolescent onset". This happens when at about age 11-14 a person, without a prior history of violence, begins to perpetrate violent acts. This often has to do with peer group influences. The need to belong to a peer group is paramount at this age. At this developmental stage parental influence becomes much less potent than the influence of the peer group. In short, a student who is not accepted as a member of a peer group will find a peer group that will accept them, even if it means perpetrating violent acts in order to "belong." This phenomenon helps explain the appearance of some middle school bullies who have no prior history of aggression.

©Chuck Saufier 2005

Schoolwide Community Building Utilizing Older Students

Bullying is a problem from kindergarten through high school. One way of building a more caring school community is to have older students teaching and sharing with younger students in cross grade settings. Schools often have "reading or math buddies" established as a regular part of the school culture. This introduces the older and younger students in a non-threatening learning environment and builds relationships that might not occur otherwise. There is a multitude of research that validates mentoring approaches to learning as good for the mentors as well as the recipients in both academic and social-emotional areas.

Taking this idea a step further into the realm of bullying by developing a group of older students to teach younger students about bullying can be a great learning experience for all. The use of role playing and interactive theater can be a powerful tool in school efforts against bullying. Research shows that schools that utilize student role playing as a tool in teaching anti-bullying strategies get better results overall in their bullying prevention efforts.

©Chuck Saufier 2005

Appleton Elementary School Kicks-off Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

The Appleton, Maine Elementary School held its initial kick-off for its bullying prevention initiative the third week in September. The school's coordinating committee was trained in the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program in May and worked over the summer to plan the kick-off event. It was an evening affair centering around a Chili and Chowder supper. Well over 200 students, parents, grandparents and community members attended, including town selectmen, school committee members and the state representative that chairs the Education Committee for the State of Maine Legislature. Brochures created by the coordinating committee about the Olweus Program were at each table setting and a student group from a local high school did skits about bullying. Door prizes donated by local businesses were awarded after dinner. Overall it was a tremendous success. Keep up the good work Appleton!

New Research

Creating a peaceful school learning environment: the impact of an anti-bullying program on educational attainment in elementary schools.

Full text of this study can be found at:

http://www.MedSciMonit.com/pub/vol_11/no_7/6440.pdf

For more information about bullying prevention or training for you're your school or community organization go to www.bullyfreeme.com or e-mail chuck@bullyfreemaine.com