

Bullying in schools: *What you can do about it*

A guide for teachers

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Is bullying a problem in your school?

Bullying in schools is a worldwide problem and has been throughout history. Canadian studies show one in 12 children is harassed regularly, one in five is bullied occasionally, and more than one in seven kids admits to being a bully at one time or other. Countless others stand by and watch or simply ignore bullying when it happens.

Yet teachers often aren't aware bullying is taking place. Those who bully usually make sure there are no grownups around to witness their actions. Victims are often too embarrassed or too frightened to complain. They worry that adults won't take their plight seriously or, even if they do, won't do anything about it. They also fear a teacher may handle the situation in a way that will provoke the bully to get even. Fear of retaliation and of being called a "tattle-tale" also keeps witnesses from reporting bullying.

You can do something about it

Research shows that when schools identify bullying as a problem and adopt effective strategies for stopping it, they get results. In fact, effective intervention programs can reduce the frequency of bullying incidents in schools by at least 50 per cent.

This pamphlet outlines some effective strategies you can use to help make your school a safe and caring environment for all students.

What is bullying?

The most common definition of bullying comes from Dan Olweus, a Scandinavian researcher who is widely respected for his groundbreaking studies of bullying in schools:

“A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students.”

Bullying can take many forms, such as:

- physical—hitting, poking, pinching, chasing, shoving, restraining or coercing another child;
- destroying or stealing his or her belongings;
- verbal—name-calling, sarcasm, teasing, threatening or spreading rumors;
- visual—graffiti, gestures;
- emotional—humiliating, making fun of another child or deliberately excluding him or her from a group;
- racial—racial slurs; and
- sexual—unwanted touching or comments.

Bullying behaviour includes physical aggression or may use more subtle, indirect forms of hurtful behaviour such as spreading rumors or excluding another from the group.

Those who bully exercise power over their victims. The power may be strength, size, age or even membership in a group from which the victim may be excluded.

For the victim, repeated bullying can lead to retaliatory behaviour, depression, low self-esteem, shyness, poor grades, isolation and, in extreme cases, even suicide.

Bullying also hurts the bully. Children who learn they can get away with violence and aggression have a greater chance than others of getting into trouble with the law later in life.

Witnesses, too, suffer the effects of bullying. They can become anxious or fearful, or even resort to aggression themselves if they see there are no negative consequences for the bully.

Who are the bullies?

While their tactics may differ, most people who bully—both male and female—have a history of aggressive behaviour and problems at home or at school.

Those who bully may have one or more of the following characteristics:

- impulsive behaviour;
- hypersensitivity and a tendency to misinterpret actions of others as hostile;
- a lack of capacity to empathize with or be compassionate toward other children;
- a tendency to use power rather than social skills to get what he or she wants;
- errors in thinking involving unrealistic expectations, such as “Winning is everything;”
- a troubled home life in which he or she is a victim of aggression or violence;
- a lack of success at school;
- a tendency to lie, steal, cheat or take the easy way; and
- a sense that he or she does not belong.

Who are the victims?

Kids who bully are very good at selecting targets who will let them get away with it. Victims often:

- are smaller or weaker than other students;
- are more anxious, quiet, or insecure than others;
- haven't any reliable friends;
- differ from other children in some way—learning disability, physical handicap, speech or language, skin color, clothes;
- cry easily;
- feel lonely and disliked; and
- won't challenge a bully.

Some researchers talk of the provocative victim, one whose poor social skills and behaviour seem to “bug” others and invite bullying. Such children are nonetheless victims and need protection from those who bully as well as help in changing their own behaviour.

Say “No” to bullying in your school

Many schools have effectively reduced bullying problems through anti-bullying programs that combine adequate supervision, appropriate and prompt intervention, and nurturing of a safe and caring climate.

As a teacher, there are a number of steps you can take when you see or become aware of a bullying incident in your school:

Intervene immediately

Do not show anger. Keep calm. This sends a message to the children that you are in control.

Talk to the students

Talk to the person (or persons) exhibiting bullying behaviour, the victim and any witnesses, separately and as soon as possible. Listen non-judgementally to everything the children have to say about what happened. Take notes.

Expect denial

Expect the student who bullied to downplay, deny, or try to steer the discussion away from his or her misbehaviour. Don't be sidetracked.

Talk about the behaviour

Avoid sarcasm or personal criticism that could lower the bully's self-esteem. Criticize the behaviour, not the child. Repeat your school's codes of conduct and point out why the bully's behaviour was unacceptable.

Let the student who bullied know that appropriate consequences—restitution for the behaviour, carrying out an act of kindness for others, completing exercises aimed at reducing aggression and developing empathy—will be imposed and that his or her parents will be involved. Don't make threats that can't be carried out.

Use appropriate consequences

Show the student who bullied that consequences to violence are possible.

Reassure the victim

Let the victim know that all possible steps will be taken to prevent another incident and follow through.

Let others know

Talk with an administrator and other teachers and staff to alert them to the problem or to find out if they can provide some history on the problem.

Work with the families

Let the student who bullied and victim know that you will be contacting their parents. Involve the parents in creating an action plan to avoid repeated incidents.

Help the victim

Involve the victim in groups and situations where he or she can make reliable friends, build self-confidence and develop social and assertiveness skills.

Help the bully

Involve the student who bullied in exercises designed to reduce aggressive behaviour, correct his or her thinking errors and develop empathy for others.

Follow up

Keep communicating and working with the parents and other teachers until the situation is resolved.

Develop an anti-bullying climate in the classroom

You can help prevent bullying or greatly reduce its incidence by regularly incorporating classroom activities that promote a safe and caring environment.

Thought-provoking literature

Raise awareness of bullying by reading and discussing age-appropriate literature, such as *The Berenstain Bears and the Bully* in the Berenstain Bears series for Grades K-4, *Don't Pick on Me* for intermediate students and *Lord of the Flies* for older groups. Discuss why the bully acted the way he or she did, how the victim might feel and in what ways others could have helped.

Encourage discussion

Get children to share ideas on what they can do if they are bullied or witness another being bullied.

Seek student input

Work with your students to develop a list of appropriate classroom behaviours. List both desirable and undesirable behaviour. For example: We don't want hitting or name-calling. We want to include everyone in group activities.

Praise appropriate behaviour

Recognize and praise positive, friendly, supportive behaviour of students toward each other.

Get students involved

Arrange volunteering opportunities for students to be involved in helpful activities with peers or younger children.

Reinforce daily

Teach and model non-violent, non-racist, non-sexist ideas and values as part of the every-day curriculum.

Foster social skills

Teach and model social skills such as communication, making friends, conflict resolution and appropriate assertiveness.

Structure groups

Use co-operative learning groups to include less popular, more timid children in small, accepting groups.

Anti-bullying resources for teachers

For more information on bullying and what you, as a teacher, can do to help, check these resources:

Books/Manuals for Teachers

*A.S.A.P.: A School-based Anti-violence Program** (1996 edition), by Marlies Sudermann, Peter Jaffe and Elaine Schieck, London Family Court Clinic, London, Ontario.

*Battling the School-Yard Bully**, by Kim Zarzour, a Today's Parent Book, Harper Perennial, Harper Collins Publishers Ltd.

*Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do** (1993), by Dan Olweus, Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Bully-proofing Your School: A Comprehensive Approach for Elementary Schools, by Carla Garrity, Kathryn Jens, William Porter, Nancy Sager and Cam Short-Camilli, published by Sopris West, Longmont, Colorado.

Lions-Quest *Working it Out: Tools for Everyday Peacemakers**, a conflict management program for Grades K-6, available from Lions-Quest Canada, Waterloo, Ontario.

*Available in the ATA library.

Books for Children and Adolescents

The Berenstain Bears and the Bully, by Stan and Jan Berenstain, Random House.

The Berenstain Bears and the In-Crowd, by Stan and Jan Berenstain, Random House.

Don't Pick on Me: How to Handle Bullying, by Rosemary Stones, published in Canada by Pembroke Publishers.

Lord of the Flies, by William Golding, Penguin.

Video

Bullying at School: Strategies for Prevention. Roberta King, Ronald Squire, with Toronto Board of Education, available from King Squire Films Ltd., Toronto.

Internet

<http://www.solnet.co.uk/kidscape>

<http://www.sacsc.ca>

or contact

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Safe and Caring Schools Project

Resources

Toward a Safe and Caring Curriculum: Resources for Integration Kindergarten to Grade 6. Order through the Learning Resources Centre (www.learning.gov.ab.ca.)

Toward a Safe and Caring Secondary Curriculum: Resources for Integration. Visit www.sacsc.ca and click on Secondary Lesson Plans and Strategies.

Safe and Caring Schools and Communities Diversity series booklets are available at www.sacsc.ca or call the SACSC office to order copies.

All other SACS resources are available to Alberta teachers at a 25 percent discount through the Learning Resources Centre (see www.learning.gov.ab.ca/SafeSchools).

The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities (SACSC) Resources



The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities' resources and materials are available through Alberta Learning's Resources Centre (LRC), 12360 142 St. NW, Edmonton, Alberta, T5L 4X9. Tel: 427-5775 in Edmonton. Elsewhere in Alberta call 310-0000 and ask for the LRC or fax (780) 422-9750. To place Internet orders, visit www.lrc.learning.gov.ab.ca *These materials are eligible for the Learning Resources Credit Allocation (25% discount). Contact the LRC for details.

The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities has four program areas and an inventory of promotional items:

I. SUPPORTING A SAFE AND CARING SCHOOL

This program area helps build a SACS culture. It includes information about SACS, an assessment tool to aid in planning and quick, easy-to-read booklets that review current research on SACS topics and successful programs.

Safe and Caring Schools in Alberta Presentation: video, overheads and 30 brochures
 # 455297 \$15.00

The SACSC: An Overview (K-12) (Pkg of 30) Describes the origin and objectives of the project (2001, 4 pp.)
 # 445298 \$ 6.80

Attributes of a Safe and Caring School (K-12) (Pkg of 30) A brochure for elementary, junior and senior high schools, describing the characteristics of a safe and caring school (1999)
 # 445313 \$ 6.80

The SACSC: Elementary Booklet Series (16 booklets) (K-6) (see LRC website)
 # 445610 \$11.50

The SACSC: Secondary Booklet Series (15 booklets) (7-12) (see LRC website)
 # 445628 \$10.80

Preschool Bullying: What You Can Do About It—A Guide for Parents and Caregivers (1-6) Provides advice on what parents can do if their child is being bullied or is bullying others (2000, 24 pp.)
 # 445347 \$1.33 ea for 10 or more \$2.65 ea

Bullying: What You Can Do About It—A Guide for Primary Level Students (K-3) Contains stories and exercises to help children deal with bullies and to stop bullying others (1999, 28 pp.)
 # 445397 \$1.33 ea for 10 or more \$2.65 ea

Bullying: What You Can Do About It—A Guide for Parents and Teachers of Primary Level Students Contains tips to help teachers and parents identify and respond to children who are involved in bullying (2000, 12 pp.)
 # 445454 \$1.33 ea for 10 or more \$2.65 ea

Bullying: What You Can Do About It—A Guide for Upper-Elementary Students and Their Parents Directed at students who are the victims, witnesses or perpetrators of bullying, and their parents (2000, 16 pp.)		
<input type="checkbox"/> # 445321	\$1.33 ea for 10 or more	\$2.65 ea
Bullying in Schools: What You Can Do About It—A Teacher's Guide (1–6) Describes strategies that teachers can follow to stop bullying in schools (1997, 10 pp.)		
<input type="checkbox"/> # 445339	\$1.33 ea for 10 or more	\$2.65 ea
Beyond Bullying: A Booklet for Junior High Students (7–9) Explains what students should do if they are being bullied or if they see someone else being bullied (2000, 12 pp.)		
<input type="checkbox"/> # 445470	\$1.33 ea for 10 or more	\$2.65 ea
Beyond Bullying: What You Can Do To Help—A Handbook for Parents and Teachers of Junior High Students (7–9) Defines bullying behaviors and suggests strategies that parents and teachers can follow to deal with it (1999, 16 pp.)		
<input type="checkbox"/> # 445488	\$1.33 ea for 10 or more	\$2.65 ea
Bullying is Everybody's Problem: Do You Have the Courage to Stop It? (Pkg of 30) (7–12) A guide for senior high students, defines bullying and provides advice on how to respond to it (1999)		
<input type="checkbox"/> # 445305	\$4.76 for 10 or more pkgs	\$6.80/pkg
Bullying and Harassment: Everybody's Problem—A Senior High Staff and Parent Resource (10–12) Provides advice for parents and teachers of high school students on how to deal with bullying (2000, 12 pp.)		
<input type="checkbox"/> # 445496	\$1.33 ea for 10 or more	\$2.65 ea
Class Meetings for Safe and Caring Schools (K–12) Explains how regular class meetings can help teachers and students work out conflicts before they become major problems (1998, 20 pp)		
<input type="checkbox"/> # 445587	\$1.33 ea for 10 or more	\$2.65 ea
Expecting Respect: The Peer Education Project—A School-Based Learning Model (K–12) Provides an overview of Expecting Respect, a project that trains junior and senior high students to make classroom presentations on establishing healthy social relationships (1999, 16 pp.)		
<input type="checkbox"/> # 445462	\$1.33 ea for 10 or more	\$2.65 ea
Safe and Caring Schools: Havens for the Mind (K–12) Reviews the role of SACS in healthy brain development and learning		
<input type="checkbox"/> # 445503	\$1.33 ea for 10 or more	\$2.65 ea
Media Violence: The Children Are Watching—A Guide for Parents and Teachers (K-12) Contains tips for parents and teachers in countering the effects on children of media violence (1999, 12 pp.)		
<input type="checkbox"/> # 445511	\$1.33 ea for 10 or more	\$2.65 ea
Peer Support and Student Leadership Programs (K-12) Describes a number of programs that have been used successfully at various grade levels to encourage students to help their fellow students (2000, 30 pp.)		
<input type="checkbox"/> # 445503	\$1.33 ea for 10 or more	\$2.65 ea
Niska News (K–12) A collection of articles about SACS reprinted from The ATA News (1999, 36 pp.)		
<input type="checkbox"/> # 445529	\$1.33 ea for 10 or more	\$2.65 ea

Principals' Best (K–12) Describes activities that various schools in the province have undertaken to create a safe and caring environment for students (1999, 16 pp.) See website.

445545 \$1.33 ea for 10 or more \$2.65 ea

Volunteer Mentorship Programs: (K–12) Describes a number of successful programs in which adult volunteers were assigned to serve as mentors to school-aged children (2000, 28 pp.)

445579 \$1.33 ea for 10 or more \$2.65 ea

Volunteer Mentorship Program: (K–12) A video portrays programs in which adults from the community work with children to help them develop various skills (1999, 9 ½ minutes)

445602 \$ 7.00

Volunteer Mentorship Program: A Practical Handbook (includes 3.5" disk) (K–12) Explains how to set up programs in which adults serve as mentors to school-aged children (1999, 44 pp. plus a computer disk containing sample documents used in the program)

445595 \$10.00

CHECK LRC FOR NEW TITLES

II. TOWARD A SAFE AND CARING CURRICULUM—RESOURCES FOR INTEGRATION

These resources are recommended and approved by Alberta Learning. They integrate violence prevention into all subjects K–6 and are divided into five topics: (approximately 85 pp.)

1. Building a Safe and Caring Classroom/Living Respectfully
2. Developing Self-Esteem
3. Respecting Diversity and Preventing Prejudice
4. Managing Anger and Dealing with Bullying and Harassment
5. Working It Out Together/Resolving Conflicts Peacefully

Student resource sheets are available in French. To order, check (F).

Kindergarten # 445446 F (Out of Province \$69.00) \$49.00

Grade 1 # 445371 F (Out of Province \$69.00) \$49.00

Grade 2 # 445389 F (Out of Province \$69.00) \$49.00

Grade 3 # 445404 F (Out of Province \$69.00) \$49.00

Grade 4 # 445412 F (Out of Province \$69.00) \$49.00

Grade 5 # 445420 F (Out of Province \$69.00) \$49.00

Grade 6 # 445438 F (Out of Province \$69.00) \$49.00

Anti-Bullying Curriculum Materials: Social Studies Grades 10, 11, 12 Developed by Project Ploughshares Calgary, this booklet contains a series of exercises that teachers can use to incorporate the topic of bullying into the high school social studies curriculum (1999, 81 pp.)

445563 \$10.00

Classroom Management: A Thinking and Caring Approach Written by Barrie Bennett and Peter Smilanich, this manual outlines numerous strategies that teachers can use to cope with misbehavior in the classroom and create a learning environment that encourages student learning (1994, 342 pp.)

445660 \$31.60

SACSC series of six full-color posters A series of six full-color posters highlighting the Project's key concepts.

444836 \$ 9.00

III. TOWARD A SAFE AND CARING PROFESSION

The SACSC trains inservice leaders and workshop facilitators. The following workshops are designed to help teachers implement the curriculum resources.

Toward a Safe and Caring Curriculum—ATA Resources for Integration: Kindergarten to Grade 6*

Toward a Safe and Caring Secondary Curriculum—Approaches for Integration*

A series of short sessions focused on strengthening SACS teaching strategies is also available.

IV. TOWARD A SAFE AND CARING COMMUNITY

This program area is designed to help all adults who work with children—parents, teachers, coaches, youth group leaders, music instructors—model and reinforce positive social behavior, whether at school, at home or in the community. The community program includes a series of 2-2½ hour workshops for adults and older teens.

Living Respectfully*

Developing Self-Esteem*

Respecting Diversity and Preventing Prejudice*

Managing Anger*

Dealing with Bullying*

Working It Out Together - Resolving Conflicts Peacefully*

Who Cares? brochures (Pkg of 30) Provides background on the Safe and Caring Communities Project, a collaborative effort between the ATA and Lions Clubs of Alberta (1998)

444654 \$ 9.80

Who Cares? CD-ROM and brochure Describes the Safe and Caring Communities Project, a collaborative effort between the ATA and the Lions Clubs of Alberta (1998)

444646 \$ 4.35

Who Cares? video and brochure Describes the Safe and Caring Communities Project, a collaborative effort between the ATA and the Lions Clubs of Alberta (1997, 11 minutes)

444638 \$ 5.95

Toward a Safe and Caring Community Workshops Action Handbook: A Guide to Implementation

Provides specific information about how to implement the ATA's Safe and Caring Schools Project—Toward a Safe and Caring Community Program. In addition, the handbook provides suggested activities and strategies to help communities continue to work on issues related to enhancing respect and responsibility among children and teens.

455304 \$ 7.00

Violence-Prevention Catalogue of Alberta Agencies' Resources Compilation of the information that was gathered from over 200 organizations and community groups who work in the area of violence prevention, and with children and youth in character development through community leadership

455312 \$ 7.00

SACSC PROMOTIONAL ITEMS

SACSC cards with color logo and envelopes (Pkg of 40) Blank card and envelope, featuring the

SACSC logo

☐ # 444547 \$ 10.00

Niska hand puppet Featuring the Niska mascot

☐ # 444555 \$ 14.00

Niska labels (800 peel & stick labels per pkg) Featuring the Niska mascot

☐ # 444571 \$ 4.00

Niska mouse pad 8 ½" by 9 ½" featuring the Niska mascot

☐ # 444563 \$ 6.00

Niska tattoos (125 per pkg) A 1½" by 1½" temporary tattoo featuring Niska

☐ # 444597 \$23.40

Niska water bottles (5 per pkg) 5 white plastic water bottles featuring the Niska logo

☐ # 444612 \$ 8.50

Niska zipper pulls (5 per pkg) Bronze, featuring the Safe and Caring Schools Logo

☐ # 444589 \$ 7.75

SACSC award buttons (Pkg of 30–2 ¼" white buttons)

☐ # 444620 \$10.00

Safe and Caring Schools and Communities coffee mug

☐ # 444604 \$ 5.45

Safe and Caring Schools and Communities pencils (Pkg of 30) Inscribed with "Toward a Safe and Caring Community"

☐ # 444662 \$10.70

Niska T-Shirt (white, featuring the Niska mascot front and back)

☐ # 444745 adult X-large; ☐ # 444737 adult large; ☐ # 444729 adult medium; ☐ # 444711 adult small; ☐ # 444703 youth X-large; ☐ # 444696 youth large; ☐ # 444688 youth medium;

☐ # 444670 youth small \$10.50

SACSC men's golf shirt (white, featuring the Niska mascot)

☐ # 444787 X-large; ☐ # 444779 large; ☐ # 444761 medium; ☐ # 444753 small \$24.95

SACSC women's golf shirt (white, sleeveless, featuring the Niska mascot)

☐ # 444828 X-large; ☐ # 444810 large; ☐ # 444802 medium; ☐ # 444795 small \$24.45

***All workshop materials can be ordered from the SACSC office by inservice leaders and workshop facilitators who have successfully completed the training: e-mail office@sacsc.ca, fax (780) 455-6481 or phone (780) 447-9487.**

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