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HOWARDS GROVE SCHOOL DISTRICT

*Education is not expensive. It is priceless.*

# Howards Grove School District

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Our efforts to create a nurturing  
learning environment for all.

Parent/Community Information Packet

## **Partners**

Howards Grove School District is committed to providing a nurturing learning environment for all of its community members and will not tolerate any action or behavior that restricts any person's rights to physical and emotional safety.

Helping students develop into respectful individuals with empathy for others and personal integrity is a partnership between home, school, and the community.

Schools and classrooms characterized by caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities to participate produce resilient youth. (Bernard, 1997)

*Responsibility of our Community:* All members of our community have a responsibility to work toward the prevention and management of bullying. If all members work together to reduce bullying, the safety and comfort of all members will be facilitated.

## **Opportunities to Learn and Grow**

Through the Howards Grove School District curriculum and a Comprehensive School Counseling Program emphasis is placed on character education, getting along with others and being respectful.

Modeling and teaching the social skills of anger management, problem solving, friendship and conflict resolution help to raise happy, healthy, and caring children, who are respectful and able to stand up for themselves.

This prepares and equips students with the knowledge, skills and abilities to prevent them from becoming targets and empowers them to stop bullying when they are the target or bystander of bullying. It also includes elements that lead bullies to change their behaviors.

# What is Bullying?

**“Bullying”** is a form of overt and aggressive behavior that is intentionally hurtful (physically or psychologically or both), persistent (occurs repetitively), and includes an imbalance of power (stronger in some way – actual or perceived).

Bullying can be physical, verbal, psychological (emotional), and/or electronically transmitted (cyberbullying) or a combination of any of these. Some examples of bullying, that can be performed by an individual or a group are:

- A. Physical – hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, pulling, taking and/or damaging personal belongings or extorting money, blocking or impeding student movement, unwelcome physical contact.
- B. Verbal – taunting, malicious teasing/name calling/insulting, using inappropriate language, or making threats.
- C. Psychological – spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, coercion, or engaging in social exclusion/shunning, extortion, or intimidation.
- D. “Cyberbullying” – the use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging (IM) defamatory personal web sites, and defamatory online personal polling web sites, to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by and individual or group, that is intended to harm others.

Cyberbullying can be particularly devastating to young people because:

- Cyberbullies more easily hide behind the anonymity that the Internet provides;
- Cyberbullies spread their hurtful messages to a very wide audience with remarkable speed;
- Cyberbullies do not have to own their own actions, as it is usually very difficult to identify cyberbullies because of screen names, so they do not fear being punished for their actions; and
- The reflection time that once existed between the planning of a prank– or a serious stunt–and its commission has all but been erased when it comes to cyberbullying activity.

Cyberbullying includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Posting slurs or rumors or other disparaging remarks about a student on a web site or on weblog.
- Sending e-mail, text or instant messages that are mean or threatening, or so numerous as to drive-up the target’s cell phone bill
- Using a camera phone to take and send embarrassing photographs of students; posting misleading or fake photographs of students on web sites.

## **STAFF**

The staff is required to:

- Be positive role models in their behavior
- Be aware of the types of bullying behavior and consistently vigilant in identifying it
- Be alert when children are in less supervised areas and more proactive in providing responsible supervision
- Provide help to targets first
- Document any bullying activity
- Report all bullying documentation to the building principal/school counselor handling discipline and consequences.
- Maintain confidentiality of all bullying incidents and reporting by others
- Teach/model appropriate use of technology

## **STUDENTS**

Students are required to:

- Make a decision to avoid bullying any other person
- Take a step to alert an adult or help the targeted student if bullying occurs
- Report to an adult in a truthful way to ensure the safety of all students
- Be a part of an advocate community and do “the right thing” in helping those less fortunate
- Use technology appropriately

## **PARENTS**

Parents are required to:

- Encourage their children to ensure the safety of all students
- Encourage their children to support any child who feels threatened either during or after a bullying incident
- Encourage children to report to an adult if bullying occurs
- Document any report of bullying and contact the school
- Speak to staff in a respectful manner when contacting the school
- Encourage children to be caring community members and not be aggressive or retaliatory to others even if they are targeted
- Accept the school’s response to the bullying even if it is not apparent to you immediately
- Monitor their children’s use of technology (i.e. e-mail, internet, social networking, etc.)
- Model appropriate use of technology

## If Bullying Occurs:

- The school staff will deal with the incident immediately
- Staff will document it
- The staff person in charge of discipline will review and deal with the situation as he or she sees fit.
- Support for the target will be given
- Consequences and discipline will be discussed with the offending child
- The offending child will be asked to reflect on his/her own behavior without judgment or blame toward others
- Pupils may experience consequences that include:
  - Loss of recess or activity
  - Loss of computer privileges
  - Call home to parent
  - Detention
  - Behavioral contract
  - Community service
  - Restitution
  - Suspension or Expulsion (based on severity and chronicity of problem)
  - Other consequences that match the situation
- Staff will look for patterns of bullying behavior

**Remember**, bullying is a form of overt and aggressive behavior that is intentionally hurtful (physically or psychologically or both), persistent (occurs repetitively), and includes an imbalance of power (stronger in some way – actual or perceived.). One act of teasing or rude behavior doesn't equate to bullying. Bullying requires repetition.

We will work with students to understand that they have the power as an individual, group, class, or school to work together and change things—specifically to eliminate meanness and bullying as acceptable behaviors.

They can make a difference.

We will work with the students to stand up for what is right. They need to learn that they, not the bully, have tremendous power.

# Parent Checklist

If you feel that there is a bullying situation, here is a list of things to consider.

1. Do I clearly know what happened? Dates, times, who was involved? What children saw the incident? What adults may have seen it?
2. Do any school personnel know about the incident?
3. Do I understand the definition of bullying?
4. Have I calmed myself enough to have a discussion that is clear and constructive without becoming too aggressive myself?
5. Does this incident require school intervention? If so:
  - a. If a first incident, who should I contact first?
    - i. Teacher: through a phone call, e-mail and/or note, and ask for this to be confidential
    - ii. Has teacher responded to me within twenty-four hours? If not, go to Principal
    - iii. Principal contact in addition to teacher? Only if it is so serious that significant emotional or physical safety is at issue.
    - iv. Other school personnel? Only if incident involved someone in the school who may have been present (monitor, lunch lady, etc.) Ask the school if I have permission to contact one of these staff members.
  - b. If this is the second or third contact, and this has happened before with the same kid(s):
    - i. Contact the teacher again with phone call and note.
    - ii. Ask for phone meeting with the teacher
    - iii. Ask for phone meeting with the principal, or send a note to the principal with an explanation of the situation
    - iv. Ask what strategies the teacher has used to handle this. How effective or ineffective was the intervention?
    - v. Can there be a private meeting with my child (if the child feels okay about this and it is confidential) to come up with a plan?
    - vi. Ask for feedback from the teacher/principal weekly, or even daily if my child is fearful of a situation recurring.
    - vii. Are there any other ideas the school can provide for my child that will not stigmatize my child further?

# **Bully Stopper Guide**

## **Check-in time**

As adults, when we witness or hear about our child being teased or bullied, our first instinct is to “make it stop,” get involved, and correct the situation. While it is natural to want to protect your child by solving the problem for them, teaching them to solve it themselves is much more effective.

In order to bully-proof our children, schools, parents, teachers, and students must work together.

Once you’ve established that something has happened that sounds like bullying, it’s time for the child to do a little assessment to figure how to resolve the problem. The following are questions the child can ask her/him self while in the situation, and afterward, when analyzing it.

1. **Has this ever happened to me before?**

One-time events don’t always require actions. Children often test out being mean or bullying behavior, without making a habit of it. Children don’t have great regulation over their emotions, and they sometimes change allegiances every five minutes. The person they were fighting with this morning might be their best friend this afternoon. If there is no immediate safety issue and no pattern of bullying established, lean toward a “wait and see” approach.

2. **Does the Bully know he/she hurt me? Does he/she care?**

We need to establish whether the other child is really bullying, testing out bullying, or not even aware of hurtful behaviors. If the other child is aware that your child was hurt (emotionally or physically), how did he/she react? Did he/she apologize or try to help in any way? If so, that’s also a sign of empathy and perhaps a sign that the child is simply “testing” bullying and is not truly a bully...yet.

3. **Is there any way for me to laugh this off?**

This is a hard one for a sensitive child to answer. Almost every time, the initial answer will be no. But the more the child can learn to smile, laugh, or grin along with the bullies rather than getting upset, the more likely it is that the bullies will give up trying to get a rise out of your child. Try to work out a scale with your child, so he/she can check in with themselves to determine how bad this particular event really is. On a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 is the worst, how embarrassing is this event? How hurtful is the comment? If it’s below an 8, it can probably be laughed off, with some practice.

## **Bully Stopper Guide (cont.)**

4. **Am I in Physical Danger?**

If the answer to this is yes, there can't be any "wait and see" time. Something will need to be done immediately, and it probably can't be done alone. But it still needs to be done with the child's understanding and consent—it's not in your best interest or the child's best interest to barrel through and take over the situation.

5. **Do I feel powerful enough to confront the bully myself?**

If so, it's just a matter of formulating a time and place, and what words and body language to use. This should NEVER be done if it is not safe.

6. **Can I rely on others?**

Your child may have loyal friends who just don't know what's happening or don't know how to help. They may need to hear specifically what to do: when your child needs someone to walk with, what words to say if your child is being picked on, when to get a teacher, and so on. Maybe your child would feel strong enough to confront the bully if your child's friends were there for backup.

Using these questions, along with other tools, children can momentarily derail the momentum of playground or classroom events and create an opportunity to assess the danger they are in and decide on a strategy to help them handle the situation if it occurs again.

These questions also help them distinguish between true bullying and one-time fights. These guides also help children begin to think about the power of the bully in relation to themselves, and whether or not they can safely take action or need to count on others (friends or adults) to help them.

## Sources

Bullying from Both Sides: Strategic Interventions for Working With Bullies and Victims	Walter Roberts
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Bullying Prevention for Schools: A Step-By Step Guide to Implementing a Successful Anti-Bullying Program	Allan Beane
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Bully-proofing Children: A Practical Hands-on Guide to Stop Bullying	Joanne Scaglione
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Bully-Proofing your School: A Comprehensive Approach for Elementary Schools	Carla Garrity
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