

# What Teachers Can Do to Address Bullying Behavior

Teachers are present most often when bullying occurs at school. If peer relations are a problem they often interfere with the educational goals of the class. In addition social and interpersonal relations are important issues to prepare students for life beyond the school and classroom. Teachers can try some of the following suggestions to help with bullying prevention:

- Involve students in the formation of classroom rules about bullying.
- Provide classroom activities and discussions related to bullying and violence, including the hurt bullying can cause and ways to reduce bully behavior. Use strategies such as role-play, class meetings, and stories about bullying.
- Develop a classroom plan so students know what to do when bullying occurs. Talk about the difference between telling and tattling. Encourage them to report bullying.
- Teach cooperation by assigning activities that require collaboration. Monitor the treatment of participants, and take care when grouping students.
- Take immediate action when bullying occurs. By doing so you send a message to all students that bullying is not accepted behavior. Speak to the bystanders and not just the bully about the behavior.
- Confront bullies in private. Let them know you are aware of the behavior. Do not challenge them in front of their peers, as this may increase their aggression and status.
- Notify both the parents of targets and bullies, and seek to resolve the problem at school. Listen receptively when parents express concerns over bullying situations and support investigative and school action plans for bully behavior.
- Refer both targets and bullies to counseling when appropriate.
- Avoid attempts to mediate a bullying situation. The difference in power between the target and bully will likely make the target feel more victimized by mediation and may feel the bullying is somehow their fault.
- Provide protection for targets when needed. Create buddy systems; encourage friendships for children who are possible targets.
- Promote positive behaviors in students and recognize students who display pro-social behaviors regularly.