

# **Bullying Prevention Guidelines Loudoun County Public Schools**

## **Introduction**

All students have the right to attend school where their individual differences are respected and where they are free of fear of harassment and bullying. Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) actively uphold and support efforts to prevent harassment and bullying.

The responsibility for combating bullying rests with the entire school community. Administrators are the acknowledged leaders in this effort; however, responsibility for effective anti-bullying programs must be the responsibility of the total school community. The administrators, teachers, students, and parents must be united in their knowledge, approach, and response to this effort.

In an effort to unite with parents to promote awareness and prevention of bullying, a sub-committee of the bullying prevention committee conducted parent focus groups to include parents of students enrolled in all grade levels in LCPS. The intention was to obtain the following information:

1. What are parents' perceptions regarding pervasiveness of the various types of bullying?
2. What are parents' perceptions regarding effective resources and venues for promoting bullying awareness and prevention within the schools?

Each school should identify its specific needs and implement strategies that are comprehensive and school-wide in an effort to protect its students and prevent bullying. Goals of the strategies should include increasing respect for differences in individuals and their beliefs, reducing bullying behaviors among students, preventing the development of new problems, and creating better peer interactions within the school. The programs should include, but not be limited to assessing bullying within the school; assessing and gaining the staffs' commitment to addressing bullying; implementing actions/programs that address the school's needs; collecting data to track the effectiveness of school efforts; and insuring that programs are continuing and long-term. Building strong bullying prevention programs in the elementary schools provides a stronger foundation as students transition to secondary education.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to provide consistent guidelines, suggest strategies, and identify resources in order for each school in LCPS to develop approaches to prevent bullying. This document focuses on prevention so all students are respected and open to learning. The information was shared at the April, 2010 elementary and secondary principals meetings and opportunities for discussion and feedback were provided.

LCPS currently provide a variety of programs to prevent bullying, as described in the "Bullying Prevention Framework" on the LCPS website, <http://cmsweb1.loudoun.k12.va.us>, under "Pupil Services." Additionally, many schools have site-specific programs.

## Definition of Bullying

### Bullying

- is an intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act of aggression or a series of acts that occur in a school setting;
  - School setting shall mean in the school, on school grounds, in school vehicles, at designated bus stop or at any activity sponsored, supervised or sanctioned by the school.
- is persistent or pervasive;
- is directed at another student or students;
- occurs in a relationship characterized by an imbalance of power;
- may create a personal fear that interferes with a student's ability to function; and
- has the effect of doing any of the following:
  - substantially interfering with a student's education;
  - creating a threatening environment; or
  - substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

A school may add to the definition of bullying acts that occur outside a school setting, if those acts

- are persistent or pervasive;
- are directed at another student or students; and
- have the effect of doing any of the following:
  - substantially interfering with a student's education,
  - creating a threatening environment, or
  - substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

Bullying behavior is a subtype of the broader concept of peer aggression and victimization; bullying prevention approaches must focus more broadly on reducing all forms of aggressions and victimization, regardless of the intent, frequency, and power differential.

## Loudoun County Public Schools Policies and Practices

Support for deterrence of bullying behaviors and disciplinary actions to address such behaviors exists in the following documents of Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS):

- LCPS School Board Health, Safety, and Wellness Goal: LCPS will strengthen programs that support safe learning environments free of bullying, teasing, and physical violence.
- *Student Rights and Responsibilities 2009 – 2010*, p. 14 "Harassment/Bullying"
- School Board Policy 8-6, "Sexual Discrimination/Harassment"
- School Board Policy 8-38, "Reporting of Offenses"
- "LCPS 2009-2010 Discipline Codes and Guidelines for Building Administrators" which explains office referral codes for reporting to the Virginia Department of Education.
  - Definition: Using repeated negative behaviors intended to frighten or cause harm. These may include, but are not limited to verbal or written threats or physical harm.
  - Consequences for bullying

## Guiding Principles of Bullying Prevention

- A school climate characterized by acceptance, positive interest, respect, and involvement with adults is important to promote an environment which supports learning and the development of the whole child.
- Bullying prevention efforts must be continual over time, multi-faceted, collaborative among all staff, and comprehensive.
- Effective bullying prevention is based on an authoritative, not authoritarian, model for the relationship between adults and children, where teachers are expected to demonstrate responsibility for the students' total environment, not just their learning.
- Developing simple, clear, and firm rules about bullying can help to ensure that students are aware of adults' expectations that they can refrain from bullying and help students who are bullied.
- All students must be taught expected behavior.
- Specific instruction and pre-correction to prevent bullying behavior from being rewarded by victims and bystanders must be essential elements in bullying prevention.
- Monitoring and acknowledgement of students for engaging in appropriate behavior is critical to the success of bullying prevention.
- If a student does not meet expectations that have been established, consequences must be applied consistently and appropriately.
- The collection and use of survey information from students and staff should guide decision making about effectiveness of the program and subsequent plans.

## Framework for Effective Bullying Prevention

- Bullying Prevention focuses on the whole school environment and uses a three-tiered approach based on student needs:
  - Universal – provided by school counselors in collaboration with school instructional staff
  - Targeted – provided by school counselors, social workers, and psychologists
  - Intensive – provided by school social workers and psychologists
- Each school should use an existing team or form a committee/team to coordinate bullying prevention efforts.
  - The team may be part of the equity team, school improvement plan committee, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) leadership team, school climate team, etc.
  - Suggestions for team members include teachers, administrators, school counselors, school resource officers, parents, coaches, bus drivers, and students.
  - The team should share information with the entire staff at least quarterly.
- The school team responsible for oversight of the school's bullying prevention program will provide training for all staff members which will
  - Establish expectations, procedures, and strategies to reduce bullying behavior;
  - Establish consequences (positive and negative);
  - Identify and increase adult supervision in “hot spots” for bullying incidents identified by the school's survey;
  - Intervene consistently and appropriately in bullying;
  - Provide information regarding legal liability as a result of unaddressed bullying in schools; and
  - Focus classroom time on bullying prevention and intervention.
- Each school should assess bullying behaviors at the school.
  - A central office committee will collaborate with the LCPS Research Office to create surveys and provide information about analysis of the results.
  - Sample surveys will be provided to each school.
  - Schools may add to the survey.
- Each school will have solutions tailored to address bullying prevention. Specific components can include the following:
  - Educating students, staff, and parents regarding
    - What bullying is,
    - How to prevent it,
    - How to respond to concerns about it, and
    - How to report concerns about it.
  - The role and responsibilities of bystanders must be addressed; students must be encouraged to report known or suspected bullying among their peers.
  - The needs of victims must be addressed.
  - Positive, pro-social role models, both peers and staff, are especially important for students who bully.
  - Consequences for bullying are logical and clear.

- Schools will continue to conduct meetings at the beginning of the school year to explain student behavioral expectations and information in the LCPS *Student Rights and Responsibilities*.
- Elementary schools will implement the “Bullying Prevention in Positive Behavior Support” (BP-PBS) program in combination with other strategies.
  - Administrators, teachers, and counselors will be responsible for the program implementation.
  - Schools implementing PBIS will receive training during PBIS training and refresher training sessions.
  - Schools not implementing PBIS should download the program from [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org) and click on “Bullying Prevention.” School counselors will receive training in implementation during the 2010 school year; however, implementation of the program is the responsibility of the entire school staff.
  - Additional training will be offered for school teams through *My Learning Plan* (MLP) by Pupil Services staff.
- Middle school counselors will provide guidance lessons at each grade level regarding bullying prevention. Middle schools will continue to use the violence and bullying prevention Standards of Learning (SOL’s) of the Health and Physical Education curriculum. Middle schools will phase in implementation of the Safe School Ambassadors program during the next two years. This intervention can be incorporated into the PBIS framework established in schools.
- The focus of bullying prevention efforts at the high schools will be social justice and tolerance of differences. High schools will continue to use the violence and bullying prevention Standards of Learning (SOL’s) of the Health and Physical Education curriculum at Grades 9 and 10. High schools will use PEER Helpers and school counselors for bullying prevention activities, as appropriate. *Friends Helping Friends* is the curriculum currently being used in the PEER Helper Program. Last year resources from the *Teaching Tolerance* project of the Southern Poverty Law Center were added. The PEER Helper sponsors have access to the publication called *Responding to Hate at School*, and the students use the guide *Speak Up!*, which addresses how to respond to everyday prejudice. Each of these publications can be viewed at [www.teachingtolerance.org](http://www.teachingtolerance.org). High schools are encouraged to consider implementation of the Safe School Ambassadors program.
- The programs listed above will be universal for all schools in LCPS, and additional programs and resources may be used as desired, needed, and appropriate.
- All schools will
  - identify the appropriate school staff person to receive referrals of incidents of alleged bullying and
  - enter referrals consistently into Star\_Web.
- All schools will evaluate program effectiveness through
  - committee/team meetings,
  - information stored in Star\_Web, and
  - student/staff surveys conducted a minimum of two times per school year.
- Bus drivers will be trained in the basics of bullying prevention and BP-PBS by Pupil Services staff and appropriate responses during their staff development session.

## Resources and Department of Pupil Services Contacts:

- Bullying Prevention-Positive Behavior Support
  - *Cathy Shwaery, Behavior Support Coordinator*
- Get Real about Violence
  - *Maril Jackson, Supervisor of Guidance Services*
  - *Beth Doyle, Guidance Specialist*
- Positive Experience in Educational Relationships (PEER)
  - *Allyne Zappalla, Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator*
- Safe School Ambassadors (SSA)
  - *Allyne Zappalla, Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator*
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
  - *Cathy Shwaery, Behavior Support Coordinator*
- Second Step
  - *John Lody, Director of Diagnostic and Prevention Services*
  - *Betsy Young, Supervisor of Student Support Services*
- Too Good for Violence
  - *Betsy Young, Supervisor of Student Support Services*
- [www.StopBullyingNow.hrsa.gov/](http://www.StopBullyingNow.hrsa.gov/) US Department of Health and Human Services National Bullying Prevention Campaign
  - *Beth Doyle, Guidance Specialist*

## **Selected School Approaches to Bullying Prevention**

### **Ball's Bluff Elementary School: Bullying Prevention-Positive Behavior Support**

Ball's Bluff Elementary School initiated a school-wide bullying prevention program in the 2009-2010 school year. When the staff returned in August, they were taught the Bullying Prevention-Positive Behavior Support (BP-PBS) strategies. The entire student body was taught about BP-PBS during a school-wide PBIS assembly. School counselors then provided classroom lessons about "Stop—Walk—Talk," essential components of BP-PBS, to students at all grade levels and continue to reinforce the message in their regular classroom lessons. Teachers also reinforce the concepts in their classrooms. Administrators check on teachers' and students' understanding and use of BP-PBS throughout the year and remind students of hand signals and language during any office referral.

### **Newton-Lee Elementary School: Bully-Free Zone**

Newton-Lee Elementary School (NLES) has established a school-wide approach to addressing the issue of bullying, through implementation of the "Bully-Free Zone" program. Each year, a portion of staff development days are dedicated to educating the staff about expectations and consequences surrounding bullying behavior at Newton-Lee. Posters hang throughout the school to remind students and staff that NLES is "Bully Free." The faculty also collaborates to provide a cohesive presentation to students during the first week of school, ensuring that the message is consistent from class to class and teacher to teacher. Students are educated about bullying behavior and its consequences, one of which includes a self reflection exercise. The initial goal of establishing the program was to eliminate bullying behavior among NLES students. Since the program's inception, the school has documented a lower number of office referrals. When the school counselor recently asked one new student what he liked most about Newton-Lee, he replied, "It's Bully- Free!"

### **Broad Run High School: Social Justice Week and Safe School Ambassadors**

Social Justice Week was established at Broad Run High School (BRHS) to help students develop increased understanding and respect for others. The initiative came from their February department meeting which focused on equity. Coming from the perspective that equity is a mind-set, not a strategy, a staff committee felt the best way to approach was to provide teachers with potential lesson ideas that might help start what many consider to be difficult conversations. BRHS saw this as great potential to use social studies classes as a way to discuss social justice and help kids become a part of what they are reading about in their textbooks. The committee developed a number of sample lessons and encouraged staff to create their own. Lessons have generated much discussion and awareness as well as appreciation of differences.

BRHS also has an established Safe School Ambassador (SSA) program. SSA is designed to teach a diverse group of students to notice and intervene in types of mistreatment including exclusion, put-downs, bullying, physical altercations, and acts against campus to foster a school climate of tolerance and respect. Instituted four years ago, BRHS's SSA program has grown to include 90+ students. They begin each school year with a required day-long training session.

Once trained, the family groups meet twice a month during FLEX time with their two adult facilitators. Throughout the year, they conduct at least five large group meetings where they refresh skills, discuss topics, role-play, and continue to build group cohesion. Data entered by the SSA students is analyzed by the program advisor to encourage interventions and assess concerns. This data is also used by the School Improvement Plan team. The SSA students have also been involved in implementation of the "Teaching Tolerance Speak Up!" campaign and study of a book and other materials regarding cyber bullying. At least two annual social events develop team-building among SSA members.

### **Potomac Falls High School: The Secret Life of Girls**

The Drama department of Potomac Falls High School (PFHS) performed a play called "The Secret Life of Girls" at River Bend Middle School and Eagle Ridge Middle School. The play centered on girl bullying that occurs in later middle school and early high school age groups. The play was about 45 minutes in length and was produced to seventh and eighth grade girls at both schools. At the conclusion of the play (performed completely by female drama participants), the high school students engaged the audience in a panel discussion. The discussion was facilitated by Ms. Tamara Christman, guidance director at PFHS, for River Bend Middle School and Mrs. Janice Koslowski, PFHS principal, at Eagle Ridge MS. Discussion focused on how bullying situations differ between middle and high school. The message essentially to the girls in the audience was to treat each other fairly and "have each other's back" in every case.

PFHS also implemented the SSA program. During the two years of implementation, the program has grown from 35 to 60 students. They host four all-ambassador meetings each year in addition to annual training. Family groups meet with staff facilitators weekly at the beginning of the school year and then meet every two weeks for the remainder of the school year. For the first time this year PFHS awarded a scholarship to a graduating SSA senior. On-line tutorials are provided for Ambassadors to increase their awareness and knowledge base; cyber bullying has been a major focus this year. Cumulative data about interventions is presented to the PFHS faculty and SSA students. The data is also used by the School Improvement Plan team to better address needs of the entire school population.

### **Stone Bridge High School: Bulldogs Don't Bully**

Junior and senior students of Stone Bridge High School (SBHS) wrote, produced, and presented their "Bulldogs Don't Bully" assembly to the ninth and tenth graders at the school. The idea for the production originated in a Government class discussion. Students were discussing Phoebe Prince, a high school student in Massachusetts who committed suicide after being harassed and bullied by classmates. The Stone Bridge students agreed that it was extremely important to get a strong anti-bullying message out to their classmates. The presenters, members of Safe School Ambassadors and PEER, met several times with Allison Alison, their Government teacher, and Tim Lucas, Director of Guidance, to plan the assembly. The on-stage presenters all wore t-shirts that bore the message, "Need a Friend?" on the front and "Bulldogs Don't Bully" on the back. They spoke of personal experiences, what bullying was, what to do if a student was a victim of bullying, and how to step in if a student witnessed bullying. After, SBHS students could purchase a "Need a Friend?" t-shirt; proceeds were given to a scholarship fund. The "Bulldogs Don't Bully" assembly was a strong example of students

caring, taking charge, and making a difference. The video of the presentation is available on Safari Montage and on the SBHS website: <http://cmsweb1.loudoun.k12.va.us/sbhs>.

SBHS also implemented the SSA program and views it as a critical piece of the climate of the entire school. The students truly are ambassadors and carry this responsibility seriously throughout the school and community. SBHS sponsors two training sessions each year for its Ambassadors. The second semester training is based on needs identified by interventions, target improvement of school climate, and involve practice of intervention skills and role-playing. Through frequent family meetings with facilitators, Ambassadors are given an avenue to discuss their observations and interventions. These discussions have helped school staff and administrators identify areas, groups, or even activities of concern. Data from SSA interventions is used as SBHS develops its School Improvement Plan. "Bulldogs Don't Bully" was developed because the instructor of the class happened to be an SSA group leader and several students in the class were Ambassadors. They ignited the entire process and with their trained skills took advantage of a situation and developed an assembly that will now be presented at the beginning of every school year.

Additional school-based approaches and resources will be added.

## **Future Steps**

- Develop resources for parents to include information regarding responses to out-of school bullying, including cyber bullying, which will be located on the LCPS website.
- Design surveys for determining student and staff perceptions of bullying behaviors and locations.
- Present information about the "Bullying Prevention Guidelines" at the next meeting of the Health, Safety, and Wellness Committee of the LCPS School Board.
- Discuss document and best practices at the LCPS Administrative Leadership Institute, August, 2010.
- Continue to seek ways to engage middle and secondary school students emotionally with the importance of bullying prevention and respect for others.
- Provide staff training and resources for schools.
- Expand Safe School Ambassadors from the current schools to include three additional middle schools and one additional high school in the 2010-2011 school year.
- Continue to expand the PBIS framework in LCPS to promote continuity of best practices within and across clusters at every level.
- Continue to develop the LCPS website and other media for educating students, staff, and parents about bullying prevention.

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## **Bullying Prevention Committee Members**

Beth Doyle	Guidance Specialist
Marilyn Jackson	Supervisor of Guidance Services
Pamela Jacobs	Principal, Tuscarora High School
Mary Kearney	Director of Special Education
Janice Koslowski	Principal, Potomac Falls High School
Anne Lewis	Director of Student Services
John Lody	Director of Diagnostic and Prevention Services
Dr. W. Michael Martin	Director of Elementary Education
Mark L. McDermott	Principal, Seneca Ridge Middle School
Rodney S. Moore	Principal, Stone Hill Middle School
Barbara P. Nichols	Director of Middle School Education
Christopher P. O'Rourke	Assistant Principal, Broad Run High School
Janet A. Platenberg	Principal, Steuart W. Weller Elementary School
Bruce W. Shafferman	Principal, Lowes Island Elementary School
Cathy Shwaery	Behavior Support Coordinator
David A. Spage	Director of High School Education
Betsy Young	Supervisor of Student Support Services
Allyne Zappalla	Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator