

Loudoun County Public Schools Framework for Bullying Prevention

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, counselors, students, and parents must be united in their knowledge, approach, and response to this effort.

The bullying prevention framework used in LCPS consists of three main components:

1. Provide students with the skills to respond appropriately to peer mistreatment or bullying;
2. Build resiliency skills in all students as prevention for bullying behaviors or victimization and;
3. Teach the entire school community a consistent bystander and adult response to peer mistreatment and bullying to effectively interrupt behavior that is disrespectful /hurtful to others.

Through the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) action plan, each school identifies its specific needs and implements strategies that are comprehensive and school-wide in an effort to protect its students and prevent bullying. Goals of the strategies 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 include, but are not 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 ongoing and sustainable for the 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 set expectations, 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.

LCPS currently provides a variety of programs to prevent bullying, as described on the LCPS website, <http://www.lcps.org/cms/lib4/VA01000195/Centricity/domain/127/bulling/Bullying.htm>.

By the fall, 2014, all Loudoun County Public Schools will have implemented the PBIS framework. PBIS is a research and evidenced-based practice for creating a common vision of behavioral expectations through consistent language and practices among staff and students. It is a framework of tiered approaches to address ALL the needs of ALL the members of the school community. Components of PBIS which address bullying prevention specifically are *Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support (Stop, Walk and Talk)* at the elementary level and *Bullying and Harassment Prevention in Positive Behavior Support: Expect Respect* at the secondary (middle and high school) level.

Additional initiatives facilitated through a partnership between Pupil Services and school staff provide support for bullying prevention efforts. Safe School Ambassadors, PEER Helpers, Building Resiliency Skills for Students with the Developmental Assets framework and the Strong Kids curriculum (elementary) are examples. New in the 2013-14 school year, secondary schools will have the opportunity to access Restorative Justice processes to address bullying and other peer mistreatment in school. Many schools have site-specific programs to meet the unique needs of their students.

Definition of Bullying

“Bullying” means any aggressive and unwanted behavior that is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim; involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor or aggressors and victim; and is repeated over time or causes severe emotional trauma. “Bullying” includes cyberbullying. “Bullying” does not include ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument, or peer conflict. (Code of Virginia § 22.1-276.01)

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, Wellness, and Transportation Goal: LCPS will strengthen programs that support safe learning environments free of bullying, teasing, and physical violence.
- *Student Rights and Responsibilities* “Harassment/Bullying”
- School Board Policy 8-6, “Sexual Discrimination/Harassment”
- School Board Policy 8-38, “Reporting of Offenses”

- “LCPS 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 Bullying Prevention

Elementary Schools

- Elementary schools implement the “Bullying Prevention in Positive Behavior Support” (BP-PBS “Stop, Walk and Talk”) program in combination with other strategies.
 - Administrators, teachers, and counselors will be responsible for the program implementation.
 - Schools will receive training during PBIS training and refresher training sessions.
 - Additional training will be offered for school teams by Pupil Services staff through *My Learning Plan* (MLP).

Middle Schools

- Middle schools will implement the *Expect Respect* strategies through the PBIS framework in each school.
 - PBIS coaches/school counselors will provide training and serve as resources for school teams.
 - School counselors will provide class presentations at each grade level regarding bullying prevention.
 - Schools will continue to use the violence and bullying prevention Standards of Learning (SOL's) of the Health and Physical Education curriculum.
 - Schools will continue to phase in implementation of the Safe School Ambassadors program. This intervention will be incorporated into the PBIS framework established in schools.

High Schools

- The focus of bullying prevention efforts at the high schools will be the implementation of *Expect Respect* and continued individual school initiatives. *Expect Respect* training will be provided through the PBIS coordination teams. Additional school efforts will address social justice and tolerance of differences.

High Schools will:

- Continue to use the violence and bullying prevention Standards of Learning (SOLs) of the Health and Physical Education curriculum at Grades 9 and 10.
- Use PEER Helpers and school counselors for bullying prevention activities, as appropriate. *Friends Helping Friends* is the curriculum used in the PEER Helper Program in addition to materials from the *Teaching Tolerance* project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. 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.
- Continue to phase in 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.

Department of Pupil Services Resources and Contacts:

- Get Real about Violence
 - *Maril Jackson, Supervisor of School Counseling Services*
 - *Beth Doyle, School Counseling Specialist*
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
 - *Stefanie LaPolla, Behavior Support Coordinator*
- Positive Experience in Educational Relationships (PEER)
 - *Allyne Zappalla, Supervisor of Student Support Services*
- Restorative Justice (RJ)
 - *Suzanne Petersen, Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator*

- Safe School Ambassadors (SSA)
 - *Allyne Zappalla, Supervisor of Student Support Services*
- Second Step
 - *John Lody, Director of Diagnostic and Prevention Services*
 - *Allyne Zappalla, Supervisor of Student Support Services*
- Too Good for Violence
 - *Allyne Zappalla, Supervisor of Student Support Services*
- www.StopBullyingNow.org US Department of Health and Human Services National Bullying Prevention Campaign
 - *Beth Doyle, School Counseling Specialist*
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