The 3 R’s To Bullying Prevention:
Recognize, Respond, and Report
by
Lori Ernsperger, Ph.D.
www.loriernsperger.com
drlori@cox.net

Copyright Ernsperger 2012
Learning Objectives

• Recognize the statistics of bullying
• Recognize the warning signs of victims
• Recognize the stereotypes of bullies
• Respond to the victims of bullies
• Respond to bullies effectively
• Teach anti-bullying social skills
• Report bullying incidence
“All my life I have been bullied.”

Luke Jackson,
Freaks, Geeks, and Asperger Syndrome
• Rosemarie
• Bullying throughout school years
• Multiple reports by parents
• Homeschooled
• Traumatized by the
  “Silence of Others”
  – Living at home
  – Quality of Life?
1. Recognize: Bullying Statistics

• 32% of all middle school and high school students (US DOE)
  – One out of 10 dropouts due to bullying
• 60% of children with disabilities (Ability Path)
• 88% of students with ASD (MA State DOE)
• 71% of adults with ASD reported being bullied in schools as a child
“Because of difficulty with social interactions and the inability to read social cues, individuals with ASD have higher rates of peer rejection and higher frequencies of verbal and physical attacks” (Ability Path)
What is Bullying?

- Myths About Bullying:
  - It is just teasing
  - Kids will be kids
  - It toughens kids up, makes them stronger
  - Just walk away
  - Don’t worry about it
  - Girls gossip and rumor mill
What is Bullying?

- Repeated interactions that causes harm; both physically and emotionally
- Power and control methods
- Aggressive and intimidating behavior meant to control others
- The abuse of power
- Physical, mental, verbal, cyber and social intimidation
- Can take many forms: hitting, kicking, shoving, teasing, name-calling, intimidation, social exclusion, gestures, and texting or cyber-bullying
“Intention”

• “I didn’t mean it” is not an excuse
• Any behavior that is unwelcomed by either party is bullying (OCR)
• Unwelcome conduct is bullying and can rise to Disability Harassment when it is repeated.
• The specific label used does not determine whether discrimination occurred (OCR)
  – The school district may call it “teasing” or “bullying” but it is Disability Harassment
  – The “R” word
Spread the Word to End the Word™

• Young people around the world are taking a stand and raising awareness of the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the words “retard” or “retarded” and are helping encourage others to think before they speak.

• Did you know the pejorative and ever increasing use of the R-word in today’s society further perpetuates the stigma and negative stereotypes that face people with intellectual disabilities?

• Up to three percent of the world’s population have intellectual disabilities - that’s 200 million people around the world. It’s the largest disability population in the world, perhaps you know someone?

• www.r-word.org
Bullying vs. Disability Harassment

• Slippery slope with no clear black and white rules

• Bullying **IS** Disability Harassment
  – Involvement of a student with an IEP or 504 plan

• Harassment creates a hostile environment when conduct is sufficiently severe, persistent and pervasive as to deny or limit a student’s opportunity to benefit from an educational program (OCR)
Bullying or Harassment?

- Students who tease or taunt a student with ASD and mocks them so he does not participate in class
- Students on the bus call a student “dumb” “retard” or “moron” and the student refuses to go to school
- A group of girls repeatedly excludes a young girl from sitting near them in the cafeteria because she goes to the resource room; so the student does not eat lunch
- A teacher repeated references students in her classroom as my “special ed kids” and the student’s grades begin to fail
  - Rosemarie
- If it causes harm, it is disability harassment.
Recognize

• “You know it when you see it.”
  – Consider the context and relationship
  – Two best friends are pushing each other in the hallway (welcome conduct)
  – Older student flips off a younger student with CP, they do not know each other (unwelcome conduct)
Recognize

• Even if a parent does not use the term “bullying” or “harassment”, it does not reduce the school’s legal requirement to investigate
  – Mom reports to school personnel “My son Ben, with ASD, is having problems with Jonathan at lunch for the past 3 weeks.”
  – The school must investigate as disability harassment (OCR)
Recognize Signs for the Victims

• Bullying creates a climate of fear for the entire school
• Negative impact on learning
• Victims may become:
  – Depressed or anxious
  – Low self-esteem
  – Deterioration of physical health: Experience head-aches
  – Absence from school or dislike school
  – Thoughts of suicide (US DOE)
Recognize the Bullies

- Bullying Stereotypes
  - The “Playground” bully
  - The “Mean Girl” bully
  - Movie stereotypes

- “Any student can become a bully given the right environmental conditions” (Swearer)

- Bullying can occur in all areas of the school environment

- Schools are responsible for all areas including:
  - Bus stops
  - Before and after school programs
  - Extracurricular activities
Recognize: The Legal Ramifications

• Bullying and/or disability harassment that adversely effects a student’s education may also be a denial of FAPE under IDEA as well as Section 504 and Title II (ADA).
  – OCR Letter to Schools: July, 25, 2000
  – OCR Letter to Schools: October 26, 2010

• Discussed further: Report Bullying
“School was hell wrapped in a hot winter fur. This one girl at school never wanted anything to do with me. All of my attempts to play with her resulted in rejection. As the school year progressed, my peers started to use my idiosyncrasies against me for their own fun.”

Rosemarie, Girls Under the Umbrella of ASD
2. Respond

• Immediate response
  – As the bullying occurs

• Short term response
  – Within 10 days

• Long-term response
  – Policy changes
Who Must Respond?

• All school personnel must respond immediately when observing bullying
• If you are hired by the school district, you must respond
  – Coaches
  – Hallway monitors
  – Teachers
  – Assistants
  – Bus drivers
  – Dean/counselor
  – Principal
  – Everybody

Copyright Ernsperger 2012
Immediate Response

• Upon Any Adult Observing Bullying:
  – Respond Immediately and Assertively
• Speak directly to the bully so that all can hear you
• Address the specific behavior
• Label the behavior
• Supervise students to class or safe environment
• Insure safe arrival to next area
• Write a report
Respond:
Scripts for All School Personnel

• BalanceEducationalServices.com (2008)

• School personnel are provided with a script:
  – “Stop! Talking like that (or pushing) right now.”
  – If you don’t know the student’s name, say “What is your name?”
  – “The way you are talking and calling that student “R” (or any insulting comment) is bullying.”
  – “In this school, we strictly forbid all bullying. You are breaking the school rules”
  – “Let’s get to class.”
Respond: Short Term

• Educate school wide and in the classroom
• Provide Disability Awareness
• Encourage inservice training
• Conduct Student Surveys
• Encourage PTA or other parent organizations to generate anti-bullying materials
  – Ability Path
  – www.stopbullying.gov
Respond: Bystanders

- Safety first
  - Non-aggressive or violent bullying
- Educate the bystanders
  - Dr. Michelle Borba: “Bystanders play a critical role in ending bullying”
- Empower bystanders to say “Stop!”
- Provide confidential reporting systems
- Bystanders should be encouraged to take an active role in stopping bullying attempts
- Hold bystanders accountable
- Build bonds of caring
  - Peer mentors
Bystanders

• Educate
• “The Juice Box Bully”
• The Promise
  – I will speak up instead of acting as a bystander
  – I will model good behavior
  – I will accept others for their differences
  – A will talk to an adult if there is a problem
  – I PROMISE to stand up against bad behavior and put an end to bullying
Respond: Teach The Victims

• Students with Disabilities (ASD) must have IEP goals and objectives that address the following:
  – Improve social skills such as sharing, taking turns, or thinking before acting
  – Develop ability to carry on a 2-way conversation
  – Practice assertive body language
  – Participate in a peer group or social activity to practice social skills
Respond: IEP Goals

• Increase self-advocacy skills so the child can learn to say “no”
• Improve speech intelligibility so the child can interact with peers
• Practice ways to handle bullies:
  • CALM Approach (Borba)
    – Cool Down
    – Assert Yourself
    – Look them in the eye
    – Mean it!
Respond: IEP Goals

• Modifications to the IEP:
  – Supervision
  – Leave class early
  – Staff training

• Teach in a variety of methods
  – Social Stories
  – Video modeling
    • www.modelmekids.com
  – Role Play
  – Direct Instruction
Respond: What NOT to Do!

• Do not tell a student to handle the harassment on his/her own, particularly when the student’s disability affects social skills, communication skills or cognitive issues. (OCR)

• Don’t punish the student who is being bullied
  — Lunch Isolation
“The Brooke Situation”

• “I went to the Dean’s office to file an incident report, as well as to let the teachers/parents know that Brooke was bullying me. My parents attended the school to discuss the situation.

• Brooke was good at bullying me because she did it when no teachers were around. (Sly)

• However, I wasn’t so good at being sly and therefore I was caught using inappropriate language in front of the Dean’s assistant. I was suspended because I could not take the bullying anymore and it is sad to me that children with ASD have to go through school being bullied.”
Respond: Long Term

• Review State Board of Education reporting system
  – State mandates for reporting
• District Wide Policies
• Meet with the Superintendent
• School Safety Teams in every building
• Stopbullying.gov
  – Kits for parents and teachers
3. Report

• Reporting Systems are inconsistent
• What are your state or school district’s reporting policies?
• Between 1999-2010: 120 legislative state bills addressing bullying in schools
  – www.bullypolice.org
• NV:
  – School Personnel can lose state license if they do not report; similar to child abuse laws for reporting
Report: Legal Ramifications

A NY judge has ruled in a precedent setting case regarding bullying and harassment for students receiving special education services (T.K. v New York Department of Education, 2011). A 12 year old girl with autism and her parents had repeatedly complained to the principal of bullying in school. The school did not take adequate steps to investigate and prevent future bullying. The district court ruled in favor of the parents that their daughter was denied a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) based largely on the Office of Civil Rights Harassment and Bullying Guidance Letter (2010).
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires that ALL schools have a prompt reporting system for grievances for individuals with disabilities (OCR)
Report: Procedures

• Immediate report must be written/ formal grievance
• Maintain good documentation and follow through
• Identify all incidents
• Prompt, thorough and impartial investigation
• Investigate
  – 10-days is optimal (OCR)
  – Scope of harassment/bullying can take longer
  – Interview any and all witnesses
  – Survey the school
  – Don’t limit investigation to the 2 parties only
Federal Policy Mandates

School is responsible for insuring that bullying or harassment does not continue which requires long-term monitoring

The protection of Section 504 or Title II is regardless of whether a complaint has been made by a student, the school must take action. (10/26/2010)
“Bullying is finally being recognized as a school safety issue that effects the entire school and must be addressed by school personnel.”

US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan
Report: Immediate Action (OCR)

• End harassment and prevent recurring
• Limit interaction amongst bully and victim
• Eliminate hostile environment
• Provide additional services to student who was denied services; remedy the effects
• Provide counseling
• Implement harassment monitoring program
  – Prevent retaliation against the complainant
Report: Parents

• Report directly to the principal
• Report in writing
  – www.pacer.org
• Follow-through with meetings
• Reach out to other parents
• Review written policies
• Be visible at school functions
• Demand anti-bullying policies
• Write letters to local and state leaders
• Contact the Office of Civil Rights
  – (800)-421-3481
Future Remedies

- Publicize school policies on bullying and harassment
- Create a School Safety Team
- Educate all staff; school assembly
- Involve parents and community
- Establish and sustain an environment of tolerance and respect
“If you fit in, life is easy. If you don’t, that’s when all the teasing and bullying starts. For kids on the spectrum, it can be pure hell.”

References

- Stopbullying.gov
- The R-Word; Special Olympics. www.r-word.org
- Office of Civil Rights: www.ed.gov/ocr
- http://specialneeds.thebullyproject.com Bully Free World Tool Kit
- www.autismspeaks.com Combating Bullying

Copyright Ernsperger 2012