

## The Best Ways To Prevent Bullying

- Create a home environment of tolerance, where differences are celebrated and everyone feels valued.
- Encourage your school to develop policy and procedures regarding bullying. Keep in mind that state law prohibits bullying for any reason, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, or sensory disability.
- Ask for a bullying prevention program to be implemented in your school.
- Intervene every time you witness bullying behavior. Preventing it is everyone's responsibility.
- If your child bullies others, provide predictable, consistent, matter-of-fact consequences.
- Support the child who is bullied. Work with the school to provide your child with effective protection against retaliation. Give emotional nurturing at home.
- Encourage bystanders to speak out against bullying behavior, to report it to adults, and to befriend excluded children.
- Spend time with your child and others. All children need a daily, personal connection with parents, teachers and other caring adults.



## How To Know If Your Child Is Involved

Keep the lines of communication open, but don't expect your child to automatically let you know about bullying. Instead, look for unspoken signs.

For example, if your child is being bullied, you might find the child:

- Is reluctant to go to school.
- Does not want to spend time with classmates after school.
- Takes a route to school that is indirect or different than usual.
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises, or headaches and stomachaches.
- Seems depressed or moody.
- Loses belongings or needs extra money.

Here are some signs that could indicate that your child is bullying others. Your child:

- Is aggressive, sometimes even toward adults.
- Likes pushing around and teasing other children.
- Dominates and manipulates.
- Is a smooth talker in tough situations.
- Is easily frustrated.

### Office of the Education Ombudsman

1110 Capitol Way S, Suite 304

P.O. Box 40004

Olympia, WA 98504-0004

Toll free: 1-866-297-2597

Fax: (360) 586-0052

[www.waparentslearn.org](http://www.waparentslearn.org)

Contact the Office of the Education Ombudsman if you'd like to receive this document in an alternative format to accommodate people with disabilities.

The Office of the Education Ombudsman provides information and referral services to students, families and communities regarding the public education system, promotes family and community involvement in education, and helps families and students resolve conflict with schools.



## Bullying at School

Office of the Education Ombudsman  
What a Family Can Do



State of Washington  
Office of the Governor

# Bullying Is Always Serious

Children need to feel safe before they can learn. To make sure this happens, every local school board in Washington is required to develop a policy that bans harassment, intimidation and bullying. Each school district must make its policy known to parents, students, volunteers and school employees.

## What Is Bullying?

Bullying is repeated negative behavior that takes advantage of a less-powerful person, and sometimes even makes the child who is bullied feel at fault. Hitting, name calling, shunning and shaming are all forms of bullying. So are spreading rumors, gossiping and making threats online. More than one in four eighth-graders reported in a 2006 Washington State survey that they were bullied at least once in the past month.

## Bad News on All Sides

The outcomes can be bad for both victim and aggressor. The child who is bullied may become depressed and anxious, patterns that can last a lifetime. The child who bullies, already abusing power at a young age, is more likely than others to engage in criminal behavior as an adult. Kids involved in bullying—in either role—also are at risk for abuse of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs.



## If There Is a Problem

- Don't blame anyone. Focus on solutions.
- Talk to your child about exactly what has happened. Ask for specific details.
- Tell the teacher, school counselor and principal, if they are not already involved.
- Notify the police if your child has been injured.
- Find out the school's process for filing a complaint.
- Ask the school to investigate the facts and develop a plan to improve the situation.
- Keep notes about details of specific bullying incidents, as well as conversations you have with school officials or other parents.
- Pursue the matter even if your child does not want you to, so long as you can assure your child's safety. Be sure to tell the child why this is necessary: for example, to make sure things will improve and to keep everyone safe.
- Insist on monitoring and protection for the child who is bullied.

## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE SCHOOL

- Discipline for the child who bullies.
- Increased supervision of students in the school building.
- Protection from retaliation for any child who has spoken up against bullying.
- Help for an isolated child to make friends.
- Commitment to prevent future bullying, followed by concrete actions.

If the principal does not respond to your satisfaction, get in touch with the school superintendent's office. Contact the Office of the Education Ombudsman if you have questions.

## HELP AT HOME FOR AN AGGRESSIVE CHILD

Have a talk about the bullying incident. Help your child tell what happened without accusing or blaming anyone. Get the child to look at the situation through the eyes of others involved and to understand how the others were affected. What was your child's goal: power, attention, fun? Brainstorm together about more constructive ways to reach the goal.

Be firm that you will not tolerate bullying. Calmly provide a non-physical consequence even if the school has also taken disciplinary measures. For example, in a matter-of-fact way, restrict privileges like TV time.

## HELP AT HOME FOR A CHILD WHO IS BULLIED

Tell your child that bullying is not his or her fault. Recognize that it is not your child's responsibility to fix a situation that includes bullying by someone stronger or by a group.

Do not tell your child to ignore abuse or to fight back. In most cases, by the time a parent learns about bullying, these responses have proven not to work.

Have a talk about your child's ideas to stop the bullying.

Praise the child for efforts already made and encourage continued reporting of every bullying incident to an adult.

If your child is isolated, provide new social opportunities with after-school activities, clubs or sports.

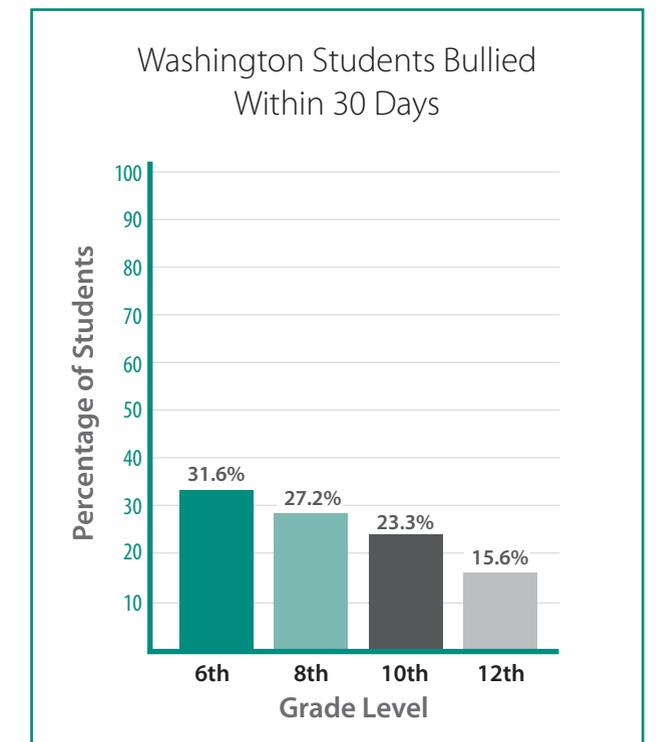
## HELP FOR ANY CHILD INVOLVED IN BULLYING

Be a model of assertive, respectful conduct for your child.

Make sure the atmosphere in your home is warm, and spend focused time with your child every day. Provide discipline in consistent ways. Notice and praise your child's good behavior.

Get professional help for your child and your family if you do not see progress in a reasonable time.

## Bullying in Washington State Public Schools



Healthy Youth Survey 2006 Survey Results