



October-National Bullying Prevention Month

In order to help students, parents, and teachers identify bullying behavior, it is important to define bullying and understand the differences between bullying, rude and mean behavior, and peer conflict.

While everyone would agree that bullying is wrong and harmful, not everyone agrees on what constitutes bullying. Some people are treated rudely causing them to be hurt by an inadvertent and unintentional comment or action. Although this may feel like bullying, rude behavior is impulsive and inconsiderate and not purposefully designed to hurt another person. Others are treated meanly which is intentionally hurtful, yet not considered bullying because it is isolated – occurring once or twice.

Bullying is defined as: Systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students that is:

- Severe or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment; or
- Unreasonably interferes with the individual's school performance or participation.

Bullying behaviors can fall into several categories: 1) intimidation, 2) verbal aggression, 3) physical aggression, 4) relational aggression (gossiping, spreading rumors, public humiliation), and 5) cyberbullying (the willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cellphones, and other electronic devices).

Whereas bullying is characterized by harmful intent, repetition and an imbalance of power; peer conflict happens occasionally and is often accidental. When children encounter conflict, adults can encourage them to resolve the conflict by calming down, asking questions and listening, and making a mutually agreed upon plan.

Unfortunately, the rules for resolving conflicts do not work with bullying. Because the power imbalance is too great, victims of bullying need to ask an adult for help. The single most effective deterrent to bullying is adult authority.

When adults receive a report of bullying, it is important to determine if the behavior is purposeful and repeated, and that an imbalance of power exists. If bullying has occurred, adults can positively intervene by listening and reassuring victims they are not alone, not to blame, and that bullying can end as a result of reporting to the proper authorities. A victim's peer group can also intervene by not becoming bystanders and by confronting the bully or reporting bullying to an adult.

To anonymously report bullying, you can:

- text a tip to 274637 (C-R-I-M-E-S) by using the key word DNTH8 (don't hate);
- call Student Crime Stoppers at 1-800-780-8477; or
- submit a Bullying Incident Form found on the District's Bullying Resources page at www.collierschools.com/bullying.

For more information on bullying, please refer to F.S. 1006.147 and School Board Policy 5517.01