



Deerfield Parent Network

“Network Notes”

From the Playground to Cyberspace: The Many Faces of Bullying *March 1, 2012*

Panelists included:

Dale Fisher, Principal of Caruso Middle School

Michael Shapiro, Principal of Shepard Middle School

Stephanie Locascio, M.S., NCC, LPC, Deerfield Police Department

Rick Weil, Investigative Officer, Deerfield Police Department

What are the differences between harassment, inappropriate behavior, teasing and bullying?

Inappropriate behavior is a catch-all term for any behavior in which negative consequences are inherent, i.e., missing homework, talking out of turn, tardiness, etc. **Teasing** is behavior that a child intends to be taken in a humorous vein or as a joke. Teasing is usually harmless when it is between two individuals who are closely associated, but it can be hurtful if a strong, positive relationship has not been established. **Bullying** is behavior that is **intended** to isolate another person or make that person feel bad, different, awkward, etc. Typically, there is an imbalance of power between the bully and victim. **Harassment** is behavior that is so outlandish that it crosses a line, such as an inappropriate grab or behavior that is sexual in nature. **Harassing behavior** goes beyond bullying; it is more appalling.

What is the likelihood that bullying a child will “go away.”?

Bullies thrive on the attention of other kids, but not adults. Bullying behavior often takes place out of site of adults; once an adult is aware of the bullying, it may stop. A student often fears reporting incidents of bullying, for fear of being labeled a tattler. We teach students that tattling is when a child reports on another student in order to get that student in trouble, but when the reporting is done to prevent further episodes of bullying, that's not tattling. Bullies often think they can get away with it, but if a bully knows an adult is witnessing his/her behavior, it usually stops.

What does the school do to educate our children about bullying?

By middle school, the kids tell us they know all about bullying, so we have to be more creative in getting the message to them in a meaningful way. Last year, Shepard school hosted a production of a locally produced play on the subject of bullying called *Gifted* that was very well received by the students because it presented the message in a fresh, new way. The play will be presented to the middle schools again this year. In addition, for the past three years, District 109 schools have participated in a program known as Second Step that is a multi-media approach to educating children about bullying. Illinois is one of only three states in the nation that have mandated anti-bullying curriculums. Second Step is a social-emotional learning program that stresses not just the problem of bullying and the victims of bullies, but the role of bystander to bullying. In the middle schools, this program stresses that students must take ownership of the anti-bullying message in their schools.



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What are some signs that a child is being bullied?

There is a tremendous variety of symptoms; some to watch for are changes in eating and/or sleeping habits; withdrawal from activities that were previously pleasurable; social isolation; feelings of being persecuted. Depression, suicidal ideation, and PTSD are the extreme symptoms.

What motivates a child to bully?

- The need for attention – even negative attention, which is better than no attention at all.
- Imitation, i.e., of what the child is experiencing at home.
- Feeling of superiority or power over another person.
- Peer acceptance
- Misunderstanding of differences (intolerance of differences)
- Media influence (what is your child seeing on television?)

How can a child report an incident of bullying without it being known?

The Caruso and Shepard websites now have an online reporting tool that students and/or their parents can use to make an anonymous (or otherwise) report of a problem. Clicking on the “Say NO to bullying” icon brings up a form for reporting and the information goes directly to the school principals. Here is the link:

<http://www.dps109.org/caruso/Pages/BullyingReportForm.aspx>

How prevalent is bullying in the Deerfield middle schools?

The school keeps very detailed statistical data about this type of behavior. It does happen, but serious incidents are quite rare in our schools. Please contact your school’s assistant principal if you would like more information.

Is there a difference between the bullying behaviors of girls vs. boys?

Yes. Boys tend to be more aggressive and physical; girls are more subtle and verbal in their bullying behavior. Girls also tend to organize bullying behavior within a group, which then targets a particular individual. Girls often use exclusion as a bullying tactic. Today, there is far more cyberbullying than face-to-face bullying.

What forms of bullying are illegal?

Cyberstalking, i.e., when there are two or more incidents of electronic communication that is directed toward another person to intentionally inflict distress or threats of physical harm. Involve police when bullying is dangerous.

What are the consequences and laws?

Serious bullying incidents reported to the police are investigated and can be sent onto the Juvenile Department of the State’s Attorney’s Office for further action. The Deerfield Police Department’s on staff social worker, Stephanie Locascio, is also called into cases to support all parties. She is a great resource in our community that should not be overlooked.

What are the victim’s rights?

To be safe, to be heard and to be protected.

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Questions? Email deerfieldparentnetwork@gmail.com



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As a parent, how can I effectively respond if I discover my child is a victim of bullying?

Top Ten Effective Ways to Respond to Your Child if they are the Victim of Bullying

written by Stephanie Locascio, LPC ~Social Services Program of the Deerfield Police Dept.

- 1.) Listen to your child. Stay calm until you have all the details. Do not interrogate.
- 2.) Validate your child's feelings first. Deal with your's later. Be careful of reacting, thus re-victimizing your child. Create safety.
- 3.) Be in the present with their thoughts and feelings. Now might not be the best time to educate about reasons why kids bully or to problem solve.
- 4.) Do make sure your child understands that no one deserves to be bullied. Tell your child to avoid but not to ignore the bully.
- 5.) Do express confidence that a solution can be found- Give your child hope.
- 6.) Work through school personnel as appropriate and as necessary. Ask for an adult your child can report to every day at the school. Keep lines of communication open.
- 7.) If needed, contact the Police Dept. to file formal charges in cases of assault, etc.
- 8.) Involve your child in the problem- solving. It will empower them and give them a sense of control.
- 9.) Develop self-confidence and self-esteem- Encourage positive self-talk, role play, help your child identify talents and gifts, develop a hobby, get them involved in service/helping projects, teach your child not to expect mistreatment.
- 10.) Watch for signs of increased anger, anxiety, depression, PTSD, suicidal ideation. When appropriate seek professional counseling for you child.

Is Facebook and other online problems something that the school can address?

The school can be a support if theirs is a concern, but the scope of the school's influence is limited to behavior or actions that in some way impact a child's ability to learn. There is a problem with Facebook and other forms of social media in that they allow people to communicate in ways that would never occur in a face-to-face encounter. Parents are encouraged to document any incidents of cyberbullying that their children may receive; print the offensive text message, email, or Facebook communication if at all possible or find some way of saving it. This evidence is very powerful tool when used to confront offenders by school administration or law enforcement.

Impress upon your children that anything they put on Facebook becomes a permanent part of their electronic footprint, and that college admissions officers and employers do look at Facebook and other social media accounts of prospective students or employees.

For parents, monitoring their children's online activity is more effective than taking it away. Ask your children to “friend” you and to educate you about how Facebook works.

A wonderful resource for parents trying to navigate media and online influences in their children's lives is www.commonsemmedia.org

Deerfield parents should always feel free to contact their child's teacher, guidance counselor, school social worker, and principal for help in dealing with bullying or any other school or social issue their child may be facing. Likewise, the Deerfield Police Department offers a wealth of resources for residents in need of assistance, including free counseling services. Please use the following link for more information:

<http://www.deerfield.il.us/departments/police/default.aspx>

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