



Letter to Parents

Lesson 4, Counselor Resource

To the Parent or Guardian:

Greetings!

Truly this is the meat of this series of lessons. This spring is the tenth anniversary of the Columbine shootings. Our country had a huge wake up call in the aftermath of that tragedy where the impacts of bullying were studied deeply. Sadly, that tragedy has been repeated over and over again throughout the world in the years since then. As educators, we are acutely aware of the impact of bullying in schools today. We are also keen to do something about it

As parents you have a right to expect a great deal from us. You expect us to provide your children quality education in a safe environment. You are counting on us to create learning communities where every child is respected and given the freedom to learn and grow without fear of abuse, retaliation or harassment. You expect us to respond, react and intervene when bullying of any kind occurs. You are right to have those expectations. We need to work together though. You are their parents and we will always honor you as the most important educator in their lives. Our goal is to educate you as much as possible about this subject so that our collaboration can be rich and impactful.

Let's look first once again at the consequences of bullying (cyber or other) in schools.

For the Target

- Increased depression
- Suicidal ideation
- School Absences
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Loss of self esteem
- Loss of power
- Loss of choice

For the Bully

- Inability to master life skills necessary for successful adulthood (compromise, empathy, negotiation and cooperation).
- Increased likelihood of criminal behavior

- Increased likelihood of becoming abusive to spouse and/or children as an adult
- Increased likelihood of abusing alcohol and/or drugs
- Increased likelihood of dropping out of school

For the Bystander

- Dwell in a climate of fear and disrespect
- Worry that they may be the next target
- Feel anxious, nervous, frustrated and tense.
- Feel powerless to make a change.
- Feel discouraged about society and hope for the future.

I have no doubt that we can all agree that bullying of any kind is not good for our children, our schools or our society. We can't pretend that it isn't happening – even when our own kids may tell us that it isn't a big deal. It is indeed a very big deal. Please work with us as we strive to change the cultures in our schools. You can help by:

- Keeping the conversations going at home.
- Assessing your own child. Which category are they most likely to fall in? Are they a bully? A target? A bystander? What support and/or guidance do they need from you to become a supporter instead?
- Remembering that empathy is the key to solving this problem. Truly learning that skill and practicing it on a daily basis is our hope. You can do this best through modeling and conversation.
- Ideally encouraging your child to become a supporter and reporter. Empowering our children to stand up to bullying is the eventual goal. Help them to be the solution.

Best regards,

Chris