

What Parents Can Do to Help End Bullying

Understand what bullying is and what it is not.

- Eula ISD Board Policy and the Student Code of Conduct states: *Bullying occurs when a student or group of students engages in written or verbal expression or physical conduct that: (1) Will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or of damage to the student's property; or (2) Is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student. [See FFI (Local).]*
- For further clarification: Bullying occurs when a student intentionally assaults, batters, threatens, harasses, stalks, menaces, intimidates, extorts, humiliates, or taunts another student including cyberbullying. Bullying also occurs when a student or a group of students organize a campaign of shunning against another student or when a student or group of students maliciously spread rumors about another student. In most circumstances, bullying does not include a mutual fight between students of roughly equal strength who are angry with each other. Such fights are subject to discipline as a violation of school rules prohibiting fighting. Also, in most cases, it does not include students who participate in a mutual argument or exchange in name calling. If severe enough, a onetime event can be categorized as a bullying behavior.
- Help your child understand that bullying is harmful and not acceptable.

Talk with and listen to your kids every day.

- Know who your children play with or hang around with in the neighborhood. Connect names and faces of those children.
- Have conversation with your children about their social lives by asking open ended questions about what they do with their friends, what happens in the neighborhood during their social time as well as what happens on the way to and from school.
- Explain to your child what bullying is and is not.
- It's important for children to know that they should tell their parents if they are bullied because parents want to make sure their child is safe.

Establish household rules about bullying.

- Children need to hear from their parents explicitly that bullying or watching bullying and doing nothing is not acceptable – this includes bullying, being bullied, or to standing by and watching other kids being bullied. This includes sibling bullying.
- Discuss possible consequences for bullying behavior.

Be a good example of kindness and leadership.

- Your kids learn a lot about relationships and power from watching how you interact with others. You have a great opportunity when you get angry at another driver on the road, a waiter, a sales clerk or even your child to model effective communication skills by not blowing up or name calling.
- Any time a child sees someone speak to another person in a mean or abusive way, they are being taught that bullying is okay.

Be able to recognize potential signs when children may be being bullied.

- Most children don't tell anyone when they are being bullied – especially adults.
- Signs may be: complaints of not feeling well, frequent loss of belongings, avoiding school, wanting to go to school late or wanting to leave early, not enjoying or wanting to attend social activities, frequent injuries or damage to clothes or property, appears to be alone most of the time, obtains an excessive or insufficient amount of sleep.
- Additional symptoms may be: depression, anxiety, safety concerns, aggression, grades dropping, low self-esteem, deficits in peer relations and substance use.

Create healthy social skills and anti-bullying behaviors.

- Coach your children what not to do – hitting, pushing, teasing, name calling and being mean to others.
- Help your child to understand how these kinds of actions might feel to the child on the receiving end (“How would it feel if that happened to you?”).
- Teach your children what to do – being kind, having empathy, playing fair, taking turns, etc.
- Teach your children what to do if other kids are mean – get an adult, tell the child who is teasing or bullying to stop, walk away and ignore the bully, and/or help others who are being bullied.

Know some of the common signs of children who bully.

- Children who bully tend to have: average or above average self-esteem, impulsive personalities, lack of empathy, difficulty conforming to rules, positive attitudes toward violence.
- Some bullies are quite popular, enjoying high status and esteem from their peers, and even teachers. These are called “Hidden bullies” – popular children who exhibit aggressions (persistent arguing, fighting, getting in trouble.

What Parents Can Do If They Suspect Their Child Has Been Involved in Bullying at School

It is normal for children and teens to have conflicts but true bullying is not something that usually goes away on its own. If you think that your child is bullying or being bullied, believe them and intervene. Some suggested actions could include:

Whether you think your child may be bullied or may be bullying:

1. Encourage your child to share all the information that they have as to the event – what was specifically said and actions taken by all involved in the situation. Gauge the seriousness of the incident and whether this is an ongoing problem.
2. Talk with your child's teacher &/or principal about the problem and see if they have noticed anything. Remember that your child's teacher &/or principal may not be aware of the situation. Both parents and school staff need to partner together to guarantee appropriate behavior and student safety.
3. Have your principal notify your child's teachers regarding your concerns so that everyone who comes in contact with your child can be on the lookout and can intervene should an episode be repeated.
4. If your child was not completely honest, was a bystander who did nothing, or who exhibited in the bullying behavior, make clear your expectations for not repeating that behavior. Children need to know that parents support expectations of appropriate home, neighborhood and school behavior.
5. If your child was a victim or a bystander who reported the incident, praise them for taking appropriate steps to keeping themselves &/or others safe.
6. Your child's campus has policies and procedures in place for reporting bullying behavior, investigating alleged bullying incidents, dealing with students who are bystanders and those that exhibit bullying behavior, and providing support to those who are victims of bullying. Use your school as a resource.

If you think your child may have been bullied:

1. Reassure your child that you will check into his/her concerns and acknowledge the feelings.
2. Find out what has been tried and work out options with your child – such as being more assertive, not arguing, avoiding people and places, seeking help, etc.
3. Arrange for your child to have opportunities to socialize with other children outside of school to help them build and maintain a strong supportive system of other children.
4. Encourage your child to stick with a friend at lunch, in the hallways, on the bus, walking home or playing in the neighborhood because kids are more likely to be targeted when they are alone.
5. Teach your child to say "STOP!" Most bullies stop bullying within 10 seconds, when someone tells him or her to stop.
6. Be willing to listen with an open mind to feedback your child's teacher, counselor &/or principal provides. They have an opportunity to observe your child's and other children's behavior under different circumstances and can provide valuable information in getting the "big picture."

If you think your child may be bullying:

1. Make sure your child know that bullying is harmful to all kids involved.
2. Help your child find other ways to exert his or her personal power, status, and leadership at school and that you will work with the school if necessary to support their changes.
3. Work together with school staff to send clear messages to your child that his or her bullying must stop.
4. Explain to your child that this kind of behavior is unacceptable. Stop any acts of aggression you see (including sibling aggression). Establish appropriate consequences for his or her actions. Praise and reinforce your children for following rules.
5. Spend more time with your child and carefully supervise and monitor his or her activities for a while. Know who their friends are and how and where they spend free time. Peers can be influential, especially for teens.