It is Bullying Prevention Month!

We are always on the alert for bullying behaviors at Williamson Central Schools, but since this is Bullying Prevention Month, it is also a great time to review some basic information about bullying and provide some resources that you might find to be helpful.

Bullying is a term that is loosely used for many negative behaviors, but bullying has a very specific definition and set of criteria. Knowing the definition can help us determine whether negative behaviors are actually bullying behaviors. For example, being unkind or getting into a fight are negative behaviors, but they are not necessarily bullying behaviors. The best way to tell if something rises to the level of bullying is to compare what is happening with the definition.

New York State officially defines buling as: an unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.

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<th>Any behavior that creates a hostile environment AND</th>
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<td>-Interferes with education or well-being</td>
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<td>-Is based on actual or perceived protected categories (age, race, sex, gender, etc.)</td>
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<td>-Causes fear for personal safety</td>
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<td>-Bullying is also defined as behavior that is intentionally harmful or hurtful.</td>
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<td>-Bullying has the potential for repetition over time.</td>
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<td>-Bullying MUST include an imbalance of power. (Students who bully others use their power, such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity, to control or harm others.)</td>
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**Signs that a child is being bullied:**

Some signs that may point to a bullying problem are:

- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewelry
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating.
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, harming themselves, or talking about suicide

**Signs a child is bullying others:**

Kids may be bullying others if they:

- Get into physical or verbal fights
- Have friends who bully others
- Are increasingly aggressive
- Get sent to the principal’s office or to detention frequently
- Have unexplained extra money or new belongings
- Blame others for their problems
- Don’t accept responsibility for their actions
- Are competitive and worry about their reputation or popularity
Why don't kids ask for help?
- Bullying can make a child feel helpless. Kids may want to handle it on their own to feel in control again. They may fear being seen as weak or a tattletale.
- Kids may fear backlash from the kid who bullied them.
- Bullying can be a humiliating experience. Kids may not want adults to know what is being said about them, whether true or false. They may also fear that adults will judge them or punish them for being weak.
- Kids who are bullied may already feel socially isolated. They may feel like no one cares or could understand.
- Kids may fear being rejected by their peers. Friends can help protect kids from bullying, and kids can fear losing this support.

Knowing about the different types of bullying may help you have a conversation with your child if you feel there are bullying behaviors going on. **There are three types of bullying:**
- **Verbal bullying** is saying or writing mean things.
- **Social bullying**, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone’s reputation or relationships.
- **Physical bullying** involves hurting a person’s body or possessions.

No type of bullying is okay!! What can we do to help victims of bullying?
At school, we will continue to teach about bullying so everyone knows what bullying is and isn’t. We use research based programs to help teach about problem solving, self regulation and kindness (Olweus, Delphi, etc.). We will continue to keep the lines of communication open so that children will feel comfortable reporting issues of bullying behavior. We will continue to teach students empowering behaviors such as **standing up for each other, being kind to each other and being proactive bystanders that step in and help when bullying behavior is witnessed.** We also know we need to work with bullies themselves to support them in learning appropriate behaviors and following up with consequences when they engage in bullying behaviors.

What can you do as a parent/guardian?
You are your child’s number one teacher! Continue to be a model of **positive character, kindness and leadership.** Maintain strong relationships with your children and stay in tune with their school day. Ask how things are going and dedicate time to listen. **Communicate, communicate, communicate!** Don’t be hesitant about asking your child specific questions if you think they are being bullied or bullying others. Help them determine the best actions to take to make the situation better. If your child is being bullied, encourage them to **report the issue to school personnel.** You can find the information for the DASA contact at each school by visiting the Dignity for All Students page on our website (www.williamsoncentral.org) Ask for help. We are always here to support our students and families when dealing with bullying behaviors!

There is no doubt that if we work together we can lessen the occurrence of bullying behavior and the negative impacts it causes to victims, bystanders and bullies themselves.

Check out [WWW.STOPBULLYING.GOV](http://WWW.STOPBULLYING.GOV) for more information on how you can help stop bullying.

Sources:
www.stopbullying.gov